

# THE TIGER TRAIL

by Edison Marshall Illustrations by PAUL FREEMAN

Josephine Southley begins to show some warmth toward Dr. Long during the course of the investigations of the murder. In the library, Dr. Long meets Vilas Hayward. Both watch the Oriental, Ahmad Das, who is half-obscured in the dim light.

There was an effect of silence, too, possibly induced by the accentuation of the faint sounds that were present. It seemed to me that I could hear distinctly the rustle and whisper of portieres dragged on the floor by the wind. A window shade wavered with the faintest stir of sound. Then there were the hushed, manifold sounds of the night that came hushed and strange through the noises—noises so obscure that the ears had to strain to perceive them.

Vilas's face was lighted by the nearest candle. I could really see it more plainly than any other detail in the room. The fact fascinated me at first. All other things were dim and blurred and unreal; but it was sharp and clear. And even this early in the drama it had a quality that was disturbing to the spirit. He had endured much these last three days.

"Good God! Where is every one?" he exploded at last. "Ahmad! Ahmad Das!"

The servant arose and came near him, half obscured in the shadows. He stood straight and tall.

"Yes, sahib—"

"Where is everybody? Southley and his son ought to be back by now. What direction have they gone?"

"I do not know, sahib. They told me they were going toward the cottages of the laborers. But they did not turn that way after they had gone out the door."

"And Miss Southley? She was to join me here."

"She has gone, too. I don't know where. The detectives are spending the day across the marsh—on the height."

"But it's time they were back by now. Good Lord, what did they go there for, when the trouble is here? Here, I tell you, and you know it, too, Ahmad. You know it too devilish well."

"Damn your black face!"

Then Vilas tried to regain his self-control. We saw him struggling. The fight was inscribed on his face. And it was a hard fight, too—a losing fight. For a long moment he was quiet, and Ahmad Das resumed his furniture dusting. He bent lower and lower, and once more he was on his knees.

And now I didn't look at Vilas. My eyes were frozen upon Ahmad Das. His position, as far as externals were concerned, was one that every house-keeper gets in many times a day. But there was something different about this. There was a luxury, a passion, in the way he spread his long body on the floor. I can't describe it except to say it was as if he felt a rapture in it. Nor was he calm any more. There was a strange nervousness upon him like an intense eagerness, and his lips were drawn, ever so slightly. He crawled about so slowly, his body so close to the floor.

Then Vilas spoke again in the silence—the words sharp and clear. My eyes flashed to him. He was leaning forward in his chair, every muscle set, every tendon rigid.

"Ahmad Das!" he commanded. "Go and get some candles."

"I cannot, sahib," the Hindu answered from the floor. "They are all gone but these two. Every one. I can not bring more."

"Then I'm going out to look for Southley."

"He will be hard to find, sahib. There are shadows and water and jungle between." Then Ahmad's voice seemed to grow indescribably eager. "You will need a guide."

"If the sahib goes, I will take him there. The sahib must not start out in the dark alone! And if the sahib has despaired of Miss Southley meeting him here, and wishes to go to his room, I will go thence with him, too."

Vilas Hayward suddenly snatched open the drawer in the table. For an instant his frenzied hands thrust at its interior; then he whirled toward Ahmad.

"Where's my pistol?" he cried. "It was in the drawer."

"Perhaps one of the detectives borrowed it for the hunt today—"

Again Ahmad went back to his dusting. His motions seemed to grow more sinuous, more silent. And now I looked in vain for the cloth. He seemed to have dropped it.

"Does the sahib wish to go look for Sahib Southley?" he asked. "If he does, I will be glad to go with him—"

To me the words seemed charged with some terrible kind of passion. The effect that they had on Vilas was not pleasant to see. The manhood seemed simply to go out of him. His lips were loose, his eyes protuded, shaking hands reached for the chair-arms.

"No, you devil!" he cried, his voice rising. "You won't get me out there, where you got my father."

"Sahib!"

"And I order you to get off the floor. You're not working now. Get up, or I'll kill you where you lie!"

Ahmad Das got up. He rose very softly to his full height. He tiptoed across the room. And he blew out the light on the little stand.

The shadows deepened. There was only one candle now, the one that burned on the table. And I heard a soft, whispered sigh from Alexander. "The man's a devil," he breathed in my ear. "Vilas called him by the right words."

