

PETER B. KYNE

Garailea

**Peter B. Kyne-k englanderaz idatzia
eta ARGIAren irakurle batek euskeratua**

Inazio Mujika Iraolak prestatutako edizioa

EIZIE



Jatorrizko izenburua:
The Go-Getter
A Story That Tells You How to Be One



Diseinua: J.L. Agote

Itzulpena: Argia-ren irakurle bat

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Euskal itzultzaile ezezagunaren omenez

Zaila da imajinatzea nondik inguratu zezakeen joan den mendearen hogeita hamarreko urte hasiera haietan gazte euskaldun batek ingelesez idatzitako liburu bat. Edo ez zuen ingelesezkoa inguratu, gaztelaniazkoa baizik... Hori ez da hain zaila imajinatzen, izan ere Bartzelonako *Juventud* argitaletxeak argitaratuak baitzituen aurreko hamarraldian Peter B. Kyne-ren hainbat eta hainbat eleberrri. Kontua da behintzat inguratu zuela ingelesez edo gaztelaniaz 1921ean Estatu Batuetan *The Go-Getter* izenburupean argitaratua zen eleberrri labur bizia.

Beharbada, gazte lagunen batek emango zion haren aztarna gure gazteari edo irakurzale helduagoren batek bestela. Beharbada, liburu-dendaren baten erakusleihoan ikusiko zuen, demagun Donostian. Gipuzkoan behintzat. Tira, gerta zitekeen Madrilen edo beste hiri handiren batean ikasten ari zela ikusia izatea.

Baina inongo dudarik gabe gipuzkoarra da gure gaztea. Giputza hizkeraz esan nahi dut, eta Beterriko mugapetik oso urrutikoa ere ez. Hizkerak salatzen du.

Gaztea zela esan dut eta hori ere ezagun du itzulpena irakurrita. Oinarri sendoak ditu, baina hankamotz samar geratzen da inoiz edo behin esapiderean batean edo bestean, erabat doitu gabeko lumaren erakusgarri. Izerdi pixka bat aterako zuela iruditzen zait, zurruntasunik ez txertatzeko euskal ordainari. Sarri, esaldi luzeak eta laburtu egi-

ten ditu, oso gogoan du orduko irakurle euskalduna. Ego-
kitzaile da itzultzaile baino gehiago. Askotan ematen du
euskaraz sortutako lan baten aurrean gaudela. Izan ere,
bai hizkuntza bizia, bai ahozko iturri garbia elkarrizketeta-
tan pasarazten diguna. Badu giharra eta kontakizuna
aurrera eramateko jostun pultsua.

Aieruz eta suzmoz ari naiz, ordea, berak ez baitu ia
ezer argitzen: “Peter B. Kyne-k englanderaz idatzia eta
ARGIAre irakurle batek euskeratua”. Hori besterik ez.
Hortik ezin atera dezakegu ez oharra berak idatzi zuenik
ezta “englanderatik” zuzenean euskaratu zuenik ere. Kon-
tutua da behintzat liburua irakurri, gustatu, eta euskaratzea
erabaki zuela egunen batean. Euskara bera herdoiltzen ari
zitzaiola eta zertxobait lantzeko, euskaldunek katiximaz
haragoko irakurgai atseginik izan zezaten edo nik al dakit
zergatik. Kontua da, hortaz, garai hartan bizi zen –gazte
batzuek bizi zuten– euskal pizkundean murgilduta euska-
ra atsegin-soinekoz jantzita ikusi nahi izan zuela, eta lana-
ri ekin ziola.

Urte miragarri haietan, hiru egunkari ari ziren orri
bana hartuta euskarazko gauzak argitaratzen. Bilboko
Euzkadin Lauaxeta ari zen, Donostiako *El Dían* Luzear,
eta *El Pueblo Vascon* Zubimendi. Beharbada gure gazteak
horietako batean argitaratuak izango zituen artikulutxo
batzuk. Horietako batean izatekotan, *El Dían* seguruen-
a, gipuzkoarra izaki. Zubimendiren orria astean behin atera-
tzen zen eta asko berak betetzen zuen. *El Díar*ako idazten
ibili baldin bazen, Ander Arzelus ezagutuko zuen. Donos-
tiarraren itzulpenerako grina eta gazteak bultzatzeko aha-
leginaren berri jakinda, ez dirudi burugabea pentsatzea
Arzelusek berak bultzatu zuela lan hori itzultzeraz. Arzelu-
sek berak englanderatik itzuli eta argitaratu zuen, 1931n,
Dickensen *Eguerri Abestia* epeka. Lan gehiago ere agindu

zituen. Junes Vernerren *Larogei egunean, ludiari bira*, esate baterako. Inoiz ez zen argitaratu “goikoek” –euskara-ren kontuetan beti badago goikoren bat– hainbat aitzakia emanda ez ziotelako utzi. Baina goikoen epaia jaso aurretik agindu ziezaiokeen gure gazteari: “hi gazte, hire gustukoren bat, politta izan dadila, eta ez oso luzea”. Ezina gero etorriko zen. Ordurako ordea hasi-masietan edo erabat bukatuta, eta nonbait argitaratu nahi hark ere. “Ekatzak, gazte, Argian neronek argitaratuko diat eta”.

Aieruka ari naiz. Barkatuko didazue.

Hainbeste itzuli-mitzuli eman gabe, Arzelus bera ez ote lan honen itzultzailea? Hasieran hala pentsatu nuen. Hizkuntza gainetik aztertuta, ordea, ezinezkoa dela esango nuke. Honek erabiltzen dituen laburtze eta fonetismoak ez lituzke donostiarrak beretzat onartuko. Arzelusekin elkarlanean aritu zen beste bat, Joxe Migel Zumalabe. 1936ko zorigaitzeko liskarrean galdu omen zitzaion Junes Vernerren itzulpen bat. Hura gaztea zen. Donostiarra. Izan zitekeen. Nork daki?

Aieruka ari naiz. Ez ahaztu. Ez baitaukat bestelako daturik.

Dakidan bakarra da, gazte, zahar edo bien arteko, euskaldun batek, 1935 aurrean, Kyne bezalako best-seller idazle bat hartu, sona handiko liburua eskuratu eta euskaratu ondoren *Argiakoei* eman ziela. Eta *Argiakoei* 1935eko *Argia'ren Egutegian* irakurgai atsegin gisa argitaratu zutela, *Garailea* izenburuarekin. Egutegi hartan bertan orri osoko ohar bat erantsi zuten: “Garailea. Aurrreraxeago irakurri zenezateke izen onetako irakurgaia. Peter B. Kyne-k englanderaz idatzia da ta gero erderara itzulia. Onoko auek guziak ere idazle berarenak dira ta Editorial Juventud S.A-k (Apartado, 3 - Barcelona) argita-

ratuak: 5,90 laurlekotan: *El señor del Valle Solitario*; 5,50 laurlekotan: *Un corazón comprensivo*, *El rancho “Arroyo Chico”*, *El avasallador*, *Amanecer*, *Tambien ellos sirven*, *Los proscritos del paraíso*, *Tamoa*; 3,90 laurlekotan: *La cuesta encantada*, *El primero de a bordo*, *Cappy Ricks se retira*, *El orgullo de Palomares*, *Llovida del cielo*, *Todo un Hombre*, *El valle de los Gigantes*, *El capitán Scraggs*; 2 laurlekotan: *De un mismo barro*; Laurleko batean: *Los tres padrinos*, *El más feo*, *El Sheriff*”.

Ikusten denez, idazle oparoa behar du izan Kyne-k. Bere lan asko eta asko western-eleberriak dira, izenburuak berak daude esaten. San Franziskon jaio zen XIX. mendeko bukaera aldera. Bere lanik ezagunena eta famatuena *Kindred of the dust* izan zen hogeietako urteetan best-seller izatera heldua. Zinemarako gidoi idazlea ere izan zen. Gaur argitaratzen dugun *Garailea* eleberri honetako pertsonaietako bat, Cappy Ricks, beste eleberri batzuetan ere agertzen da, eta bere abenturak *Saturday Evening Post* aldizkarian argitaratu ziren aurrena epeka. 1957an hil zen Kyne.

Gauza bitxia da mundua, eta itzulinguru asko ematen dituen. 1921ean Estatu Batuetan argitaratu, Euskal Herrian 1935ean “gazte batek” ausaz ariketa gisa aldizkari xume batean euskaratua eman, eta oraintxe esku artean dudan gaztelaniako edizio batean jartzen duenez “un clásico del mundo de la empresa con más de 500.000 ejemplares vendidos en todo el mundo” bilakatua. Ez dago enpresaren azti-xaman batek hartzea bezalakorik liburuak abasto eta erruz saltzeko. Enpresaren xamana Alan Axelrod da eta gaztelaniako bertsio atera duen argitaletxea Al-gaba. 2003koa da eskuratu dudan edizioa, *El buscavidas* du izenburu, eta honako kopia hau erantsi diote azpian: “un relato clásico que cuenta cómo llegar a ser el número

uno”. Nonbait Axelrod jaun azti horrek ikusiko zuen eleberri honetan zeudela gisako enpresa batek behar duen langile eredu otzan eta onaren bertute nagusiak, eta, liburuaren bertsio bat eginez (alegia, jatorrizko testua ukitu eta zenbaitetan aldatuta!), boladan dauden enpresario nahi guztien gogo-jardunetarako oinarritzko testu bihurtua zuen, hitzatze lerdjario aholkuemaile nazkagarri bat erantsita.

Gorde gaitezen liburu bakarreko jendeaz...

Hain zuzen ere, hitzatze horrek erakutsi nahi duen handiustekeria guztien kontrako txertoa izan nahi du gure argitalpen xume honek. Itzultzaile gazte bat, ezezaguna, orain hirurogeita hamar urte, era honetako gauzarik egiten ez zen garaian, kontakizun atsegin bat hautatu eta eskaini nahi izan ziela orduko euskaldunei ospatzeko argitalpena da hau, orain guk orduko haren lekukoa jaso, eta, haren omenez –euskal itzultzaile ezezagunaren omenez– egindakoa.

Inazio Mujika Iraola

2005eko uztailean

GARAILEA

ARGIAren irakurle batek euskeratua

I

Kolka bere txitakin zaleki ibiltzen dala? Zalekiago zebillen bada oraindik egur salerosketan eta itxas-gaietan “Cappy Ricks” izenarekin ain ezaguna zan Alden P. Ricks jauna. Alaxe adierazi zion bere egur-lantegietako ordezkari zan “Egur-gaietako Ricks Lagundiko” zuzendari eta lendakari Skinner jaunari. Orixe bera zesaion ere itxas-gaietan ordezkari zuan “Izar Urdin Itxas Lagundia”ko zuzendari eta lendakari eta bere sui Matias Peasley kapitani.

Skinner jaunak Cappy Ricks-ek zesaiona itzik atera gabe entzun zion. Ez baizuan aidetasunik berarekin. Matias Peasley ordeza sua izan, eta anka bat bestearen gañean jarriaz, bere aitagiarrebaren asarreari ajolik egin gabe egon zan.

–Zu kezkatitz? Bizkarreko miñez al zaude edo Herbert Hoover jauna ez al zaizu ministrotzarako egokia iruditzen?

–Gazte, zure isekak besterentzat izan bitez! –zion Cappy-k indarrez–. Badakizu nere asarreak ez osasunarekin eta ez politikarekin zer ikusirik ez duala. Sutzen nauena zartu ondoren geiago balio ez duten gizonak nere inguruan ikustea da.

–Zein ordeza?

–Zu eta Skinner.

–Baña, zer egin degu ba?

–Zuek? Orain artu berriak ditugun ogeita bost itxasontzi oiek gure gain artzea onuragarria zitzaigula sinisterrazi, eta, orra, oien zuzendaritza gure gain artu degunera-ko... itxas-zergak zerurano iyo dituzte, ontzietako makina-zaleak oporrera jo dute, eta Japongo gure etxera bialtzen ditugun gazte txoro guziak arrotzen dira eta ez dakit zergatik, Japonen amerikar egartientzat egiten dan *whisky* guzia gutxitxo dute berentzat. Zartu eta gero gure otseñak urrutidatz bitartez uxatzera beartu nazute bion artean. Eta zergatik? Emen bakarrik erabili bear genituzkeen artu-emanetan sartu erazi gaituzutelako. Urrutiko artu-emanak ez ditezke etxekoak bezela aztertu.

Matias Peasley-k, berari ezarri nai zitzaizkan erruak iñoren bizkarrean botatzeko eskua jasoaz, esan zuan:

–Ogeita bost itxasontzi oien zuzendaritza gure gain artzea on zitzaigunik ez dizugu guk sinisterrazi: Irurok ala uste izan degu, obeto esateko, zuk ala sinisterrazi didazu, ni aurren-aurrenetik asmo orren aurka nintzan eta. Amar urte dira zuk artu-emanen ardura utzi zenula eta ordutik itxas-gaietan izaten ditugun ezbear guziak neretzat izaten dira, adiskide.

–Ustez, bai; izatez, ez. Edo zer nai dezute zuek, eskulana utzi nuen bezela buru-lana ere uztea? Gizona! Nere diru guziak ezarririk daukaten artu-emanetan iritzia izateko eskubidea ere ukatuko ote didazute? Egia da, artu-eman guziak zuek zuzentzen dizkidatzute, ez oso gaizki gañera geienetan beintzat, baña... jem! Zer gertatzen zaitzu, Mat? Eta zuri, Skinner? Mat-ek errurik izaten dunean, zuk zuzendu bear dezu okerragorik etorri ez dedin, eta Skinner-ek izaten duanean, berriz, zuk, Mat. Edo gizonak

aldez aurretik ezagutzeko begia galdu al dezute, edo ez dezute iñoiz izan?

–Shanghai-ko Henderson-gatik mintzo zera noski, ezta? –galdetu zion Skinner-ek.

–Bai, Henderson-gatik mintzo naiz. Eta zuri dasaizut, gure artu-emanak itxasketa-labur edo kabotajekoak baka-rrik izan balira eta Pazifikoren aruntz-onuntza ori gure gain artu ez bagenu, ez genun gaurko egunean Henderson ori dala bide dabilkigun aña kezka ibilliko.

–Genun egur saltzallerik onena berorixe zan! –erantzun zion Skinner-ek–. Asia aldean asko eta asko salduko zuala uste nuen.

–Henderson pizkorra da. Emen, etxean mandatarari bezela sartu zan, eta denborarekin, berriz, egur-salketako sa-llan zuzendaritzaraño iritxi zan. Kaiean ere leial jokatu zuala badakizu –esan zuan Mat Peasley-k.

–Alaxe da, baña Txinara biali aurretik ezer esan al zidazuten neri?

–Ez. Ez al naiz ba ni “Izar Urdin Itxas Lagundi”ko zuzendaria? Zuk ezer esan zenezakien baño askoz lenagotik zan Henderson Shanghai-ko gure ordezkari.

–Ez al nizun nik zuri esan Henderson etzala leku orretarako egokia?

–Bai.

–Oraintxe esango dizutet ba Shanghai-ra biali zenute-nean ezin esan nezaizuteken beste zerbait. Henderson langille jatorra izan da, langille leiala, baña nagusiaren babesean. Ogei urte luzetan saiatu nintzan ni aren burutik txorakeriak uxatzen, baña alperrik eta orra orain eun eta ogeita amar milla dollar ostuta nola iges egin digun.

–Barkatu, Ricks jauna –esan zion Skinner-ek–, Henderson-ek egin zitzaken lapurretai erantzuteko milloi laurden bat dollar dauzkagula gogorazi nai nizuke...

–Ixo, Skinner! Itz bat ere! Etzazu beintzat aztu zuk eta Mat-ek ezer jakin gabe egin nuala nik ori. Eta zuk, Mat, seme maitea, gogoan izan len zer esan didazun: amar urte dirala artu-emanen ardura utzi nuala eta ez detala zure idazkolako artu-emanetan zergatik sartu, alegia...