"Then get up and save him," I answered. "Do you want to see Vilas murdered before our eyes?"

"Hush—and watch."

We watched. A long time there was silence. Ahmad Das stood still beside the extinguished candle.

"What are you going to do?"

"Do, sahib?" The answer came at last, trembling with some unearthly kind of passion. "It is not well to be imprudent with candles. The detectives might need a brighter light when they return to see what remains here."

Vilas tried to meet the snaky eyes.

"What do you mean?" he whispered.

"They will come back soon, and want to talk to their guest. One of their guests is gone—you know where. Yesterday they bore him across the water. You only remain, and you are very dear to them, Sahib Strumburg."

Vilas leaned forward. "Strumburg? How dare you call me that? My name's Hayward—"

"Once Strumburg—then Roderick—then Hayward—what does it matter, sahib? Names die when their bearers die."

"But I'm not Strumburg. I tell you I'm not—"

"I will remember, sahib, that you told me that. But consider again, and see if you don't want to make me another answer."

"I'll never admit it."

"I will go from you for a minute, sahib—just a minute into the darkness—and then I will return. I will want your answer then. And there might be other things for you to tell me, too, when I come into your presence a moment from now. You really had no proofs that Sahib Southley is wanted in prison."

"But I have! You can't scare me out of it."

"Both things you can answer when I return to the sahib's presence. It will be just a little moment—"

Vilas half rose in his seat, ordering the servant to relight the candle. But Ahmad didn't obey. Rather he faded.

The shadows hid him, and darkness closed round him.

Yet it wasn't as if he had completely gone. I knew that he was waiting somewhere in the darkness just beyond—perhaps behind the curtains, possibly in the hall. I didn't hear or see him. I simply knew he was there, and in a moment more would come back into the light for the answer to his questions. A long moment passed away. The house was tense and still. And once more I looked at Vilas Hayward.

He had his head turned over his shoulder, and he was watching with fascinated horror something that approached him in the darkness. I couldn't see what it was at first. It was farther away from me. But yet I was aware of the sense of something moving—something half crawling, half sliding toward the man in the chair. And then I saw an irregular gray patch of shadow that was not quite so dark as the shadow around it—a patch which seemed to be moving. And all at once it halted.

The Tiger of Southley Downs had come again. The candlelight was ineffective and dim, yet it showed the outline plain. Even then I tried to tell myself it was some mental fallacy, a mirage or delusion that could not possibly be true. I tried to say it was the effect of light and shadow; but the lie died before it came to my thought. It wasn't any use to try to deny the reality of the thing. There was the tawny hide, darkened, of course, by the shadow, the low-hung head, the great black stripes. The details were obscured; but my eyes didn't need them to recognize the creature. It seemed to be lying close to the floor, in the position a tiger takes just before it springs.

And I couldn't say it wasn't true. It would not have been so convincing if Vilas had not seen it, too. And I knew by the suppressed gasp of the great detective beside me that his eyes were also resting on the thing. I think that he started to whisper some messages of wonder. But I didn't hear him. All I heard was Vilas's scream.

He backed up against the wall, his fingers at his throat. There was no record left in my brain of the sounds he made and the words he said. Ahmad-Das had returned, just as he had promised, to get the answer to his questions. The transformation was complete—the tiger soul at last in its own body. And Vilas was ready to answer.

(Continued next week)

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### RATHBONE FUNERAL IS HELD LAST WEEK

Masonic Service For Congressman at Large Who Died In Chicago

Henry Rathbone, Illinois congressman at large, and G. O. P. candidate for re-election, who died early last week, was buried in Rose Hill cemetery following the Masonic service in the Oriental Consistory, 919 N. Eggarboro street, Chicago. The services were conducted by Kenwood No. 800.

Mr. Rathbone was born in 1870 in Washington, D. C., where he lived for the first nine years of his life. He spent the next three years in Europe with his parents and on his return entered Phillips academy at Andover, Mass. He was graduated from Yale university in 1892 and took up the study of law in the Albany Law school. He later attended the University of Wisconsin, where he completed his law course and was admitted to practice in 1895.