–Egia diozu, naiz eta Henderson-ek lapurreta ori egin, zuri eskerrak ez degu batere galerarik Shanghai-ko gure etxean –erantzun zion Mat Peasley-k–. Nola-nai dala ere ekingo diogu guk lanari. Henderson edalea eta jokalaria zan eta irabazten zuan baño diru geiago zijuakion. Etzuan artu-emanen ardurik izaten eta azkenean txorakeri bat egin zun: dirua artu eta itzuli. Guk ez ba jakin ori egingo zuanik. Eta gizon bat gure ordezkaritzarako aututzen degunean, autu edo ez autu, zirt edo zart egin bear. Artzen badegu, ona da ustean noski. Gai orrekin eztabaidan orain aritzea alperrikakoa da beraz. Orain egin bear deguna Henderson-en ondorengo bat arkitu, eta lenengo itxasontzian Shanghai-ra biali.

–Ederki, Mat –zion maitasunez Cappy-k–, ez dizut errurik ezarri nai. Ez naiz goxoegi aritu nere jardunaldian. Nik aña urte izaten dituzutenerako eta neri aña lapurreta egiterako, ikasiko dezute gizonak ezagutzen eta garrantziko lekuetara zein biali bear dan jakiten. Eta zuk, Skinner, ba al dezu norbait Shanghai-ra bialtzeko?

–Penaz baña ezetz esan bear. Nere sallekoko guzik gazte-
txoak dira ortarako.

–Gaztegik? Zer esan nai du itz orrek?

–Ortarako gai litzakena da, baña Andrews gaztetxoa da... Ogeita amar urte baizik ez dituala uste det.

–Ogeita amar urte beraz, e? Ori eragozpena nola izan diteken ez dakit. Ederki oroitzen naiz zuri amar milla dollarreko saria eta milloika askoren erantzun bearra eman nizunean, ogeita zortzi urte baizik etzenitula.

–Bai, jauna, alaxe da baña... Andrews jaunak... ez du oraindik pruebik eman...

–Skinner! Ez dakit etxe onetatik zergatik etzaitudan bialtzen! Andrews eztala proatu diozu. Zergatik ez? Zergatik eta zertarako daukagu gure artean proatu gabeko jendea? Erantzun nazazu! Tut! Tut! Geldik mingaña! Kistar bezela dituzun bearkunak bear bezela bete izan baze-nitu, 1919 edo 1920an egurra nai baño errexago saltzen zan garai artan, urte beteko oporra egingo zenuen, eta, bide batez, Andrews proatuko zenun gero nolakoa zan jakiteko.

–Zorionez ez nuan ba ori egin. Ondo dakizu bolara onaren ondoren oso txarra izan zala. Ez dakizu ondo zenbat lan egin bear degun orain gure itxasontziak egurrez beteak ikusiko baditugu...

–Skinner! Zu nerekin eztabaidan? Zenbat urte zituan Mat Peasley-k “Izar Urdin Itxas Lagundia” bere esku utzi nuanean? Ogeita sei baizik ez. Skinner, nik uste ez bezelako ergela zera. Zu bezelako gizonak zerate matxinada eta oporketa sortzalle, lantegi eta salerostegietara, erantzun bear aundietako tokietara eta zerbait irabazi diteken tokietara ille zuri eta bizkar makurtutako gizon adindunak eraman bear diralakoaren iritzia daramazutelako. Gaizki zaude, ordea, Skinner. Gaurko egunean, gazteak bear dira; gazteena da mundua, Egun-eguneko gizonak ogeita amar urtez bekoak dira. Mat, zer derizkiotzu, bialiko ote genduke Andrews Shanghai-ra?

–Balioko duala uste det.

–Zergatik uste dezu balioko duala?

–Balio bear dualako. Oitutzeko ainbat denbora egin du gure artean...

Cappy-k etzion utzi jarraitzen.

–Garrantzi aundiko kargu ori bere gain artzen ausartuko al da? Ori jakin bear da eta ez zuk eta Skinner-ek ainbeste aitatzen dezuten oitura.

–Ez dakit ausartuko dan. Balioko duala deritzat. Gizon atsegiña da.

–Ondo dago, baña, biali aurretik, naimen aundikoa eta ausarta dan edo ez jakin bear degu.

–Beraz –esan zuan Mat-ek exerita zegon alkitik altxeaz–, nik ez det zer ikusirik Shanghai-ko arazo orrekin. Zu asi zeranez, zeorrek izendatu bear dezu Henderson-en ondorengoa.

–Iritzi ortakoa naiz ni ere –esan zuan Skinner-ek–, nere ergeltasuna dala-eta, ez naiz Andrews-ek izan dezaken naimen-indarra zenbaterañokea dan neurtzeko gai eta. Orain dagon lekurako egokia da, baña...

–Baña egokia izango al da gugandik sei milla kilometroz urrutiratua arkitzen danean, berez gauzak erabakitze-ko eta bakoitzari duan garrantzia emateko? Orixe orain jakin bear deguna, Skinner.

–Zeorrek probatu zenezake.

–Nere kontu, Skinner! Shanghai-n gure ordezkari izango dana gizon jatorra izango da, arraiepola! Iru txar izan ditugu dabaneko. Ez genezake orrela jarraitu!

Eta besterik esan gabe, oñak mai gañean jarriaz eta gorputza atzera zuala, patxaran jarri zan Cappy.

–Andrews-eri zer prueba jarri oldoztu eziñik dago. Asmatuko du zerbait –esan zion aopean Mat-ek Skinner-eri, gelatik irteterakoan.

II

Idatzia zegon, ordea, Ricks jaunari bear zan lasaitasunarekin oldozten etzietela utziko. Amar minutu ziran geienaz ere ala zegola urrutizkiñez deitu ziotenean.

–Zer da? –galdetu zuan Cappy-k abots garratzarekin.

–Gazte bat idazkolan. William E. Peck izena omen du, eta zurekin itz-egin nai lukela dio.

–Etorri dedilla!

Laister zan mandataria William gaztearekin. Atean sartu zanerako Cappy-ri begira gelditu zan burua makurtuaz batean.

–Ricks jauna, William E. Peck naiz. Milla esker orren aguro artu nazulako.

–Hem! Exeri zaite, Peck jauna.

Gela osoa iragan bear izan zuan Peck jaunak Cappy-k eskeñi zion tokian exeriko bazan. Orduan ikusi zezakean Peck-ek errenka egiten zuala eta besoa ukalondotik ebakia zuala. Zergatik zuan bereala igerri zitekean, txamarrean baizeramakin gerran zauritua izan zanaren ezaugarria.

–Ea ba, Peck; zer egin nezake zure alde?

–Lanerako artu nazazun etorri naiz.

–Arraioa, ezetzik esan ezin banezaizuke bezela esaten didazu gañera.

–Alaxe da. Ez det ezetzik itxaron.

–Zergatik? –Williamen arpegi beltz baña atsegiñak irripar gozo batek alaitu zuan une artan.

–Saltzallea naiz, Ricks jauna –erantzun zion–. Bost urtean ikusi baidet saldu diteken guzia saltzen badakitela. Baña, ala ere, ikusi det zerbait saldu nai badet lendabizi salgaiaren nagusiari zerbait saldu bear diotela eta... nero-ni eskeintzen natzaio... Neronen burua salduaz asi nai det beintzat.

–Seme, zeureganatu nazu. Esazu, noiz eman zizuten Laterri Batuetako gudarozterako lekua?

–1917ko Jorraillaren 7ko goizean, jauna.

–Orrenbestez ixten degu gure ituna. Neroni ere “Colon-en Zaldunak¹” zeritzanean sartu nintzen, Kearney-n, baña gero itxasoratzan utzi etzidatelako alde egin nuan. Ala ere egun aiek pozik gogorazten ditut.

Izketaldi arrek biziro alaitu zuan Peck jauna. Eta bere edestia esaten asi zan:

–Gerra aurretik Portland Lagundiakin aritu nintzan ego eta sorkalde aldean egurra saltzen. Orain aste batzuek eman zidaten Letterman Gudalburuaren gaxoetxean Estaduko Seguroaren erdia jasotzeko agiria. Amar milla dollar ziran. Besokoa aguro joan zan, bereala moztu zidaten eta; anka, orde, autsia egon, eta sendatzeko egunak bear, eta gañera bestea baño zerbait motxagoa gelditu zait. Orrela negoela biriketako gaitza sortu zitzaidan, eta urte betez biriketako gaitzak sendatzen dituzten Fort Bayard gaxoetxean egona naiz. Ala ere, sendatu naiz eta nere birikak len bezelaxe daude sendagille agiriak diotenez.

¹ *Knights of Columbus*: Elkartea katoliko ongintzakoa, New Haven-en (Conecticut-en) sortua 1882an.

–Lanerako gogorik eta almenik bai al daukazu?

–Bai, Ricks jauna. Burua eta eskuiko besoa sano dauzkat. Oldoztu eta idatzi nezake beraz, eta, anka bat bestea baño motxagoa badet ere, pazientzi aundikoa naiz eta edozeñek añako gaitasuna badet erosleak arkitzeko. Nerezako lanik bai al dezu?

–Ez, Peck jauna. Ez naiz iñor ortarako. Amar urte badira lantegi auen zuzendaritza utzi nuala. Orain zauden gela au batekin eta bestearekin itz-egiteko baizik ez da... Neri datozkidan eskutitzak jasotzeko eta kaleko kontuak jakiteko lekua edo. Skinner jaunarekin itz-egizu.

–Skinner jaunarekin itz-egin det, baña ez dit itxaropen aundirik eman. Beso uts onekin biotza ikutu nai izan diotela uste izan du. Esan zidan len zeuzkan saltzalleak nora biali etzekiela zegola. Edozein lan eskatu nion, egurrak zenbatzen eta neurtzen nekiela eta abar esanaz...

–Eta alare etziñun artu?

–Ez, jauna, guzia alperrik izan zan.

–Ederki, zoaz nere sui Peasley kapitanaarengana. Ura da gure itxas-gaietako zuzendaria eta baditeke...

–Itz-egin det arekin ere. Oso ona izan da nerekin. Beste amar edo amaika gudari izandutako dauzkala esan zidan biali nai ezik, eta, ni pozik artuko baniñuke ere, oraingoz beintzat eziñekoa dula esan dit.

–Orduan... Zergatik etorri zera neregana?

–Aiek ori esan arren, zuk zerbait lan ematea nai detelako. Etzait ajola edozein lan izanda ere, egiteko gai bainaiz beintzat. Nik egin nezakena bada, iñork baño obeto egingo det, eta lan artarako gai ezpanaiz, berriz, zuei bialtzen lanik ez ematearren, neroni juango naiz. Ez det iñoren errukitasunetik bizi nai, lengoa ezpanaiz ere.

–Ikusten det –erantzun zuan Cappy-k txirrin bat jotzen zuan bitartean.

Laister zan Skinner jauna gela artan. Begiratu zorrotza egin zion Peck-eri. Cappy jaunari, begirunez, zer nai zuan galdetu zion.

–Skinner lagun maitea, Andrews Shanghai-ra bialiko ote degun pentsatzen egon naiz, eta ona zer erabaki detan: angio idazkola edozeñen mende dagolako edozein eragozpen izan genezake berriro ere; orregatik, ba, norbaitek azkar juan bear du ara. Dijuala beraz Andrews lenengo itxa-sontzian, betiko ezpada ere oraingoa egiteko beintzat. Arako gai ezpada, onera etorri diteke berriro, onerako jatorra da-eta. Bitartean... hem!, hum!... Skinner lagun zarrara, ar zazu gazte au zure idazkolan eta eman ezaiozu leku egoki bat zenbaterako gai dan jakin dezagun. Asko poztuko nitzake orixe egingo bazenu, Skinner.

Skinner jaunaren naimena menderatua zegon. Ederki zekin ori berak ere. Bai Peck-ek ere ederki zekin ori, gudaroztean izana zanez baitzekin goitik bera datozen oar txikienak ere agindu bezela artu bear izaten dirala. Irripar gozoa egin zuan, beraz, Skinner-eri begiratuaz.

–Ederki, jauna. Lan saria zenbatekoa da?

Cappy-k, eskuak jasoaz, arazo arekin zer ikusirik etzuala adierazi zion.

–Ez, ori ez baida nere egitekoa. Ez nuke iñolaz ere zure gauzetan sartu nai. Jakiña, merezi aña sari emango diozu, geiegirik gabe.

–Entzun zuk orain, gazte: emen gauza guziak egiñak arkituko dituzula uste badezu, oker zaude. Emen lan asko eta ondo egin bear da zerbait izateko. Zerbait gaizki egi-ten dezunen, lenengoan, oartu egingo zaitugu; bigarren-

an, illabeteko lan-saria galduko dezu, eta, irugarrengoan, lanik gabe geldituko zera. Emen ez dago txantxarik. Entzun dezu?

–Bai, jauna. Gaurkoz lanerako lekua baizik ez det nai; ori izan ezker, Skinner jaunaren biotzerako bidea neronek arkituko det. Skinner jauna, milla esker baimena eman dezulako. Zure uste osoaren jabe izateko alegiñean saiatuko naiz.

“A zer nolakua degun au ere! –zion aopean Cappy-k–. Azkarra degu noski. Skinner gizarajoa! Noiz edo noiz zer-bait gauza berri bururatuko balitzaikek, ilko itzakek! Orain ere erneazten ago mendaratu autelako. Gorriak ikusi eraziko dizkiok gazte oni”.

Peck zutik zegon, zai bezela.

–Noiz etorri bear det, jauna? –galdetu zion Skinner-eri.

–Nai dezunean.

–Orain amabiak dira. Bazkalduta, ordu batean etorri niteke. Egun erdia bakarrik galduko det ori eginda.

Gero, Cappy-ri begiratzuz, nunbait irakurri zuan au esan zion:

–“Eguzkiaren ezkutatzerakoan, salgaiak garestitu baidira, eta gutxi edo ezer irabazi ezpadezu, esan etzerala bizi; egun guzia galdutzat eman ezazu”.

Ori entzundakoan Skinner bere idazkolan sartu zan. Atea itxia zegola nabaitu zuanean, Peck-ek begiak goruntz jaso zituan bere bildurra erakutsiaz.

–Asiera txarra degu noski.

–Zuk lana nai zenun. Nik lan on bat izango zenula ezin ba esan, Skinner eta Mat Peasley ezin nitzake ezertarra beartu-eta. Badakizu William...

–Bill Peck esan oi didate etxeokoak.

–Ederki, Bill.

Cappy-k, exeri alkia utziaz, errukizko begiratua egin zion Bill Peck gazteari.

–Ez naiz zutzaz aztuko, gazte. Zuri lagundu bearrean naiz. Ez uste ordea izan au gerran zauritutakoen bil-lekua danik... Skinner-ek zer lan sari emango dizun jakin nai nuke. Nolanai dala ere, ematen dizuna ematen dizula, itzik atera gabe artu ezaiozu, eta, garaia irixtean, merezi badezu beintzat, ni izango nazu bitartekorik leialena.

–Eskerrik asko, jauna. Oso ona zera neretzat. Jaunak lagun dagizula.

Besterik esan gabe jua zan Bill Peck gaztea. Jua zannerako, Skinner jauna etorri zan. Zerbait esateko aia iriki ere egin zuan, baña etzion Cappy-k ezer esaten utzi.

–Ez itzik, Skinner lagun zarra! Badakit zer esan nai didazun eta arrazoi izan zenezake baña... hem!, hum!, entzun nazazu. Zuregana jua danean nolaz ez dezu artu zurekin, gerran zauritutuko gazte ori? Oraindik begi aurrean daukat bere ixtar autsiakin, eta ezkerreko esku gabe... Gi-zarajoa! Eta, ala ere, lanerako irrikitzen. Zu berriz jela kozkor bat bezela, biotzik ez dezula dirudi.

–Biotz ona gauza bat da, baña biotz onak ez du artu-emanekin zer ikusirik. Orain dala gutxi, berreun eta be-deratzi gerran zauritu artu dituzu zure lantegietan auek artzeko langille jatorrak bialita, eta Washingtonerako orrela artu zenitunak dabaneko eskean dira.

–Noski, ba. Oraintxe matxinada zaleak-eta aspertuta naukate. Noiz nai oporrean dira. Oiekin ez diteke pakerik, ez zorionik. Orain artu ditudan langille oiek izango dira matxinada zaleak atzeratuko dituztenak.

–Bai, bai: ala baderitzaizu sarjento bat jarriko degu sail bakoitzean buru bezela. Goizian diana eta gauean retreta ere jo diteke, eta astean bein edo... Besterik ez bada ere, Aberriaganako maitasun ageria ekarri digute beintzat... eta badakizu egun osoak zertan egiten dituzten? An egindako gauza jakingarriak edesten... diotenez...

–Orrek, ordea, ez du Peck-erekin zer ikusirik. Aizu, Skinner, *Gudaretxeko ipuiak*² deritzan liburua irakurri al dezu?

–Ez det letzeko astirik.

–Orain bertan erosi bear dezu ba liburu ori, eta “Tommy” deritzan ipuia irakurri bear dezu.

–Begira, Ricks jauna, Peck etzait batere gogoko. Lana eskatu zidan eta ezetz esan nion. Mat Peasley-k ere ori bera egin zuan. Eta orrek, bere burugogortasuna ederki erakutsiaz eta guri jaramonik egin gabe, zurengana jo du. Zuk, lanerako artu berriz. Damutuko zaizu oraindik.

–Skinner! Skinner! Begira neri! Badakizu zergatik artu erazi nizun gazte ori?

–Noski; biotza argizaia baño xamurragoa dezulako.

–Egi-egia diozut, egunean baño egunean ergelago zaudede. Ezezkorik izango etzuala ben-benetan uste zuan gazte bat nola utziko nuan ba kale gorrian? Peck gudari jatorre-netakoa izana degu gañera uste detanez. Bai al dakizu zuk zer nai dun eta zer asmo ditun. Gizona, gizona! Zuk badakizu zer egin dun! Zu eragozpen ziñanez, zure aunditasun eta guzti bazterreratu. Gazte orrek ogibidea ederki irabazia du, gizona. Zer lanetan jarri bear dezu?

² R. Kipling-ena da delako liburu hori: *Barrack Room Ballads*.

–Andrews-en tokian.

–Egia, aztuta negon. Ez al dauzkazu gañera pillatuta millaka dollar askoren zugatz usai txarreko saldu eziñik?

Baiezkoa egin zuan buruarekin Skinner-ek. Cappy-k pozik jarraitu zuan izketan.

–Eman zaizkiotzu, ba, eman Peck-eri eta baita gañera-ko saldu eziñik daukazun egur guziak ere... Ulertzen didazu noski, Skinner.

Skinner-ek parrez erantzun zion:

–Eta saltzen ez baditu kalera, e?

–Baietz uste det, oldozpen utsak tamalduzik uzten banau ere. Baña saltzen baditu, Andrews-ek zuan lan-sari bera izango du. Obenlari izan giñezke, baña beti zuzen jokatu bear degu.

Eta bizkarrean eskua jarriaz jarraitu zuan esanaz:

–Olaxe ba, lagun zar, hem!, hum!, barkatu azkartxo ibilli banaiz... hem!, hum! Eta entzun ondo, Skinner: Peck-eri eman bear dizkiozun egur txar oiek garestiegi jartzen badituzu, zeorri kalera. Zuzen eta garbi jokatu. Azpikeria besterentzat utzita. Gogoan izan Peck-en beso erdia Prantziko lurretan gelditu zala.

III

Eguardiko amabi eta erdietan, California kale zear Cappy bazkaltzera zijoalarik, Bill Peck arkitu zuan, eta onek, gelditu araziz, txartel bat erakutsi zion.

–Ze derizkiozu, jauna? Ez al dago ederki egiña?

Cappy-k auxe irakurri zezakean:

EGUR GAIETAKO RICKS LAGUNDIA

California kalea, 248

SAN FRANZISKO

Ordezkarria: William E. Peck

Zuk nai dezuna iltzeak sartu ditezkena bada... guk daukagu!

Astiro aztertu zuan Cappy-k Ricks-ek eskuartean zeukan txartela. Ederki irarria zan. Ez da alako lana ordu-erdi batean egiten.

–Bill, lapur batek besteari esan oi dion bezela esan akidazu egia... Noiz bururatu zitzaizun gurekin lan egin bear zenduala?

–Astetxo bat baizik ez da.

–Gudaritzan aginterik bai al zenduan?

–Ez, jauna, ez, gudari utsa nintzan.

–Ezin sinistu det. Ez al zizuten iñoiz aginpiderik eskeñi?

–Askotan, baña aginpidea artzekotan, nere gain eta nere gogoz arturik neukan lanik politena utzi bear. Ez ba garrantzi aundiko lana zalako baña..., bai nere gogokoa. Zugaitz adarrakin estalita etsaiak zeuden tokiraño iritxi-az, etsaien soldadu zintzoenak iltzen nituan. Askotan bururatu zitzaidan lan ura uztea, baña zenbat amerikarren bizitza gaizkatzen nuan ikusirik, neretzat arrixku aundikoa izanagatik, beti lengora jotzen nuan.

–Gudaritzara gaztetan jua izan baziña, gaur gudalbururik aintzatuena izango ziñan, Bill. Zugaitz usaidunak saltzeko oiturarik bai al dezu?

–Ez. Zer zugaitz-mota da ori?

–Californiako Humboldt-en jaiotzen dan usai txarreko piñu bat da ori: egur txarrekoa eta usai txarragokoa. Skinner-ek lanik zallena emango dizu eta ori saltzen ain zalla da.

–Iltzatu al diteke?

–Ori bai!

–Egur ori, noizik beinka bederik, erosten dutenak ba al dira?

–Bai, noiz edo noiz gure saltzalleak tontoen batzuk arkitu oi dituzte. Zorionez egur ortatik gutxi daukagu, baña gure mendizañak orrelakoren bat ikusten duanean txarra izanagatik beti botatzen dualako, gure saltzalleak ezin saldu ala beti izaten degu.

–Oso garesti ez dan guzia saltzen dakit nik, jauna.

IV

Bi illabete ziran Cappy Ricks-ek Bill Peck ikusten etzuala. Saltzalle on batek jakin bear ditun zertzelada gu-
ziak ikasita, Utah, Arizona, Mexiko eta Texas aldera artu
baitzuan. Aguro asi zan lanean Bill Peck gaztea. Salt Lyke
City-n egur txarrenetakoa saldu zuan lenbailen bialtzeko
urrutidazkiz eskaturik. Ogden-en Skinner-ek ezertxo saldu
ezin izan zion bati asko eta asko saldu zion. Arizonan
erosle berri asko arkitu zituan; baña Bill Peck-en saltzeko
trebetasuna ederkiena Texasen ikusi zitekien, asko eta
ederki saldu baitzuan. Mea zuloetako zutikakoak-eta saldu
oi zituan bereziki, eta ainbeste eskaera egiten zitun, Skin-
ner-ek beste egur mota batzuek saldu bear zituala agindu
zion: piñuak, Douglas eta gorri motak. San Franziskora
itzultzerakoan, Angeles erkian gelditu zan an ere usai txa-
rreko egur ori ausarki salduaz. Skinner-ek bialtzeko agin-
dua zekarkion urrutidatzia artu zuanean, Cappy-rengana
juanaz esan zion:

–Peck laguna egur saltzalle jatorra degula aitortu bea-
rrean naiz. Bost erosle berri arkitu dizkigu, eta urrutidaz-
ki onen bitartez egur usaiduna eskatzen digu berriro. Urte
berritatik sari geiago eman bearrean naiz noski.

–Baña, Skinner, urteberrik arte zergatik itxoin? Ema-
teko ortan beti atzera ikusten zaitut. Peck-ek sari aundia-
goa merezi badu, zergatik ez bertatik geitu? Peck-ek lane-

rako gogo geiago izango du, eta, onenean, gizon ona zera-la sinistuaz maite egingo zaitu.

–Tira, ba. Andrews-ek zuan lan-sari bera izango du Peck-ek aurrerantz.

–Gezurra dirudi, Skinner, beti berdin ari bear zurekin. Ez dezu ba zorrek esaten Peck Andrews baño saltzalle obea dala?

–Ala uste det, bai.

–Zuzen joka zazu ba, eta ari baño geiago ordaindu ezaiozu! Ez gañera emendik aurrera, lanean asi zanetik baizik. Eta zoaz emendik, erneazten jartzen nazu-eta. A, aizu! Andrews ondo ari al da Shanghain?

–Urrutidatz lagundiak aberastuko ditu beintzat orrek. Astean iru edo lau urrutidatz bialtzen dizkigu, eta gauzak berez erabakitzen ez du iñoiz ikasiko. Mat Peasley-k Andrews orrekin ez du oso pozik izan bear.

–Orrela al gera! Mat-ek errudun ni egin bearko nau, jakiña. Egia gañera, neronek biali erazi nuan; baña... gogora zait, Skinner, Andrews aldi baterako baizik ez genun biali.

–Bai, alaxe da.

–Aren ondorengo bat billatu bearrean naiz, beraz, Mat “esan nizon nik” esanaz etorri etzaidan. Peck ona izango litzake Shanghairako, baña geiago proatu nai nuke... Aizu, Skinner, txarro urdiñakiko prueba egingo ote degu onekin?

Skinner alaitu zan ori entzundakoan.

–Bai, baña lendabizi dendariari eta txinelai adierazi zaiezu, bestela badakizu ze neke datorzken.

–Bai, bai. Beraz, zuk igande eguerdiko ordu baterako Peck zure etxera eraman erazi zazu, gañerako guzia nere gain utzita.

Skinner-ek par gozoa egiñaz baiezkoa esan zion.

V

Larunbatean etzan Skinner idazkolara azaldu. Bere ordezkoarekin itz-egin zuan, ordea, urrutizkiñez; ondoezik zegola esan ere. Peck-eri mandatua biali zion egun artan berarekin itz-egin nai zuala, baña, gaxotu zanez, etzezakela eta astelenean berriro kanpora juan bear zualako nai-ta-nai-ez igandean itz-egin bear ko zutela esanaz. Peck-eri etzion ajolik egun batean edo bestean izan, eta igande eguadiko ordu batean jutekotan gelditu zan Skinner-ek ala esan ziolako.

Igande eguadiko ordu bata zan Peck Skinner-en etxera iritxi zanean. Skinner oiean izperringia irakurtzen ari zan. Etzeukan gaitz itxurarik, baña, ala ere, Peck-ek Skinner-eri lenbailen sendatzea Jaunari nai zekiola esan zion. Obeto zegoela esanaz bere artu-eman arazoai buruz mintzatzen ari zitzaion. Izketa-aldean gogoz ari ziranean urrutizkin txintzarria entzun zan, eta Skinner-ek urrutizkiña aldamenean zeukalako bereala erantzun zuan.

–Tamal det, baña ezin nezake; oeraturik nago eta ezin irten ninteke. Peck ementxe dago, ordea, eta onek egin dezaizuke ori.

–Pozik gañera! –esan zuen Bill Peck-ek–. Zein il bear det eta bere gorputza nun utzi bear det? Ricks jaunaren naia izan ezker...

–Ja, ja! –algara gozoa egin zuan Skinner-ek.

Eta Cappy-k ala parra egiteko zer zuan galdetu zione-an esan zion:

–Peck jaunak dio edozertarako gertu dagola. Ea nor il bear duan galdetu du. Ja, ja! Peck, Ricks jaunak zurekin itz-egin nai du. Tori urrutizkiña.

–Arratsaldeon, Ricks jauna.

–Kaxo, adiskide. Gaur arratsalderako zer asmo dituzu?

–Bein Skinner-ekiko egitekoak bukatu ezker, ezertxo ere ez. Lan-saria askotxo ere geitu dit eta oso pozik nago. Eta Skinner-en biotz ona badakust ere zuk zer ikusia...

–Tut, tut! Ixilik ortaz! Ezta itz bat ere! Irabazi dezulako dezu ori. Baña nerekin ain adiskide zeran ezker, mesede bat eskatu bear dizut. Ez det iñor bialtzeko eta zuri orrelako bat egin eraztea egoki iduritzen ezpazait ere... hum!... hum!... Zera... esan nai nuke...

–Esan lasai, ez nazu asarretuko, Ricks jauna. Ez naiz zenbait bezin arroputza.

–Eskerrik asko, Bill. Asko poztutzen nau zu orrelakoa izateak. Goazen, ba, arira. Gaur goizean eleizatik atera naizenean eta kaleak zear nebillelarik, Stockton eta Powell kaleen erdian arkitzen dan Sutter kaleko denda batean, Merkatu kalearen aurrez-aurre, txarro urdin bat ikusi det. Eta txarro urdiñak nere gogoko izaki. Gaur ikusi detan txarro ori ez da oso ederra, ezta ikusgarrietakoa ere, garestia ezin beraz izan; baña nere ezagun batek txarro ori bezelako beste bat du, eta ori nai luke orain pianoaren alde bakoitzean txarro berdiñak jartzeko. Ona ordea zer gertatzen zaidan. Gaur gaueko zortzietan Santa Barbara aldera ateratzen dan trena artu bear det len esan dizuten ezagun orren eztai-urteurrena edo jaitzen dutelako. Eta

nere alabak tankera ortako oparitxoa egitea litzakela ego-kiena esan dit.

–Bai jauna, bai, zuk txarro urdin ori zerekin eraman nai zenuke gaur Santa Barbarara. Eta gaur bertan erosi bear nai-ta-nai-ez, biar, dendak iriki arte utzi ezkerro, berandutxo litzake-eta.

–Orixe, bai. Badakizu beraz gaur bertan bear detala. Atzo ikusi izan banu, atzo bertan erosiko nuan, eta ez nizun zuri orrenbeste lan emango.

–Ezaugarri geiago eman bear dizkidatzu. Esan didazu ze txarro nai dezun... Ez, ez didazu oraindik esan. Esaidazu ze urdin duan, urdin asko dira-eta, ze neurrikoa dan, ze zabalero dun gutxi gorabera. Xaplana edo luzea da? Urdin argia edo illuna?

–Txarro urdin-argia da eta marrazki japondarrez apaindua dago. Ez dakit nolako marrazkiak diran, baña loreak eta txori irudiak beintzat baditu. Ogeita amar zentimetro luze eta amar zabal izango da.

–Ederki, jauna, ekarriko diot.

–Eta zortziak amar gutxiagotan ateratzen dan trenera eramango al didazu? Oiakiko gelan egongo naiz.

–Bai jauna, eramango diot.

–Eskerrik asko, Bill. Ez dezu noski ortarako diru asko bearko eta gaur txautzen dezuna biar nere izenean etxeko diruzaiari eskatuko diozu.

Berriro itz aspertu bat egin zuan Skinner-ekin, eta kaleratu zanerako irurak ziran.

Stockton eta Powell kale bitartean zegon Sutter kaleko etxe sallera juan zan zuzenean, eta, denda guzietako

agertokiak ederki miatu arren, etzuan Cappy Ricks-ek nai zuan txarrorik billatu. Ez eta antzekorik ere.

“Gure agureak beste tokiren batean ikusiko zian txarroa –zion berekiko Bill Peck-ek–, edo bestela etziot ondo aditu. Berriro galdetu bearko ziot”.