Mr. Rathbone's father, Major Henry R. Rathbone, was an officer of the 12th United States infantry during the civil war and was a member of the presidential box party as a special aid to the president when Lincoln was assassinated.

Surviving Mr. Rathbone are his widow, his brother, a niece, Louise Randolph of Washington, D. C., and two nephews, Buckner T. Randolph, Washington, D. C., and Richard Harney of Chicago.

### R. O. T. C. CAMP AT FORT SHERIDAN ENDS

The young men attending the R. O. T. C. training camp at Fort Sheridan this year have been instructed in practical and theoretical methods of warfare of a technical sort. They had a rather comprehensive course in message center work, which has to do with the intercommunication of the different army units.

Not only the use of the field telephone was taught, for work in the telegraphic line has gone ahead as has wireless instruction. In one instance, several of the young men took over the division headquarters as a unit and made a very successful job of its operations, it is said.

The material that the instructors

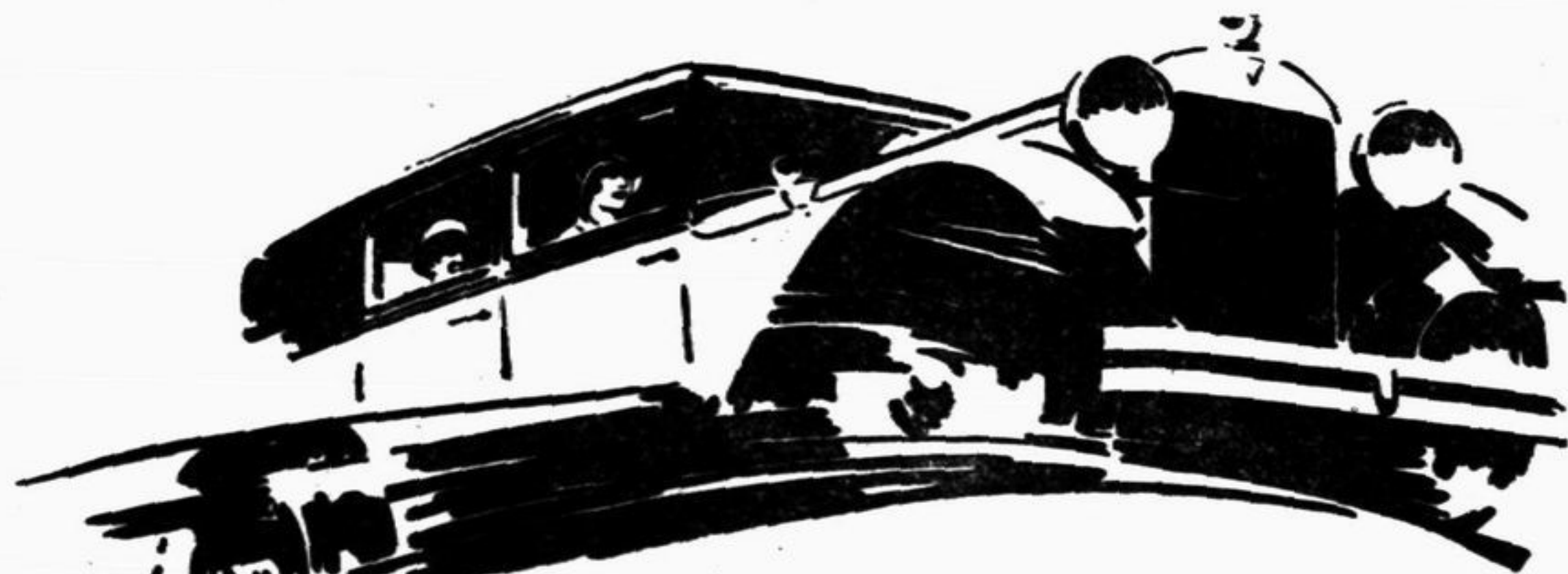
have to work with is of the best, not only for brawn, but for brain as well, they point out. Many of the young men are college graduates and all of them are college students. Their instructors report that they were very

receptive to the technical training that the camp affords.

But college students or not, when the bugle blows, whether it be reveille, taps or "chow", there is a mad scramble to obey its call. There is a

lot of work to be done during the day and the officers in charge report grimly that "it is done, too."

The camp opened June 16 and closed July 26. There are 71 men there this year.



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