Bai galdetu ere, baña alperrik, etxean neskamea bakarrik zegon eta etzekin Cappy Ricks nora juan zan ez noiz etorriko zan. Sutter kalean barrena dabil orain berriro Bill Peck. Ez du agertokirik begiratu gabe uzten. Powell eta Bush kaleak ere miatu zituan, eta, ez arkitu arren, etzuan etsitzen. Korreo kalean ere, ezer ez. Buru gogor xamarra izan arren, aspertu zan gure gizona; baita nekatu ere ainbeste goraberakin. Alako batean, ordea, Grant egurastoki inguruan, Geary kaletik barrena zijoala, orra nun ikusten dun txarro urdiña. Ori ote da, ordea, Cappy Ricks-ek nai duana? Begira-begiraka egon zan eta “auxe dek” esan zuan alako batean.

Atea irikitzen asi zan, baña itxia zegon ate ura. Aldi batean ate joka ere egon zan norbaitek irikiko ziolakoan, baña etzan an iñor, itxuraz beintzat. Ate-gañean zegon idazkun bati begira jarri zan eta auxe irakurri zuan:

BITXITEGIA B. COHEN

“Gaitzerdi, zer edo zer bazekiat orain”, egin zion bere buruari, eta errenka-errenka Palace Hotelera juan zan. Urrutizkin-zerrenda edo lista eskatu zuan. Urrutizkin-zerrendan emeretzi B. Cohen izeneko arkitu zituan. Zeñi deitu? Salerosle-zerrenda eskatu zuan orduan bitxiak saltzen zituan B. Cohen arkitzeko. Bai arkitu ere. Alperrik, ordea, dendako zuzenbidea zekarkin.

“Ez da San Franziskon biziko, inguruko erriren batean baizik” esanaz Berkeley, Oakland, Alameda eta beste urietako urrutizkin zerrendak miatzen asi zan. Etzuen ezer lortu. Aspertua, nekatua, erdi etsita urrutizkiña artu, eta San Franziskoko emeretzi B. Cohen-eri deitzen asi zan. Emeretzietatik lauk etzuten erantzun ere; iruk, urrutizkiña aspaldi utzi zuten; seik, ebreoeraz erantzun zioten; bostek, etzirala arek billatzen zuan B. Cohen erantzun zioten, eta emeretzigarrenak irlandatarra zala eta bere abizena Cohan idazten zala erantzun zion.

Berkeley, Oakland, Alameda, San Rafael, Saussalito, Mill Valley, San Mateo, Redwood City eta Palo Alto-ko B. Cohen guziai deitu zien urren, eta, alperrik izan zitzaiolako urrutizkiña utzi eta izerdia legortzen, kolka bera baño ere arroagoa eta ernegaziagoa atera zan. Kaleratu zanean gora begira gelditu zan. Bazidurin Alguztidunari laguntza eskatzen ziola ere.

Seiak ziran. Gure gizona oldozkor zegon. Baña nola ote zan Cohen, Cohan, Cohn, Kohn edo Coen?

“Berriro len bezela asi bear badet, gaur gauerako ilko naiz” esanaz, dendaruntz artu zuan berriro.

Idazkunak onela zion:

BITXITEGIA

B. COHN

“Ardo kontrabandistak nun ote diran jakin nai nuke nik orain –zion berekiko–. Oraintxe nekatu naiz eta ardo tanto bat ez litzaidake gaizki etorriko. Zin ere egingo nuen nik abizen au E-rekin idazten zala! Len ala ikusi detalakotan nago gañera oraindik ere!”.

Peck, urrutizkiña artuaz, San Franziskoko B. Cohn guziai deika asi zan berriro. Zortzi baziran izen ortakoak. Sei etxetik atereak ziran, zazpigarrenak mozkor abotsarekin erantzun zion eta zortzigarrenak erdi-gorra zalako oiuka itzegiten zuan.

“Gerrak badizkik bereak, baña baita pakeak ere”, zion Peck-ek.

Berriro urrutizkiña eskuan, San Franziskoren inguruetan bizi ziran B. Cohn guziai deika asi zan. Oraingoan, noizpait bear eta, asmatu zuan. Seigarren aldiz deitzerakotan erantzun zioten San Rafaeldik, berak nai zuan B. Cohn-en etxetik. Baña –beti bañaka–, sukaldariak esan zionez, B. Cohn jauna Simons zeritzan jaun baten etxean, Mill Valley-n zan.

Iru ziran abizen ortakoak Mill Valley-n. Berak nai zuanarekin itz egingo bazuan, irurai deitu bear izan zien. Antxe zan B. Cohn jauna, eta berarekin itz-egin nai zuana nor zan galdezka asi zitzaizkion:

–Heck jauna? Leck jauna?

Ixillunea.

Berriro lengo abotsak urrutizkiñez:

–Cohn jaunak dio ez dula Leck izenadun iñor ezagutzen; zer nai dezun jakin nai du eta apaltzen ari dala eta baezpadako arazoagatik ez lukela aparti utzi nai.

–Esan zaiozu mesedez Cohn jaunari Peck jaunak garrantzi aundiko arazoaz itz-egin nai diola.

–Metz jauna? Ben Metz jauna?

–Ez, ez eta ez! Peck! P... e... c... k?

–D... e... c... k?

–Ez!... P.

–C?

–P!

–A, bai! E... Zer geiago?

–C... k.

–Aizu, naikoa degu! Deitu akiozu Cohn jaunari bere-ala, bestela orrera juan eta tiro bat emango dizut. Esaiozu denda sutan dagola!

Bereala esan zioten noski Cohn jaunari Peck-ek zekar-kiana, laister zan beintzat urrutizkiñean.

–Itzaltzalletako burua al zera?

–Entzun, Cohn jauna. Zure denda ez dago sutan. Gezurtxo ori esatera beartu nazute zu urrutizkiñera ekarri erazteko. Ni Peck naiz. Ez nazu ezagutzen. San Franziskon, Geary kaleko dendan gaur bertan erosi nai nuken txarro urdin bat daukazu. Zazpi eta erdiak baño lenago nerekin bear du gañera. Berealaxe etortzea nai nuke beraz neri txarro ori saltzera.

–Erua al-zaude edo ni erotu nai nazu?

–Ez, Cohn jauna, ez, etziñuket erotu nai. Neroni nago ni naiko erotuta. Txarro orixe bear det, eta ez naiz neurenenganatu gabe geldituko.

–Bai al dakizu txarroak zenbat balio duan?

–Ez; ez da jakin bearrik ere. Gauza bat erosi bear detanean ez diot balioari begiratzen. Erosi eta kito. Etorriko al zera?

–Zaude! Zazpiak laurden gutxi dira eta urrengo trena zortzietan ateratzen da. Bederatzik amar gutxiagotan orizango naiz, ba... Oraindik apaltzen asi berria naiz eta ezin ba bereala juan.

–Utzi zazu aparia! Nik txarroa bear det!

–Eckstein jauna, ortarañoko presa badezu deitu zaiozu nere ordekoari. Herman Yoost izena du eta urrutizkiñaren zenbakia “Prospect iru... bi... lau... bederatzi”. Esaiozu nik esan dizutela denda iriki eta txarroa saltzeko. Agur Eckstein jauna!

Ta beste gabe utzi zuan urrutizkiña B. Cohn jaunak.

Etzeukan Bill Peck-ek denbora alperrik galtzeko. Bereala deitu zuan beraz “Prospect 3249” urrutizkiñera. Herman Yoost-en amak erantzun zion. Herman Yoost etzan etxean. Beti apaldu oi zuan bazkunean izango zala noski garai artan. Ze bazkun izan zitekeen etzekin ordea. Zer egin? New Yorkeko bazkun guzietara deitu. Erantzun parregarrienak egin ziozkaten. Zortziak joak eta artean ari zan. Bazkun batetik erantzun zioten Yuce etzala ango bazkide; bestetik Luce etzala an; urrengotik Cus iltzala iru illabete edo bazirala; Boos New York-en zala; Youst etzutela ezagutzen eta abar.

–Oraintxe sartu didate ederra! Ez dezatela beintzat esan ez naizela saiatu. Agertokiko leiarra autsiko det eta kito.

Taxi bat artu zuan eta taxi-zaleari nun itxoin esan ondoren, mallu bat kenduta denda aldera abiatu zan. Dendako ate ondoan ordea txinel bat zegoen, ortarako baime-nik ez duan arren, ziarrua erretzen.

“Leiarra austen badet espetxera eramango natxiok”, zion bere buruari, eta denda aurrean burua makur zuala jarraitu zuan.

Berriro aurre artatik pasatzerakoan dendara begiratu zuan eta orduan argi dizdikorraz apaindutako idazkuna irakurri zuan: “B. Cohen”! zion.

Ori ikusi zuanean, lenaz gain aspertuta, nekatuta, nazkatuta, ziara etsita exeri egin zan. Goseak zegon. Pre-saka eta gutxi bazkaldu zuan txarro ori zala eta, eta orrenbeste ibillirekin biziros goretu zan. Etzan gutxiagotarako! Ankean min zeukan eta moztutako besoko eskuan azkure zeukala zeritzaion.

“Mundu au txorotz bete dago. Nekaturik nago eta goret det. Apaldu dezadan ba”.

Len zai utzi zuan taxi bera artuta jatetxe batera jua zan beraz. Apaldu aurretik, ordea, “Prospect 3249” urrutizkiñera deitu zuan, eta bai Herman Yoost etxean arkitu ere. Gauzak zuzentzen asiak ziran noski.

Esan zion asarrez beterik zer nai zuan, baña etzuan orrenbestez nai zuana iritxi. B. Cohn edo Cohen jaunarekin itz-egingo zuala esan zion, eta, “Kek” jaunak ziona egia bazan, bederatzik alderako dendan izango zala eta an itxoiteko.

Pozik esan zion baietz “Kek”ek.

Bederatzik eta laurdenak ziran Herman Yoost dendara iritxi zanean. Bidean zetorrelarik ordea txinel bati laguntzeko esan zion eta txinela lagun zuela etorri zan. Denda iriki zuan, argiak piztu ere bai eta agertokitik atereaz mai gañean jarri zuan txarroa.

–Zenbat balio du ditxosozko txarro onek?

–Bi milla dollar. Eta bereala ordaintzekotan.

Eskerrak txinela an zegola, bestela erortzen da gure Peck jatorra. Bi milla dollar! Eta berak amar baizik izan ez!

–Txeke batekin ordaintzea berdina al litzake?

–Ez ordea nik zu ezagutzen.

–Nun daukazute urrutizkiña?

Skinner-en etxera deitu zuan.

–Skinner jauna, Bill Peck naiz. Dendan nago, eta bi milla dollar bereala ordaintzen baditut, oraintxen eraman nezake Ricks jaunak nai duan txarroa.

–Baña, gizona! Orain arteko guzian orren billa ibilli al zera?

–Bai, jauna, eta bear dan guzian ibilliko naiz gañera. Ekarri zaizkidatzu mesedez onera, Geary kaleko B. Cohen jaunaren dendara bi milla dollar. Ler egin det eta orre-
raño ere ez nitzake iritxiko.

–Peck adiskidea, ez ordea nik bi milla dollar izan. Nola nai dezu ba etxean orrenbeste diru eukitzea.

–Atoz San Franziskora eta idazkolatik artu itzazu.

–Kutxako atea ordulariak irikitzen duala badakizu, eta biar goizeko bederatziak arte ezin liteke iñolaz ere iri-
ki.

–Atoz ba onera eta esan zaiezu dendakoai nere txekea ona dala.

–Ona ote da ordea?

Irakiten zeuzkan odol guziak burura iyo zitzaizkan or-
duan Bill Peck jaunari eta galdera ori entzundakoan, za-
kurraren... biali zuan Skinner.

–Biar ilko zaitut bai nik zu nere beso motzarekin. Lo-
tsagabea! Lapurra!

Pixka bat baretu zanean Ricks jaunaren etxera deitu
zuan Mat Peasley-ren galdezka. Bereala etorri zitzaion ka-
pitana eta maitakiro entzun zituan Peck-ek edestu zizkan
ibilli neketsuak.

–Bill, ori gizonari egin lezaiokeen isekarik aundiena da. Ezin liteke gizona orrelako mandatueta biala! Entzun nik esaten dizudana; etzazu jaramonik egin.

–Ezin nezake. Ricks jauna asarretuko litzaidake, eta, eskuiko besoa moztu bearren arkituko banaiz ere, Ricks jaunarekin adiskide izan nai det.

–Txarroa eramateko beranduegi dezu ordea gañera orain! Ricks jauna zortzietan atera da, eta orain bederatzi eta erdiak dira.

–Badakit, baña txarroaren jabe egiten banaiz, Santa Barbarara iritxi baño len emango diot.

–Nola?

–Egazkin-zale dan lagun bat badet eta arek eramango nau bere egazkiñarekin Santa Barbararaño.

–Zu erotu egin zera!

–Badakit, baña eman zaizkidatzu bi milla dollar.

–Zertarako?

–Txarroa erosteko.

–Eroa edo txoraa... bietako bat ziurki, biak batera ezpada ere. Ricks jauna ez bi milla dollarrengatik, baña berreunengatik ere ilko litzake, gizona!

–Peasley kapitana, emango al dizkidatzu bi milla dollar?

–Ez, adiskide, ez. Zuaz etxera eta lo egin zazu.

–Mesedez! Zu guziak ezagutzen zaituzte eta zuri txekea artuko dizute. Neri ez... Gaur gañera igandea da-eta...

–Igandea! Bai ederki betetzen dituzula zuk erlijioko aginduak –esan eta beste gabe utzi zuan Bill Peck gizararoa.

–Zer? –galdetu zion Herman Yoost-ek urrutizkiña utzi zuanean–. Gau guzian emen egon bear al degu edo?

Buru-makur zegon Bill.

–Entzun! Diamante onak ezagutzen bai al dakizu?

–Nai luke.

–Itxoingo al didazu ni etorri arte?

–Itxoingo dizut.

Errenka nabarmenean, baña al zuan pizkorrena atera zan dendatik. Bai aguro etorri ere erreztun ikusgarri bat eskuetan zuala.

–Zenbat balio du onek?

Astiro aztertu zuan Herman Yoost-ek, eta bi milla eta bosteun dollar inguru balio zituala aitortu zuan.

–Txekearen dirua jaso ezin badezu, ori zuretzat. Ekatzu ordea ageri bat.

Ordu erdi bat geienaz ere zan txarroa kartoi gogor batean bildu eta jatetxe batera joan zanean. Apaldutakoan bere lagunarengana joan zan eta gau erdirako Bill Peck eta txarroa an zijoazen aizeak zear egazkin eder batean.

Ordu eta erdi inguruan edo ibilli ondoren zelai batean tren-bide bazterrean gelditu ziran. Bill Peck jetxi zanerako, egazkiña San Franziskoko bidea arturik zan berriro. Trenbidean exerita zegoelarik, trenaren txistua entzun zuan, eta zer egingo eta izperringi bat ederki bildu eta sutu ondoren trenbide erdian jarri zan trena geldi arazteko asmoz. Berearekin atera zan gañera. Antxe gelditu zan beintzat trena.

–Zergatik gelditu arazi dezu trena? Billeterik bai al dezu?

–Billeterik ez, baña dirua bai bear dana ordaintzeko. Gizon baten billa nabil eta berarengana joaten utzi nai ez-padidazu bertan ilko zaitut.

–Beso-motza zaralako barkatzen dizkizut arrokeri oiek, bestela... Zuk nai dezun jaun ori zarra, txikia, bizar zuriakiko bat al da?

–Bai jauna, orixe bera.

–San Franziskotik atera baño len zure galdezka zan. Eskuiko besopean zerbait zeramakin beso-motzik ikusi al detan galdezka zitzaidan beintzat. Guazen, esango dizut nun dagon.

Atea eun aldiz jo ezpazuten etzuten bein bakarrik ere jo. Alako batean an datorkie Cappy Ricks oeko alkandorra luzea soñean duala.

–Barkatu, Richs jauna, baña ainbeste Cohen, Cohn eta Cohan ziran eta ain da zalla bi milla dollar berealako batean billatzen, trena ateratzerako geltokira joaterik ez det izan... Nai ordurako ezin ekarri izan dizut, baña zuk neregatik atsekaberik txikiena izatea ere ez nuen nai... Ona emen txarroa! Denda etzegon zuk esan didazun lekuan, baña auxe da noski zuk nai zenun txarroa. Ala izan bear. Asko balio du eta milla eragozpen arkitu ditut nere bidean; opari ederra daramazu beraz.

Cappy-k arrituta begiratzen zion aurrez aurre zeukan Bill Peck gazteari.

–Jesus, Jesus! Jesus milla bider! Zuzenbidea oker eman dizugu, ainbeste Cohen artean bear zana billatuazi dizugu, dendako leiarra autsi etzenezan txinel bat biali degu, iñor ezagutzen etzenuan tokian bi milla dollar arki-

tu erazi dizkitzugu, eta, eragozpen oiek guziaz gañera, trenak iges egin arren, ona nun ikusten zaitudan goizeko ordubietan zere txarro eta guzi! Atoz, atoz barrura.

Pozik sartu zan Bill Peck. Bai laster exeri ere.

–Beraz, iseka egin dirazute? Beraz, nere bizkar parra egin dezute?

Asarrez esan zituan aurreko itz oiek.

–Ederki, jauna: zarra zera eta... oso ona izan zera netetzako, ez dizut ezertxo ere esan nai. Baña, Ricks jauna, gerra aurretik errexa zitzaidana gaur zailla zait. Ixtarrean min det, min ezkerreko besoan, min biotzean...

Bill Peck-en begiak malkoz busti ziran.

–Etzenidake orrelakorik egin bear, Ricks jauna. Neri gaizki iruditu arren, agintzen zaitena betetzen dakit; beti egiten det agintzen zaitena: goiz edo berandu, bete beintzat. Nere nagusiai bear zaien menpetasuna gordetzen dakit..., eta pena izugarria ematen dit nere nagusiak zuk egin didazuna egiteak... Egur txar oiek saltzeko beste bat billatu zenezake ba... Skinner txatxu ori edo. Eta gañera esan zenezaioke urrena ikusten detan tokin ikusten detala, ezurrik gabe utziko detala...

Maitakiro jarri zuan Cappy-k bere eskua Bill Peck-en buruan.

–Bill adiskide maitea, arrazoi dezu, gogortxo jokatu degu zurekin. Orra, ordea, zergatik dan. Garrantzi aundiko leku baterako nai ziñuket zu. Biali baño len, zure leialtasunaren berri jakin nai, ordea. Orregatik egin erazi dizut txarro urdiñakiko prueba ori. Garaile! zera. Bi milla dollarreko txarroa ekarri dezu zure ustez, baña ez da ori zuk ekarri dezuna, urteko amar milla dollar irabazteko eskubidea baizik. Shanghaira joan bear dezu emendik, an de-

gun gure etxeko zuzendari izatera. Garrantzi aundiko lekura bialtzeko gizon bat aukeratu bear detanean, txarro urdiñakiko prueba ori egiteko oitura det. Orain artekoan amabostetatik bik bakarrik ekarri didazute txarro urdin au.

Aguro joan zitzaizkan asarreak Bill Peck-eri, artean bere begiak malkoz bustiak agertzen baziran ere.

–Eskerrik asko, jauna. Barkatu... eta Shanghain alegiñean saiatuko naiz.

–Badakit, Bill. Esan zaidazu egia, ez al dezu etsi eta guzia zegon bezala uzteko asmorik artu?

–Bai jauna. C... o... h... e... n guziaz deitutakoan ez bear bat egin ez detanean ez da ezer. Eta C... o... h...n guziaz deitutakoan! Baña etzegon asitako lana uzterik. Gerratean ezagutu nuen gizon bati leialtasun geiago zor nion eta berriro...

–Zeñi?

–Gure gudalburuari! Ura zan lekuan ikurritz bat gennun: “Egingo da!”. Bere buruzagiak zerbait agintzen ziotenean, aren erantzuna jakiña izaten zan: “Ederki, jauna: egingo da!”. Menpekoren batek ezpai txikiren bat jartzen bazion zorrotz-zorrotz begiratuko zion, eta menpekoa, ikurritza gogoratuaz, itzik esan gabe juango zan agindua betetzera edo betetzearren iltzera. Sarjentoak zerbait agindutakoan, agindurik gogorrena izanda ere, par-irria egiñaz alai-alai “Ederki, jauna: egingo da!” esaten ez bagenun, Jainkoak guarda! Bazan gure etsaien artean lagun asko iltzen zizkigun gudari bat. Gudalburuak uraxe iltze-ko agindua eman zidan neregatik oso ondo itz-egin zioten batzuei eskerrak. Beregana joan nintzanean mapa bat aterra eta esan zidan: “Ara, Peck, inguru auetan dabil bereak eta bi egiten eta garbitu zazu”. Bear zan begirapenaz esan

nion: “Jauna: egingo da!”. Etzait sekula aztuko arek ga-xoetxean nengoa tokira ikertzera joan zitzaidanean egin zidan begiratu goxoa. Zauritua nengon eta ez nuen bizitarako nintzanik ere uste, eta auxe esan zidan: “Gizona, etzaude iltzeko eta askoz gutxiagorik ere. Gudaritzatik at asko egin zenezake”. Nik ezetz noski erantzun niolako, “Peck gudariak al duan guzia egingo du osasunera biur-tzeko eta ezaugarritzat orain bertan par egingo du” esan etziran ba. Irri-parra egin nun eta betiko erantzun ura eman bear izan nion: “Jauna egingo da!”. Gizona zan gure gualburua...

–Nola izena zuan zure gualburuak?

Bill Peck-ek gualburuaren izena esan zuan.

–Arraie, arraiea! Gauzak nola izaten diran! Orain ogeita bost urte gualburu orrek nere etxean lan egin nai zuan, eta txarro urdiñakiko prueba egin nuan berarekin ere. Eta, bestela ezin zualako, txarroa artzearren leiarra autsi zuan eta iru kilometro bidean edo berarekin ibili ba-zuan ere, azkenean txinelak kendu zioten. Aien atzaparretatik askatzea zenbat kosta zitzaidalako gero. Gizon one-gia zalako aske utzi nuan... bere bidean jarrai zezala. Eta oraintxe ikusten det agindutakoa betetzen ederki dakila. Baña, Bill, nun arkitu dituzu txarroa erosteko bear zeni-tun bi milla dollarrak?

–Gerran genbiltzala etsaien esietan sartu giñan batean erreztun ederrakiko beatz moztutako bat arkitu nuan. Ondo jokatu nuala-eta, erreztun ura neretzat eman zida-ten nik artzen ez banuan beste norbaitentzan izango zala esanaz.

–Baña nere izenean orrenbeste diru gastatzen nola ausartu zera? Ez al zendun neri garesti zala irudituko zi-tzaidan bildurrik?

–Iñolaz ere! Zure langilleen erantzunbearrak zure gain baizik ez ditezke. Ezagutzen zaitut gañera. Zuk esan zenidan zer egin bear nun, baña ez nola egin bear nun. Gudalburuak soldadu ura iltzeko agindu zidanean nik ez nuan pentsatzen ere ni ilko niñutenik. Arek iltzeko esan zidan eta bideak neronek arkitu bear. Etsaien eskuetan erori banitz, ez neukan agindua betetzerik.

–Alaxe da. Nolanai dala ere, txarro ori nai dezunari eman zenezaioke. Lendik ere nerea baizan. Amabost zentabo baizik ez ditu balio zuri bi milla dollar eskatu badizkizute ere. Eta lo egizu lasai, nekatua zaude-eta.

–Ez al dezu, ordea, Santa Barbarako ezkon-urteurrenera joan bear?

–Ez. Aspalditik igarria nago golf jokua onuragarria zaitela, eta noizik-beinka oneraxe etortzen naiz astetxo bat igarotzera. Gañera norbait prueban jartzen detanean, zer gerta ere idazkولاتik urrutiratu egiten naiz... Ze jolas mota da zure gogokoena, Bill? A! Izan ere! Barkatu... Beso-motza ziñanik gogoratu gabe esan dizut.

–Aizu, adiskide. Golfean esku bakarrarekin jokatzeko diña banaiz noski.

–Baña, pruebarik egin al dezu?

–Ez jauna, egingo da!, ordea.

THE GO-GETTER

A Story That Tells You How to Be One

By Peter B. Kyne

This little book is dedicated to the memory of my dead chief, Brigadier-General Leroy S. Lyon, sometime commander of the 65th Field Artillery Brigade, 40th Division, United States Army.

He practiced and preached a religion of loyalty to the country and the appointed task, whatever it might be.

I

Mr. Alden P. Ricks, known in Pacific Coast wholesale lumber and shipping circles as Cappy Ricks, had more troubles than a hen with ducklings. He remarked as much to Mr. Skinner, president and general manager of the Ricks Logging & Lumbering Company, the corporate entity which represented Cappy's vast lumber interests; and he fairly barked the information at Captain Matt Peasley, his son-in-law and also president and manager of the Blue Star Navigation Company, another corporate entity which represented the Ricks interest in the American mercantile marine.

Mr. Skinner received this information in silence. He was not related to Cappy Ricks. But Matt Peasley sat down, crossed his legs and matched glares with his mercurial father-in-law.

"*You* have troubles!" he jeered, with emphasis on the pronoun. "Have you got a misery in your back, or is Herbert Hoover the wrong man for Secretary of Commerce?"

"Stow your sarcasm, young feller," Cappy shrilled. "You know dad-blamed well it isn't a question of health or politics. It's the fact that in my old age I find myself totally surrounded by the choicest aggregation of mental duds since Ajax defied the lightning."

"Meaning whom?"

"You and Skinner."

"Why, what have we done?"

"You argued me into taking on the management of twenty-five of those infernal Shipping Board freighters, and no sooner do we have them allocated to us than a near panic hits the coun-

try, freight rates go to glory, marine engineers go on strike and every infernal young whelp we send out to take charge of one of our offices in the Orient promptly gets the swelled head and thinks he's divinely ordained to drink up all the synthetic Scotch whiskey manufactured in Japan for the benefit of thirsty Americans. In my old age you two have forced us into the position of having to fire folks by cable. Why? Because we're breaking into a game that can't be played on the home grounds. A lot of our business is so far away we can't control it."

Matt Peasley leveled an accusing finger at Cappy Ricks. "We never argued you into taking over the management of those Shipping Board boats. We argued me into it. I'm the goat. You have nothing to do with it. You retired ten years ago. All the troubles in the marine end of this shop belong on my capable shoulders, old settler."

"Theoretically—yes. Actually—no. I hope you do not expect me to abandon mental as well as physical effort. Great Wampus Cats! Am I to be denied a sentimental interest in matters where I have a controlling financial interest? I admit you two boys are running my affairs and ordinarily you run them rather well, but—but—ahem! Harumph-h-h! What's the matter with you, Matt? And you, also, Skinner? If Matt makes a mistake, it's your job to remind him of it before the results manifest themselves, is it not? And vice versa. Have you two boobs lost your ability to judge men or did you ever have such ability?"

"You're referring to Henderson, of the Shanghai office, I dare say," Mr. Skinner cut in.

"I am, Skinner. And I'm here to remind you that if we'd stuck to our own game, which is coast-wise shipping, and had left the trans-Pacific field with its general cargoes to others, we wouldn't have any Shanghai office at this moment and we would not be pestered by the Hendersons of this world."

"He's the best lumber salesman we've ever had," Mr. Skinner defended. "I had every hope that he would send us orders for many a cargo for Asiatic delivery."

"And he had gone through every job in this office, from office boy to sales manager in the lumber department and from freight clerk to passenger agent in the navigation company," Matt Peasley supplemented.

"I admit all of that. But did you consult me when you decided to send him out to China on his own?"

"Of course not. I'm boss of the Blue Star Navigation Company, am I not? The man was in charge of the Shanghai office before you ever opened your mouth to discharge your cargo of free advice."

"I told you then that Henderson wouldn't make good, didn't I?"

"You did."

"And now I have an opportunity to tell you the little tale you didn't give me an opportunity to tell you before you sent him out. Henderson *was* a good man—a crackerjack man—when he had a better man over him. But—I've been twenty years reducing a tendency on the part of that fellow's head to bust his hat-band. And now he's gone south with a hundred and thirty thousand taels of our Shanghai bank account."

"Permit me to remind you, Mr. Ricks," Mr. Skinner cut in coldly, "that he was bonded to the extent of a quarter of a million dollars."

"Not a peep out of you, Skinner. Not a peep. Permit me to remind *you* that I'm the little genius who placed that insurance unknown to you and Matt. And I recall now that I was reminded by you, Matthew, my son, that I had retired ten years ago and please, would I quit interfering in the internal administration of your office."

"Well, I must admit your far-sightedness in that instance will keep the Shanghai office out of the red ink this year," Matt Peasley replied. "However, we face this situation, Cappy. Henderson has drunk and gambled and signed chits in excess of his salary. He hasn't attended to business and he's capped his inef-

ficiency by absconding with our bank account. We couldn't foresee that. When we send a man out to the Orient to be our manager there, we have to trust him all the way or not at all. So there is no use weeping over spilled milk, Cappy. Our job is to select a successor to Henderson and send him out to Shanghai on the next boat."

"Oh, very well, Matt," Cappy replied magnanimously, "I'll not rub it into you. I suppose I'm far from generous, bawling you out like this. Perhaps, when you're my age and have a lot of mental and moral cripples nip you and draw blood as often as they've drawn it on me you'll be a better judge than I of men worthy of the weight of responsibility. Skinner, have you got a candidate for this job?"

"I regret to say, sir, I have not. All of the men in my department are quite young—too young for the responsibility."

"What do you mean—young?" Cappy blazed.

"Well, the only man I would consider for the job is Andrews and he is too young—about thirty, I should say."

"About thirty, eh? Strikes me you were about twenty-eight when I threw ten thousand a year at you in actual cash, and a couple of million dollars' worth of responsibility."

"Yes sir, but then Andrews has never been tested—"

"Skinner," Cappy interrupted in his most awful voice, "it's a constant source of amazement to me why I refrain from firing you. You say Andrews has never been tested. Why hasn't he been tested? Why are we maintaining untested material in this shop, anyhow? Eh? Answer me that. Tut, tut, tut! Not a peep out of you, sir. If you had done your Christian duty, you would have taken a year's vacation when lumber was selling itself in 1919 and 1920, and you would have left Andrews sitting in at your desk to see the sort of stuff he's made of."

"It's a mighty lucky thing I didn't go away for a year," Skinner protested respectfully, "because the market broke—like

that—and if you don't think we have to hustle to sell sufficient lumber to keep our own ships busy freighting it—”

“Skinner, how dare you contradict me? How old was Matt Peasley when I turned over the Blue Star Navigation Company to him, lock, stock and barrel? Why, he wasn't twenty-six years old. Skinner, you're a dodo! The killjoys like you who have straddled the neck of industry and throttled it with absurd theories that a man's back must be bent like an ox-bow and his locks snowy white before he can be entrusted with responsibility and a living wage, have caused all of our wars and strikes. This is a young man's world, Skinner, and don't you ever forget it. The go-getters of this world are under thirty years of age. Matt,” he concluded, turning to his son-in-law, “what do you think of Andrews for that Shanghai job?”

“I think he'll do.”

“Why do you think he'll do?”

“Because he ought to do. He's been with us long enough to have acquired sufficient experience to enable him—”

“Has he acquired the courage to tackle the job, Matt?” Cappy interrupted. “That's more important than this doggoned experience you and Skinner prate so much about.”

“I know nothing of his courage. I assume that he has force and initiative. I know he has a pleasing personality.”

“Well, before we send him out we ought to know whether or no he has force and initiative.”

“Then,” quoth Matt Peasley, rising, “I wash my hands of the job of selecting Henderson's successor. You've butted in, so I suggest you name the lucky man.”

“Yes, indeed,” Skinner agreed. “I'm sure it's quite beyond my poor abilities to uncover Andrews' force and initiative on such notice. He does possess sufficient force and initiative for his present job, but—”

“But will he possess force and initiative when he has to make a quick decision six thousand miles from expert advice, and

stand or fall by that decision? That's what we want to know, Skinner."

"I suggest, sir," Mr. Skinner replied with chill politeness, "that you conduct the examination."

"I accept the nomination, Skinner. By the Holy Pink-toed Prophet! The next man we send out to that Shanghai office is going to be a go-getter. We've had three managers go rotten on us and that's three too many."

And without further ado, Cappy swung his aged legs up on to his desk and slid down in his swivel chair until he rested on his spine. His head sank on his breast and he closed his eyes.

"He's framing the examination for Andrews," Matt Peasley whispered, as he and Skinner made their exits.

II

The President emeritus of the Ricks' interests was not destined to uninterrupted cogitation, however. Within ten minutes his private exchange operator called him to the telephone.

"What is it?" Cappy yelled into the transmitter.

"There is a young man in the general office. His name is Mr. William E. Peck and he desires to see you personally."

Cappy sighed. "Very well," he replied. "Have him shown in."

Almost immediately the office boy ushered Mr. Peck into Cappy's presence. The moment he was fairly inside the door the visitor halted, came easily and naturally to "attention" and bowed respectfully, while the cool glance of his keen blue eyes held steadily the autocrat of the Blue Star Navigation Company.

"Mr. Ricks, Peck is my name, sir—William E. Peck. Thank you, sir, for acceding to my request for an interview."

"Ahem! Hum-m-m!" Cappy looked belligerent. "Sit down, Mr. Peck."

Mr. Peck sat down, but as he crossed to the chair beside Cappy's desk, the old gentleman noticed that his visitor walked with a slight limp, and that his left forearm had been amputated half way to the elbow. To the observant Cappy, the American Legion button in Mr. Peck's lapel told the story.

"Well, Mr. Peck," he queried gently, "what can I do for you?"

"I've called for my job," the veteran replied briefly.

“By the Holy Pink-toed Prophet!” Cappy ejaculated, “you say that like a man who doesn’t expect to be refused.”

“Quite right, sir. I do not anticipate a refusal.”

“Why?”

Mr. William E. Peck’s engaging but somewhat plain features rippled into the most compelling smile Cappy Ricks had ever seen. “I am a salesman, Mr. Ricks,” he replied. “I know that statement to be true because I have demonstrated, over a period of five years, that I can sell my share of anything that has a hockable value. I have always found, however, that before proceeding to sell goods I had to sell the manufacturer of those goods something, to-wit—myself! I am about to sell myself to you.”

“Son,” said Cappy smilingly, “you win. You’ve sold me already. When did they sell you a membership in the military forces of the United States of America?”

“On the morning of April 7th, 1917, sir.”

“That clinches our sale. I soldiered with the Knights of Columbus at Camp Keamy myself, but when they refused to let me go abroad with my division my heart was broken, so I went over the hill.”

That little touch of the language of the line appeared to warm Mr. Peck’s heart considerably, establishing at once a free masonry between them.

“I was with the Portland Lumber Company, selling lumber in the Middle West before the war,” he explained. “Uncle Sam gave me my sheepskin at Letter-man General Hospital last week, with half disability on my ten thousand dollars’ worth of government insurance. Whittling my wing was a mere trifle, but my broken leg was a long time mending, and now it’s shorter than it really ought to be. And I developed pneumonia with influenza and they found some T.B. indications after that. I’ve been at the government tuberculosis hospital at Fort Bayard,

New Mexico, for a year. However, what's left of me is certified to be sound. I've got five inches chest expansion and I feel fine."

"Not at all blue or discouraged?" Cappy hazarded.

"Oh, I got off easy, Mr. Ricks. I have my head left—and my right arm. I can think and I can write, and even if one of my wheels is flat, I can hike longer and faster after an order than most. Got a job for me, Mr. Ricks?"

"No, I haven't, Mr. Peck. I'm out of it, you know. Retired ten years ago. This office is merely a headquarters for social frivolity—a place to get my mail and mill over the gossip of the street. Our Mr. Skinner is the chap you should see."

"I have seen Mr. Skinner, sir," the erstwhile warrior replied, "but he wasn't very sympathetic. I think he jumped to the conclusion that I was attempting to trade him my empty sleeve. He informed me that there wasn't sufficient business to keep his present staff of salesmen busy, so then I told him I'd take anything, from stenographer up. I'm the champion one-handed typist of the United States Army. I can tally lumber and bill it. I can keep books and answer the telephone."

"No encouragement, eh?"

"No, sir."

"Well, now, son," Cappy informed his cheerful visitor confidentially, "you take my tip and see my son-in-law, Captain Peasley. He's high, low and jack-in-the-game in the shipping end of our business."

"I have also interviewed Captain Peasley. He was very kind. He said he felt that he owed me a job, but business is so bad he couldn't make a place for me. He told me he is now carrying a dozen ex-service men merely because he hasn't the heart to let them go. I believe him."

"Well, my dear boy—my dear young friend! Why do you come to me?"

"Because," Mr. Peck replied smilingly, "I want you to go over their heads and give me a job. I don't care a hoot what it

is, provided I can do it. If I can do it, I'll do it better than it was ever done before, and if I can't do that I'll quit to save you the embarrassment of firing me. I'm not an object of charity, but I'm scarcely the man I used to be and I'm four years behind the procession and have to catch up. I have the best of references—"

"I see you have," Cappy cut in blandly, and pressed the push-button on his desk. Mr. Skinner entered. He glanced disapprovingly at William E. Peck and then turned inquiring eyes toward Cappy Ricks.

"Skinner, dear boy," Cappy purred amiably, "I've been thinking over the proposition to send Andrews out to the Shanghai office, and I've come to this conclusion. We'll have to take a chance. At the present time that office is in charge of a stenographer, and we've got to get a manager on the job without further loss of time. So I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll send Andrews out on the next boat, but inform him that his position is temporary. Then if he doesn't make good out there we can take him back into this office, where he is a most valuable man. Meanwhile—ahem! hum-m-m! Harumph!—meanwhile, you'd oblige me greatly, Skinner, my dear boy, if you would consent to take this young man into your office and give him a good workout to see the stuff he's made of. As a favor to me, Skinner, my dear boy, as a favor to me."

Mr. Skinner, in the language of the sporting world, was down for the count—and knew it. Young Mr. Peck knew it too, and smiled graciously upon the general manager, for young Mr. Peck had been in the army, where one of the first great lessons to be assimilated is this: that the commanding general's request is always tantamount to an order.

"Very well, sir," Mr. Skinner replied coldly. "Have you arranged the compensation to be given Mr. Peck?"

Cappy threw up a deprecating hand. "That detail is entirely up to you, Skinner. Far be it from me to interfere in the internal administration of your department. Naturally you will pay Mr. Peck what he is worth and not a cent more." He turned to the

triumphant Peck. "Now, you listen to me, young feller. If you think you're slipping gracefully into a good thing, disabuse your mind of that impression right now. You'll step right up to the plate, my son, and you'll hit the ball fairly on the nose, and you'll do it early and often. The first time you tip a foul, you'll be warned. The second time you do it you'll get a month's lay-off to think it over, and the third time you'll be out—for keeps. Do I make myself clear?"

"You do, sir," Mr. Peck declared happily. "All I ask is fighting room and I'll hack my way into Mr. Skinner's heart. Thank you, Mr. Skinner, for consenting to take me on. I appreciate your action very, very much and shall endeavor to be worthy of your confidence."

"Young scoundrel! In-fer-nal young scoundrel!" Cappy murmured to himself. "He has a sense of humor, thank God! Ah, poor old narrow-gauge Skinner! If that fellow ever gets a new or unconventional thought in his stodgy head, it'll kill him overnight. He's hopping mad right now, because he can't say a word in his own defense, but if he doesn't make he'll look like a summer holiday for Mr. Bill Peck, I'm due to be mercifully chloroformed. Good Lord, how empty life would be if I couldn't butt in and raise a little riot every once in so often."

Young Mr. Peck had risen and was standing at attention. "When do I report for duty, sir?" he queried of Mr. Skinner.

"Whenever you're ready," Skinner retorted with a wintry smile. Mr. Peck glanced at a cheap wrist watch. "It's twelve o'clock now," he soliloquized aloud. "I'll pop out, wrap myself around some rations and report on the job at one P.M. I might just as well knock out half a day's pay." He glanced at Cappy Ricks and quoted:

"Count that day lost whose low descending sun
Finds prices shot to glory and business done for fun."

Unable to maintain his composure in the face of such levity during office hours, Mr. Skinner withdrew, still wrapped in his

sub-Antarctic dignity. As the door closed behind him, Mr. Peck's eyebrows went up in a manner indicative of apprehension.

"I'm off to a bad start, Mr. Ricks," he opined.

"You only asked for a start," Cappy piped back at him. "I didn't guarantee you a *good* start, and I wouldn't because I can't. I can only drive Skinner and Matt Peasley so far—and no farther. There's always a point at which I quit—er—ah—William."

"More familiarly known as Bill Peck, sir."

"Very well, Bill." Cappy slid out to the edge of his chair and peered at Bill Peck balefully over the top of his spectacles. "I'll have my eye on you, young feller," he shrilled. "I freely acknowledge our indebtedness to you, but the day you get the notion in your head that this office is an old soldiers' home—" He paused thoughtfully. "I wonder what Skinner *will* pay you?" he mused. "Oh, well," he continued, whatever it is, take it and say nothing and when the moment is propitious—and provided you've earned it—I'll intercede with the danged old relic and get you a raise."

"Thank you very much, sir. You are most kind. Good-day, sir."

And Bill Peck picked up his hat and limped out of The Presence. Scarcely had the door closed behind him than Mr. Skinner re-entered Cappy Ricks' lair. He opened his mouth to speak, but Cappy silenced him with an imperious finger.

"Not a peep out of you, Skinner, my dear boy," he chirped amiably. "I know exactly what you're going to say and I admit your right to say it, but—as—ahem! Harumph-h-h!—now, Skinner, listen to reason. How the devil could you have the heart to reject that crippled ex-soldier? There he stood, on one sound leg, with his sleeve tucked into his coat pocket and on his homely face the grin of an unwhipped, unbeatable man. But you—blast your cold, unfeeling soul, Skinner!—looked him in

the eye and turned him down like a drunkard turns down near-beer. Skinner, how *could* you do it?"

Undaunted by Cappy's admonitory finger, Mr. Skinner struck a distinctly defiant attitude.

"There is no sentiment in business," he replied angrily. "A week ago last Thursday the local posts of the American Legion commenced their organized drive for jobs for their crippled and unemployed comrades, and within three days you've sawed off two hundred and nine such jobs on the various corporations that you control. The gang you shipped up to the mill in Washington has already applied for a charter for a new post to be known as Cappy Ricks Post No. 534. And you had experienced men discharged to make room for these ex-soldiers."

"You bet I did," Cappy yelled triumphantly. "It's always Old Home Week in every logging camp and saw-mill in the Northwest for I.W.W.'s and revolutionary communists. I'm sick of their unauthorized strikes and sabotage, and by the Holy Pink-Toed Prophet, Cappy Ricks Post. No. 534, American Legion, is the only sort of back-fire I can think of to put the Wobblies on the run."

"Every office and ship and retail yard could be run by a first-sergeant," Skinner complained. "I'm thinking of having reveille and retreat and bugle calls and Saturday morning inspections. I tell you, sir, the Ricks interests have absorbed all the old soldiers possible and at the present moment those interests are overflowing with glory. What we want are workers, not talkers. These ex-soldiers spend too much time fighting their battles over again."

"Well, Comrade Peck is the last one I'll ask you to absorb, Skinner," Cappy promised contritely. "Ever read Kipling's Barrack Room Ballads, Skinner?"

"I have no time to read," Mr. Skinner protested.

“Go up town this minute and buy a copy and read one ballad entitled ‘Tommy,’” Cappy barked. “For the good of your immortal soul,” he added.

“Well, Comrade Peck doesn’t make a hit with me, Mr. Ricks. He applied to me for a job and I gave him his answer. Then he went to Captain Matt and was refused, so, just to demonstrate his bad taste, he went over our heads and induced you to pitchfork him into a job. He’ll curse the day he was inspired to do that.”

“Skinner! Skinner! Look me in the eye! Do you know why I asked you to take on Bill Peck?”

“I do. Because you’re too tender-hearted for your own good.”

“You unimaginative dunderhead! You jibbering jackdaw! How could I reject a boy who simply would not be rejected? Why, I’ll bet a ripe peach that Bill Peck was one of the doggondest finest soldiers you ever saw. He carries his objective. He sized you up just like that, Skinner. He declined to permit you to block him. Skinner, that Peck person has been opposed by experts. Yes, sir—experts! What kind of a job are you going to give him, Skinner, my dear boy?”

“Andrews’ job, of course.”

“Oh, yes, I forgot. Skinner, dear boy, haven’t we got about half a million feet of skunk spruce to saw off on somebody?” Mr. Skinner nodded and Cappy continued with all the naïve eagerness of one who has just made a marvelous discovery, which he is confident will revolutionize science. “Give him that stinking stuff to peddle, Skinner, and if you can dig up a couple of dozen carloads of red fir or bull pine in transit, or some short or odd-length stock, or some larch ceiling or flooring, or some hemlock random stock—in fact, anything the trade doesn’t want as a gift—you get me, don’t you, Skinner?”

Mr. Skinner smiled his swordfish smile. “And if he fails to make good—*au revoir*, eh?”

“Yes, I suppose so, although I hate to think about it. On the other hand, if he makes good he’s to have Andrews’ salary. We must be fair, Skinner. Whatever our faults we must always be fair.” He rose and patted the general manager’s lean shoulder. “There, there, Skinner, my boy. Forgive me if I’ve been a trifle—ah—ahem!—precipitate and—er—harumph-h-h! Skinner, if you put a prohibitive price on that skunk fir, by the Holy Pink-toed Prophet, I’ll fire you! Be fair, boy, be fair. No dirty work, Skinner. Remember, Comrade Peck has half of his left forearm buried in France.”

III

At twelve-thirty, as Cappy was hurrying up California Street to luncheon at the Commercial Club, he met Bill Peck limping down the sidewalk. The ex-soldier stopped him and handed him a card.

“What do you think of that, sir?” he queried. “Isn’t it a neat business card?”

Cappy read:

RICKS LUMBER & LOGGING COMPANY

Lumber and its products

248 California St.
San Francisco.

Represented by
William E. Peck

If you can drive nails in it—we have it!

Cappy Ricks ran a speculative thumb over Comrade Peck’s business card. It was engraved. And copper plates or steel dies are not made in half an hour!

“By the Twelve Ragged Apostles!” This was Cappy’s most terrible oath and he never employed it unless rocked to his very foundations. “Bill, as one bandit to another—come clean. When did you first make up your mind to go to work for us?”

“A week ago,” Comrade Peck replied blandly.

“And what was your grade when Kaiser Bill went A.W.O.L.?”

"I was a buck."

"I don't believe you. Didn't anybody ever offer you something better?"

"Frequently. However, if I had accepted I would have had to resign the nicest job I ever had. There wasn't much money in it, but it was filled with excitement and interesting experiments. I used to disguise myself as a Christmas tree or a box car and pick off German sharp-shooters. I was known as Peck's Bad Boy. I was often tempted to quit, but whenever I'd reflect on the number of American lives I was saving daily, a commission was just a scrap of paper to me."

"If you'd ever started in any other branch of the service you'd have run John J. Pershing down to lance corporal. Bill, listen! Have you ever had any experience selling skunk spruce?"

Comrade Peck was plainly puzzled. He shook his head. "What sort of stock is it?" he asked.

"Humboldt County, California, spruce, and it's coarse and stringy and wet and heavy and smells just like a skunk directly after using. I'm afraid Skinner's going to start you at the bottom—and skunk spruce is it.

"Can you drive nails in it, Mr. Ricks?"

"Oh, yes."

"Does anybody ever buy skunk spruce, sir?"

"Oh, occasionally one of our bright young men digs up a half-wit who's willing to try anything once. Otherwise, of course, we would not continue to manufacture it. Fortunately, Bill, we have very little of it, but whenever our woods boss runs across a good tree he hasn't the heart to leave it standing, and as a result, we always have enough skunk spruce on hand to keep our salesmen humble."

"I can sell anything—at a price," Comrade Peck replied unconcernedly, and continued on his way back to the office.

IV

For two months Cappy Ricks saw nothing of Bill Peck. That enterprising veteran had been sent out into the Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas territory the moment he had familiarized himself with the numerous details regarding freight rates, weights and the mills he represented, all things which a salesman should be familiar with before he starts out on the road. From Salt Lake City he wired an order for two carloads of larch rustic and in Ogden he managed to inveigle a retail yard with which Mr. Skinner had been trying to do business for years, into sampling a carload of skunk spruce boards, random lengths and grades, at a dollar above the price given him by Skinner. In Arizona he worked up some new business in mining timbers, but it was not until he got into the heart of Texas that Comrade Peck really commenced to demonstrate his selling ability. Standard oil derricks were his specialty and he shot the orders in so fast that Mr. Skinner was forced to wire him for mercy and instruct him to devote his talent to the disposal of cedar shingles and siding, Douglas fir and redwood. Eventually he completed his circle and worked his way home, via Los Angeles, pausing however, in the San Joaquin Valley to sell two more carloads of skunk spruce. When this order was wired in, Mr. Skinner came to Cappy Ricks with the telegram.

“Well, I must admit Comrade Peck can sell lumber,” he announced grudgingly. “He has secured five new accounts and here is an order for two more carloads of skunk spruce. I’ll have to raise his salary about the first of the year.

“My dear Skinner, why the devil wait until the first of the year? Your pernicious habit of deferring the inevitable parting with money has cost us the services of more than one good man.

You know you have to raise Comrade Peck's salary sooner or later, so why not do it now and smile like a dentifrice advertisement while you're doing it? Comrade Peck will feel a whole lot better as a result, and who knows? He may conclude you're a human being, after all, and learn to love you?"

"Very well, sir. I'll give him the same salary Andrews was getting before Peck took over his territory."

"Skinner, you make it impossible for me to refrain from showing you who's boss around here. He's better than Andrews, isn't he?"

"I think he is, sir."

"Well then, for the love of a square deal, pay him more and pay it to him from the first day he went to work. Get out. You make me nervous. By the way, how is Andrews getting along in his Shanghai job?"

"He's helping the cable company pay its income tax. Cables about three times a week on matters he should decide for himself. Matt Peasley is disgusted with him."

"Ah! Well, I'm not disappointed. And I suppose Matt will be in here before long to remind me that I was the bright boy who picked Andrews for the job. Well, I did, but I call upon you to remember. Skinner, when I'm assailed, that Andrews' appointment was temporary."

"Yes, sir, it was."

"Well, I suppose I'll have to cast about for his successor and beat Matt out of his cheap 'I told you so' triumph. I think Comrade Peck has some of the earmarks of a good manager for our Shanghai office, but I'll have to test him a little further." He looked up humorously at Mr. Skinner. "Skinner, my dear boy," he continued, "I'm going to have him deliver a blue vase."

Mr. Skinner's cold features actually glowed. "Well, tip the chief of police and the proprietor of the store off this time and save yourself some money," he warned Cappy. He walked to the

window and looked down into California Street. He continued to smile.

“Yes,” Cappy continued dreamily, “I think I shall give him the thirty-third degree. You’ll agree with me, Skinner, that if he delivers the blue vase he’ll be worth ten thousand dollars a year as our Oriental manager?”

“I’ll say he will,” Mr. Skinner replied slangily.

“Very well, then. Arrange matters, Skinner, so that he will be available for me at one o’clock, a week from Sunday. I’ll attend to the other details.”

Mr. Skinner nodded. He was still chuckling when he departed for his own office.

V

A week from the succeeding Saturday, Mr. Skinner did not come down to the office, but a telephone message from his home informed the chief clerk that Mr. Skinner was at home and somewhat indisposed. The chief clerk was to advise Mr. Peck that he, Mr. Skinner, had contemplated having a conference with the latter that day, but that his indisposition would prevent this. Mr. Skinner hoped to be feeling much better tomorrow, and since he was very desirous of a conference with Mr. Peck before the latter should depart on his next selling pilgrimage, on Monday, would Mr. Peck be good enough to call at Mr. Skinner's house at one o'clock Sunday afternoon? Mr. Peck sent back word that he would be there at the appointed time and was rewarded with Mr. Skinner's thanks, via the chief clerk.

Promptly at one o'clock the following day, Bill Peck reported at the general manager's house. He found Mr. Skinner in bed, reading the paper and looking surprisingly well. He trusted Mr. Skinner felt better than he looked. Mr. Skinner did, and at once entered into a discussion of the new customers, other prospects he particularly desired Mr. Peck to approach, new business to be investigated, and further details without end. And in the midst of this conference Cappy Riggs telephoned.

A portable telephone stood on a commode beside Mr. Skinner's bed, so the latter answered immediately. Comrade Peck watched Skinner listen attentively for fully two minutes, then heard him say:

"Mr. Ricks, I'm terribly sorry. I'd love to do this errand for you, but really I'm under the weather. In fact, I'm in bed as I speak to you now. But Mr. Peck is here with me and I'm sure hell be very happy to attend to the matter for you."

"By all means," Bill Peck hastened to assure the general manager. "Who does Mr. Ricks want killed and where will he have the body delivered?"

"Hah-hah! Hah-Hah!" Mr. Skinner had a singularly annoying, mirthless laugh, as if he begrudged himself such an unheard-of indulgence. "Mr. Peck says," he informed Cappy, "that he'll be delighted to attend to the matter for you. He wants to know whom you want killed and where you wish the body delivered. Hah-hah! Hah! Peck, Mr. Ricks will speak to you."

Bill Peck took the telephone. "Good afternoon, Mr. Ricks."

"Hello, old soldier. What are you doing this afternoon?"

"Nothing—after I conclude my conference with Mr. Skinner. By the way, he has just given me a most handsome boost in salary, for which I am most appreciative. I feel, however, despite Mr. Skinner's graciousness, that you have put in a kind word for me with him, and I want to thank you—"

"Tut, tut. Not a peep out of you, sir. Not a peep. You get nothing for nothing from Skinner or me. However, in view of the fact that you're feeling kindly toward me this afternoon, I wish you'd do a little errand for me. I can't send a boy and I hate to make a messenger out of you—er—ah—ahem! That is har-umph-h-h—!"

"I have no false pride, Mr. Ricks."

"Thank you, Bill. Glad you feel that way about it. Bill, I was prowling around town this forenoon, after church, and down in a store on Sutter Street, between Stockton and Powell Street, on the right hand side as you face Market Street, I saw a blue vase in a window. I have a weakness for vases, Bill. I'm a sharp on them, too. Now, this vase I saw isn't very expensive as vases go—in fact, I wouldn't buy it for my collection—but one of the finest and sweetest ladies of my acquaintance has the mate to that blue vase I saw in the window, and I know she'd be proud-

er than Punch if she had two of them—one for each side of her drawing room mantel, understand?

“Now, I’m leaving from the Southern Pacific depot at eight o’clock tonight, bound for Santa Barbara to attend her wedding anniversary tomorrow night. I forget what anniversary it is, Bill, but I have been informed by my daughter that I’ll be very much *de trop* if I send her any present other than something in porcelain or China or Cloisonné—well. Bill, this crazy little blue vase just fills the order. Understand?”

“Yes, sir. You feel that it would be most graceful on your part if you could bring this little blue vase down to Santa Barbara with you tonight. You have to have it tonight, because if you wait until the store opens on Monday the vase will reach your hostess twenty-four hours after her anniversary party.”

“Exactly, Bill. Now, I’ve simply got to have that vase. If I had discovered it yesterday I wouldn’t be asking you to get it for me today, Bill.”

“Please do not make any explanations or apologies, Mr. Ricks. You have described the vase—no you haven’t. What sort of blue is it, how tall is it and what is, approximately, its greatest diameter? Does it set on a base, or does it not? Is it a solid blue, or is it figured?”

It’s a Cloisonné vase, Bill—sort of old Dutch blue, or Delft, with some Oriental funny-business on it. I couldn’t describe it exactly, but it has some birds and flowers on it. It’s about a foot tall and four inches in diameter and sets on a teak-wood base.”

“Very well, sir. You shall have it.”

“And you’ll deliver it to me in stateroom A, car 7, aboard the train at Third and Townsend Streets, at seven fifty-five tonight?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Thank you, Bill. The expense will be trifling. Collect it from the cashier in the morning, and tell him to charge it to my account.” And Cappy hung up.

At once Mr. Skinner took up the thread of the interrupted conference, and it was not until three o'clock that Bill Peck left his house and proceeded downtown to locate Cappy Rick's blue vase.

He proceeded to the block in Sutter Street between Stockton and Powell Streets, and although he walked patiently up one side of the street and down the other, not a single vase of any description showed in any shop window, nor could he find a single shop where such a vase as Cappy had described might, perchance, be displayed for sale.

"I think the old boy has erred in the co-ordinates of the target," Bill Peck concluded, "or else I misunderstood him. I'll telephone his house and ask him to repeat them."

He did, but nobody was at home except a Swedish maid, and all she knew was that Mr. Ricks was out and the hour of his return was unknown. So Mr. Peck went back to Sutter Street and scoured once more every shop window in the block. Then he scouted two blocks above Powell and two blocks below Stockton. Still the blue vase remained invisible.

So he transferred his search to a corresponding area on Bush Street, and when that failed, he went painstakingly over four blocks of Post Street. He was still without results when he moved one block further west and one further south and discovered the blue vase in a huge plate-glass window of a shop on Geary Street near Grant Avenue. He surveyed it critically and was convinced that it was the object he sought.

He tried the door, but it was locked, as he had anticipated it would be. So he kicked the door and raised an infernal racket, hoping against hope that the noise might bring a watchman from the rear of the building. In vain. He backed out to the edge of the sidewalk and read the sign over the door:

B. COHEN'S ART SHOP

This was a start, so Mr. Peck limped over to the Palace Hotel and procured a telephone directory. By actual count there were nineteen B. Cohens scattered throughout the city, so before commencing to call the nineteen, Bill Peck borrowed the city directory from the hotel clerk and scanned it for the particular B. Cohen who owned the art shop. His search availed him nothing. B. Cohen was listed as an art dealer at the address where the blue vase reposed in the show window. That was all.

"I suppose he's a commuter," Mr. Peck concluded, and at once proceeded to procure directories of the adjacent cities of Berkeley, Oakland and Alameda. They were not available, so in despair he changed a dollar into five cent pieces, sought a telephone booth and commenced calling up all the B. Cohens in San Francisco. Of the nineteen, four did not answer, three were temporarily disconnected, six replied in Yiddish, five were not the B. Cohen he sought, and one swore he was Irish and that his name was spelled Cohan and pronounced with an accent on both syllables.

The B. Cohens resident in Berkeley, Oakland, Alameda, San Rafael, Sausalito, Mill Valley, San Mateo, Redwood City and Palo Alto were next telephoned to, and when this long and expensive task was done, Ex-Private Bill Peck emerged from the telephone booth wringing wet with perspiration and as irritable as a clucking hen. Once outside the hotel he raised his haggard face to heaven and dumbly queried of the Almighty what He meant by saving him from quick death on the field of honor only to condemn him to be talked to death by B. Cohens in civil life.

It was now six o'clock. Suddenly Peck had an inspiration. Was the name spelled Cohen, Cohan, Cohn, Kohn or Coen?

"If I have to take a Jewish census again tonight I'll die," he told himself desperately, and went back to the art shop.

The sign read: B. COHN'S ART SHOP.

"I wish I knew a bootlegger's joint," poor Peck complained. "I'm pretty far gone and a little wood alcohol couldn't hurt me

much now. Why, I could have sworn that name was spelled with an E. It seems to me I noted that particularly."

He went back to the hotel telephone booth and commenced calling up all the B. Cohns in town. There were eight of them and six of them were out, one was maudlin with liquor and the other was very deaf and shouted unintelligibly.

"Peace hath its barbarities no less than war," Mr. Peck sighed. He changed a twenty-dollar bill into nickles, dimes and quarters, returned to the hot, ill-smelling telephone booth and proceeded to lay down a barrage of telephone calls to the B. Cohns of all towns of any importance contiguous to San Francisco Bay. And he was lucky. On the sixth call he located the particular B. Cohn in San Rafael, only to be informed by Mr. Cohn's cook that Mr. Cohn was dining at the home of a Mr. Simons in Mill Valley.

There were three Mr. Simons in Mill Valley, and Peck called them all before connecting with the right one. Yes, Mr. B. Cohn was there. Who wished to speak to him? Mr. Heck? Oh, Mr. Lake! A silence. Then—Mr. Cohn says he doesn't know any Mr. Lake and wants to know the nature of your business. He is dining and doesn't like to be disturbed unless the matter is of grave importance."

"Tell him Mr. Peck wishes to speak to him on a matter of very great importance," wailed the ex-private.

"Mr. Metz? Mr. Ben Metz?"

"No, no, no. Peck—p-e-c-k."

"D-e-c-k?"

"No, P."

"C?"

"P."

"Oh, yes, E. E-what?"

"C-K—"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Eckstein."

“Call Cohn to the phone or I’ll go over there on the next boat and kill you, you damned idiot,” shrieked Peck. “Tell him his store is on fire.”

That message was evidently delivered for almost instantly Mr. B. Cohn was puffing and spluttering into the phone.

“Iss dot der fire marshal?” he managed to articulate.

“Listen, Mr. Cohn. Your store is not on fire, but I had to say so in order to get you to the telephone. I am Mr. Peck, a total stranger to you. You have a blue vase in your shop window on Geary Street in San Francisco. I want to buy it and I want to buy it before seven forty-five tonight. I want you to come across the bay and open the store and sell me that vase.”

“Such a business! Vot you think I am? Crazy?”

“No, Mr. Cohn, I do not. I’m the only crazy man talking. I’m crazy for that vase and I’ve got to have it right away.”

“You know vot dot vase costs?” Mr. B. Cohn’s voice dripped syrup.

“No, and I don’t give a hoot what it costs. I want what I want when I want it. Do I get it?”

“Ve-ell, lemme see. Vot time iss it?” A silence while B. Cohn evidently looked at his watch. “It iss now a quarter of seven, Mr. Eckstein, und der nexd drain from Mill Valley don’t leaf until eight o’clock. Dot vill get me to San Francisco at eight-fifty—and I am dining mit friends und haf just finished my soup.”

“To hell with your soup. I want that blue vase.”

“Vell, I tell you, Mr. Eckstein, if you got to have it, call up my head salesman, Herman Joost, in der Chilton Apardments—Prospect three—two—four—nine, und tell him I said he should come down right away qvick und sell you dot blue vase. Good-bye, Mr. Eckstein.”

And B. Cohn hung up.

Instantly Peck called Prospect 3249 and asked for Herman Joost. Mr. Joost’s mother answered. She was desolated because

Herman was not at home, but vouchsafed the information that he was dining at the country club. Which country club? She did not know. So Peck procured from the hotel clerk a list of the country clubs in and around San Francisco and started calling them up. At eight o'clock he was still being informed that Mr. Juice was not a member, that Mr. Luce wasn't in, that Mr. Coos had been dead three months and that Mr. Boos had played but eight holes when he received a telegram calling him back to New York. At the other clubs Mr. Joust was unknown.

"Licked," murmured Bill Peck, "but never let it be said that I didn't go down fighting. I'm going to heave a brick through that show window, grab the vase and run with it."

He engaged a taxicab and instructed the driver to wait for him at the corner of Geary and Stockton Streets. Also, he borrowed from the chauffeur a ball peen hammer. When he reached the art shop of B. Cohn, however, a policeman was standing in the doorway, violating the general orders of a policeman on duty by surreptitiously smoking a cigar.

"He'll nab me if I crack that window," the desperate Peck decided, and continued on down the street, crossed to the other side and came back. It was now dark and over the art shop B. Cohn's name burned in small red, white and blue electric lights.

And lo, it was spelled B. Cohen!

Ex-private William E. Peck sat down on a fire hydrant and cursed with rage. His weak leg hurt him, too, and for some damnable reason, the stump of his left arm developed the feeling that his missing hand was itchy.

"The world is filled with idiots," he raved furiously. "I'm tired and I'm hungry. I skipped luncheon and I've been too busy to think of dinner."

He walked back to his taxicab and returned to the hotel where, hope springing eternal in his breast, he called Prospect 3249 again and discovered that the missing Herman Joost had

returned to the bosom of his family. To him the frantic Peck delivered the message of B. Cohn, whereupon the cautious Herman Joost replied that he would confirm the authenticity of the message by telephoning to Mr. Cohn at Mr. Simon's home in Mill Valley. If Mr. B. Cohn or Cohen confirmed Mr. Kek's story he, the said Herman Joost, would be at the store sometime before nine o'clock, and if Mr. Kek cared to, he might await him there.

Mr. Kek said he would be delighted to wait for him there.

At nine-fifteen Herman Joost appeared on the scene. On his way down the street he had taken the precaution to pick up a policeman and bring him along with him. The lights were switched on in the store and Mr. Joost lovingly abstracted the blue vase from the window.

"What's the cursed thing worth?" Peck demanded.

"Two thousand dollars," Mr. Joost replied without so much as the quiver of an eyelash. "Cash," he added, apparently as an afterthought.

The exhausted Peck leaned against the sturdy guardian of the law and sighed. This was the final straw. He had about ten dollars in his possession.

"You refuse, absolutely, to accept my check?" he quavered.

"I don't know you, Mr. Peck," Herman Joost replied simply.

"Where's your telephone?"

Mr. Joost led Peck to the telephone and the latter called up Mr. Skinner.

"Mr. Skinner," he announced, "this is all that is mortal of Bill Peck speaking. I've got the store open and for two thousand dollars—cash—I can buy the blue vase Mr. Ricks has set his heart upon."

"Oh, Peck, dear fellow," Mr. Skinner purred sympathetically. "Have you been all this time on that errand?"

"I have. And I'm going to stick on the job until I deliver the goods. For God's sake let me have two thousand dollars and bring it down to me at B. Cohen's Art Shop on Geary Street near Grant Avenue. I'm too utterly exhausted to go up after it."

"My dear Mr. Peck, I haven't two thousand dollars in my house. That is too great a sum of money to keep on hand."

"Well, then, come downtown, open up the office safe and get the money for me."

"Time lock on the office safe, Peck. Impossible."

"Well then, come downtown and identify me at hotels and cafés and restaurants so I can cash my own check."

"Is your check good, Mr. Peck?"

The flood of invective which had been accumulating in Mr. Peck's system all the afternoon now broke its bounds. He screamed at Mr. Skinner a blasphemous invitation to betake himself to the lower regions.

"Tomorrow morning," he promised hoarsely, "I'll beat you to death with the stump of my left arm, you miserable, cold-blooded, lazy, shiftless slacker."

He called up Cappy Ricks' residence next, and asked for Captain Matt Peasley, who, he knew, made his home with his father-in-law. Matt Peasley came to the telephone and listened sympathetically to Peck's tale of woe.

"Peck, that's the worst outrage I ever heard of," he declared. "The idea of setting you such a task. You take my advice and forget the blue vase."

"I can't," Peck panted. "Mr. Ricks will feel mighty chagrined if I fail to get the vase to him. I wouldn't disappoint him for my right arm. He's been a dead game sport with me, Captain Peasley."

"But it's too late to get the vase to him, Peck. He left the city at eight o'clock and it is now almost half past nine."

"I know, but if I can secure legal possession of the vase I'll get it to him before he leaves the train at Santa Barbara at six o'clock tomorrow morning."

"How?"

"There's a flying school out at the Marina and one of the pilots there is a friend of mine. He'll fly to Santa Barbara with me and the vase."

"You're crazy."

"I know it. Please lend me two thousand dollars."

"What for?"

"To pay for the vase."

"Now I know you're crazy—or drunk. Why if Cappy Ricks ever forgot himself to the extent of paying two hundred dollars for a vase he'd bleed to death in an hour."

"Won't you let me have two thousand dollars, Captain Peasley?"

"I will not, Peck, old son. Go home and to bed and forget it."

"Please. You can cash your checks. You're known so much better than I, and it's Sunday night—"

"And it's a fine way to keep holy the Sabbath day," Matt Peasley retorted and hung up.

"Well," Herman Joost queried, "do we stay here all night?"

Bill Peck bowed his head. "Look here," he demanded suddenly, "do you know a good diamond when you see it?"

"I do," Herman Joost replied.

"Will you wait here until I go to my hotel and get one?"

"Sure."

Bill Peck limped painfully away. Forty minutes later he returned with a platinum ring set with diamonds and sapphires.

"What are they worth?" he demanded.

Herman Joost looked the ring over lovingly and appraised it conservatively at twenty-five hundred dollars.

“Take it as security for the payment of my check,” Peck pleaded. “Give me a receipt for it and after my check has gone through clearing I’ll come back and get the ring.”

Fifteen minutes later, with the blue vase packed in excelsior and reposing in a stout cardboard box, Bill Peck entered a restaurant and ordered dinner. When he had dined he engaged a taxi and was driven to the flying field at the Marina. From the night watchman he ascertained the address of his pilot friend and at midnight, with his friend at the wheel, Bill Peck and his blue vase soared up into the moonlight and headed south.

An hour and a half later they landed in a stubble field in the Salinas Valley and, bidding his friend good-bye, Bill Peck trudged across to the railroad track and sat down. When the train bearing Cappy Ricks came roaring down the valley, Peck twisted a Sunday paper with which he had provided himself, into an improvised torch, which he lighted. Standing between the rails he swung the flaming paper frantically.

The train slid to a halt, a brakeman opened a vestibule door, and Bill Peck stepped wearily aboard.

“What do you mean by flagging this train?” the brakeman demanded angrily, as he signaled the engineer to proceed. “Got a ticket?”

“No, but I’ve got the money to pay my way. And I flagged this train because I wanted to change my method of travel. I’m looking for a man in stateroom A of car 7, and if you try to block me there’ll be murder done.”

“That’s right. Take advantage of your half-portion arm and abuse me,” the brakeman retorted bitterly. “Are you looking for that little old man with the Henry Clay collar and the white mutton-chop whiskers?”

“I certainly am.”

“Well, he was looking for you just before we left San Francisco. He asked me if I had seen a one-armed man with a box under his good arm. I’ll lead you to him.”

A prolonged ringing at Cappy’s stateroom door brought the old gentleman to the entrance in his nightshirt.

“Very sorry to have to disturb you, Mr. Ricks,” said Bill Peck, “but the fact is there were so many Cohens and Cohns and Cohans, and it was such a job to dig up two thousand dollars, that I failed to connect with you at seven forty-five last night, as per orders. It was absolutely impossible for me to accomplish the task within the time limit set, but I was resolved that you should not be disappointed. Here is the vase. The shop wasn’t within four blocks of where you thought it was, sir, but I’m sure I found the right vase. It ought to be. It cost enough and was hard enough to get, so it should be precious enough to form a gift for any friend of yours.”

Gappy Ricks stared at Bill Peck as if the latter were a wraith.

“By the Twelve Ragged Apostles!” he murmured. “By the Holy Pink-toed Prophet! We changed the sign on you and we stacked the Cohens on you and we set a policeman to guard the shop to keep you from breaking the window, and we made you dig up two thousand dollars on Sunday night in a town where you are practically unknown, and while you missed the train at eight o’clock, you overtake it at two o’clock in the morning and deliver the blue vase. Come in and rest your poor old game leg, Bill. Brake-man, I’m much obliged to you.”

Bill Peck entered and slumped wearily down on the settee. “So it was a plant?” he cracked, and his voice trembled with rage. “Well, sir, you’re an old man and you’ve been good to me, so I do not begrudge you your little joke, but Mr. Ricks, I can’t stand things like I used to. My leg hurts and my stump hurts and my heart hurts——”

He paused, choking, and the tears of impotent rage filled his eyes. “You shouldn’t treat me that way, sir,” he complained presently. “I’ve been trained not to question orders, even when

they seem utterly foolish to me; I've been trained to obey them—on time, if possible, but if impossible, to obey them anyhow. I've been taught loyalty to my chief—and I'm sorry my chief found it necessary to make a buffoon of me. I haven't had a very good time the past three years and—and—you can—pa-pa-pass your skunk spruce and larch rustic and short odd length stock to some slacker like Skinner—and you'd better—arrange—to replace—Skinner, because he's young—enough to—take a beating—and I'm going to—give it to him—and it'll be a hospital—job—sir—”

Cappy Ricks ruffled Bill Peck's aching head with a paternal hand.

“Bill, old boy, it was cruel—damnably cruel, but I had a big job for you and I had to find out a lot of things about you before I entrusted you with that job. So I arranged to give you the Degree of the Blue Vase, which is the supreme test of a go-getter. You thought you carried into this stateroom a two thousand dollar vase, but between ourselves, what you really carried in was a ten thousand dollar job as our Shanghai manager.”

“Wha—what!”

“Every time I have to pick out a permanent holder of a job worth ten thousand dollars, or more, I give the candidate the Degree of the Blue Vase,” Cappy explained. “I've had two men out of a field of fifteen deliver the vase, Bill.”

Bill Peck had forgotten his rage, but the tears of his recent fury still glistened in his bold blue eyes. “Thank you, sir. I forgive you—and I'll make good in Shanghai.”

“I know you will, Bill. Now, tell me, son, weren't you tempted to quit when you discovered the almost insuperable obstacles I'd placed in your way?”

“Yes, sir, I was. I wanted to commit suicide before I'd finished telephoning all the C-o-h-e-n-s in the world. And when I started on the C-o-h-n-s—well, it's this way, sir. I just couldn't

quit because that would have been disloyal to a man I once knew.”

“Who was he?” Cappy demanded, and there was awe in his voice.

“He was my brigadier, and he had a brigade motto: It shall be done. When the divisional commander called him up and told him to move forward with his brigade and occupy certain territory, our brigadier would say: ‘Very well, sir. It shall be done.’ If any officer in his brigade showed signs of flunking his job because it appeared impossible, the brigadier would just look at him once—and then that officer would remember the motto and go and do his job or die trying.

“In the army, sir, the *esprit de corps* doesn’t bubble up from the bottom. It filters down from the top. An organization is what its commanding officer is—neither better nor worse. In my company, when the top sergeant handed out a week of kitchen police to a buck, that buck was out of luck if he couldn’t muster a grin and say: ‘All right, sergeant. It shall be done.’

“The brigadier sent for me once and ordered me to go out and get a certain German sniper. I’d been pretty lucky—some days I got enough for a mess—and he’d heard of me. He opened a map and said to me: ‘Here’s about where he holes up. Go get him, Private Peck.’ Well, Mr. Ricks, I snapped into it and gave him a rifle salute, and said, ‘Sir, it shall be done’—and I’ll never forget the look that man gave me. He came down to the field hospital to see me after I’d walked into one of those Austrian 88’s. I knew my left wing was a total loss and I suspected my left leg was about to leave me, and I was downhearted and wanted to die. He came and bucked me up. He said: ‘Why, Private Peck, you aren’t half dead. In civil life you’re going to be worth half a dozen live ones—aren’t you?’ But I was pretty far gone and I told him I didn’t believe it, so he gave me a hard look and said: ‘Private Peck will do his utmost to recover and as a starter he will smile.’ Of course, putting it in the form of an or-

der, I had to give him the usual reply, so I grinned and said: 'Sir, it shall be done.' He was quite a man, sir, and his brigade had a soul—his soul——”

“I see, Bill. And his soul goes marching on, eh? Who was he, Bill?”

Bill Peck named his idol.

“By the Twelve Ragged Apostles!” There was awe in Cappy Ricks’ voice, there was reverence in his faded old eyes. “Son,” he continued gently, “twenty-five years your brigadier was a candidate for an important job in my employ—and I gave him the Degree of the Blue Vase. He couldn’t get the vase legitimately, so he threw a cobble-stone through the window, grabbed the vase and ran a mile and a half before the police captured him. Cost me a lot of money to square the case and keep it quiet. But he was too good, Bill, and I couldn’t stand in his way; I let him go forward to his destiny. But tell me, Bill. How did you get the two thousand dollars to pay for this vase?”

“Once,” said ex-Private Peck thoughtfully, “the brigadier and I were first at a dug-out entrance. It was a headquarters dug-out and they wouldn’t surrender, so I bombed them and then we went down. I found a finger with a ring on it—and the brigadier said if I didn’t take the ring somebody else would. I left that ring as security for my check.”

“But how could you have the courage to let me in for a two thousand dollar vase? Didn’t you realize that the price was absurd and that I might repudiate the transaction?”

“Certainly not. You are responsible for the acts of your servant. You are a true blue sport and would never repudiate my action. You told me what to do, but you did not insult my intelligence by telling me how to do it. When my late brigadier sent me after the German sniper he didn’t take into consideration the probability that the sniper might get me. He told me to get the sniper. It was my business to see to it that I accomplished my mission and carried my objective, which, of course, I could not have done if I had permitted the German to get me.”

"I see, Bill. Well, give that blue vase to the porter in the morning. I paid fifteen cents for it in a five, ten and fifteen cent store. Meanwhile, hop into that upper berth and help yourself to a well-earned rest."

"But aren't you going to a wedding anniversary at Santa Barbara, Mr. Ricks?"

"I am not. Bill, I discovered a long time ago that it's a good idea for me to get out of town and play golf as often as I can. Besides which, prudence dictates that I remain away from the office for a week after the seeker of blue vases fails to deliver the goods and—by the way, Bill, what sort of a game do you play? Oh, forgive me, Bill. I forgot about your left arm."

"Say, look here, sir," Bill Peck retorted, "I'm big enough and ugly enough to play one-handed golf."

"But, have you ever tried it?"

"No, sir," Bill Peck replied seriously, "but—it shall be done!"

HIZTEGIA

agertoki: erakusleiho
bazkun: klub.
dabaneko: dagoeneko.
dasaizut: esaten dizut.
edestia: kontakizuna.
edestu: kontatu.
erki: konderri
gaizkatu: salbatu.
gudarozte: armada.
idazkola: bulego.
ikurritz: lelo.
izperringi: egunkari.
jaitu: ospatu.
kistar: kristau.
lagundia: konpainia.
Laterri Batuak: Estatu Batuak.
oldozpen: pentsamendu.
oldoztu: pentsatu.
opor, oporketa: greba / opor.
otseña: enplegatua.
txinel: polizia.
urrutidatzi, urrutidazki: telegrama.
urrutizkiñ: telefono
zesaion: esaten zion.

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