



# SKY-HIGH NERVE

by FREDERICK L. NEBEL

*Gales and McGill, free lances of the air, seek adventure—and get rapid-fire action as Gales plays out his hand against the sinister menace of the Tong. Another smashing Gales-McGill yarn!*

**B**ILL GALES and Mike McGill, flyers of fortune, free-lances of the air, looked down and ahead and saw Singapore spread before them. Singapore—crossroads of the East! City of color, adventure, intrigue, where life swings back and forth on a lazy, indifferent pendulum and the Oriental sun either makes or breaks a man. Here the white man rules, while Malay, Chinese and Hindu look on, rebellion in their hearts, but caution in their heads.

Gales, at the controls of the shoddy hydroplane, dropped to five hundred feet and went roaring over the cluttered waterfront. He crossed the Singapore River, jammed with barges and sampans, droned over Raffles Square and directly over the imposing Hotel Europe. Then he shot out over the Singapore Roads, passed places where bars of black ooze showed above the water.

He banked, turned and slanted down.

His motor roared as he shot downward. Then he shut it off, and the big, ungainly plane whistled in

its descent. The pontoons kissed the water, threw up spray, lifted a trifle, and then struck again. The plane missed a sampan so closely that its native occupants threw up their hands and leaped overside. The plane slid to a stop within hailing distance of the jetties, and Gales, pulling off his goggles, leaned forward and slapped his partner on the back.

“Well, Mike, three cheers for Singapore!” he chuckled.

“Ray! ‘Ray! ‘Ray!” grunted McGill; and then: “T hell with Singapore! I’ll bet there’s not a decent drink of liquor in the whole dump.”

Gales unfastened his safety belt and propped himself up on the edge of the rear cockpit. He was a lean, rangy young man with a clean-clipped jaw and a devil-may-care twinkle in his eyes. He stuck a cigarette between his lips, flamed a match to it and gushed a stream of smoke through his nostrils. McGill, who was a little older and a slight, wiry chunk of a man, spat distastefully overside.

"Cripes, what a muck-hole this place is!" he complained. "Lookit those native shacks sitting on stilts over the mud banks. Lookit the bunch o' sampans and the filthy bums in them. Hell's bells and damnation, the joint smells like an East River garbage barge!"

Gales chuckled, and his eyes twinkled.

"I know what's the matter with you, Mike. You need a drink. Let's anchor here, go ashore and have a gin-sling."

"In the first place," went on McGill, "why did we come here?"

"Law of gravitation. Sooner or later, when you're in the East, you gravitate to Singapore."

"That's a lot of boloney!"

"Might just as well try Singapore as any other place."

"I don't like the looks o' the place, Bill. I got a hunch we're going to get into trouble."

Gales shrugged and arched his eyebrows.

"Well," he replied, "what the hell!"

"Well—" McGill snapped his fingers, "if that's the way you feel, ditto with me. What the hell!"

They went ashore. They had some trouble with the port authorities, for rumor of their activities through the Indies and up the China coast had preceded them.

"I've heard of you chums," said one dignitary.

"And I want to warn you that in Singapore we English don't stand for malicious mischief and loose ideas about authority. There is considerable unrest here as it is, what with the natives being incited by Bolshevik agents, and there have been a few murders in the streets. We are using an iron hand, and law-breakers are not dallied with. I happen to know that you two have had a hand in various unlawful enterprises up the coast. You are notorious. And mind, you will save yourselves and your American consul a great deal of unnecessary trouble by conforming to the laws of this city."

That was that. The two partners chose to refrain from back-talk. Indeed, they were notorious on the coast, known from Shanghai to Surabaya for a brace of wild, reckless adventurers, ripe at all times for anything short of murder.

They went up along Boat Quay, past the stores of the ship chandlers, stopped in at a dingy, murky saloon and had gin-slings. Gales had one and McGill had two. They came out feeling a little happier, crossed an iron bridge and wandered down through the sailors' quarter. Their next port of call was the Golden Anchor,

a pub jammed with sailormen from all the ports of the world—Dane, Swede, English, Portuguese, Spaniard—white, black, yellow, brown. A veritable melting pot.

McGill had two more drinks, and gradually he began to revise his opinion about Singapore. McGill always judged a port by the liquor it served.

"Good town, Bill—good town," he commented.

"Take it easy, Mike," smiled Gales, a careful drinker. "You've got the night ahead of you."

"Sure," vociferated McGill, "I can hold my liquor, Bill."

With which he called for another drink and downed it neat.

"Let's move along, Mike," suggested Gales, noticing that his partner, was beginning to sway a trifle.

"Aw, just another, Bill. Come on, join me. Let's drink to the Stars and Stripes."

"Well, this'll be the last," grinned Gales.

They drank to their country's flag, and then Gales took his partner's arm, and steered him out into the street. McGill rarely revealed his liquor when walking. It was when he stood still that he swayed like a palm tree. Under way he could almost follow a chalk line, even with a dozen drinks under his belt.

They drifted from the sailors' quarter on into the street of the bazaars, where sheds extended from the booths and shaded the walk. Everywhere there was color. Red signs smeared with black ideographs. Glass tinkling. Malays, Hindus, Chinese, Burmese, shuffling through the streets and rubbing elbows with the whites. Rikishas whisking by, weaving in and out. Tradesmen shouting their wares in sing-song voices. Movement and din and clamor, glaring sunlight and soggy heat. The turbulent tempo of the colorful East.

"Pst!" hissed Gales.

He stopped short and gripped McGill's arm.

"Whuh—what?" grunted McGill.

Gales was staring across the street at a window above one of the Chinese shops.

"Mike, I just saw something," he clipped.

"Whatcha see, Bill?"

"I saw, just got a glance, a girl's face—white. Then I saw a yellow hand kind of jump at her throat. Then she disappeared like a flash."

"Where?"

"That window."

The two men looked at each other sharply.

"Let's butt in, Mike," said Gales.

"Let's, Bill," said McGill.

They crossed the street with purposeful steps. They

banged into the shop, and a short, tubby Chinese with gimlet eyes, bowed and rubbed his hands together in anticipation of a sale.

Gales clipped, "Who's upstairs?"

The Chinese was taken aback at the blunt question. He licked his lips and seemed worried. Gales flung questing eyes about the shop.

"Where's the stairs?" he demanded.

The Chinese retreated, leaned back against a counter.

"Aw, bat him, Bill," suggested McGill.

Gales went into whirlwind action, the merry twinkle gone from his eyes, his lean, tawny face set in tight lines of determination. The Chinese sidestepped and whipped a knife from his sleeve. Gales blocked the thrust, drove a short-arm jab to his paunch and doubled the Celestial like a jack-knife. He ran by, and as the Chinese straightened, McGill sent a sizzling blow to his jaw and laid him out cold.

Gales found a stairway, looked back and, seeing that McGill was following, climbed for altitude. He reached the top, knocked aside a curtain and rushed into a dim, luxuriously appointed room. For a brief instant he paused, to get his bearings.

He saw a white girl in the clutches of a rather large, heavy-built Chinese. Both the girl and the Chinese twisted to look at him. The girl was disheveled, flushed, her eyes wide with anguish and fright. She squirmed to free herself; kicked, clawed, writhed.

The Chinaman, seeing danger at the doorway, released her, squared away and muttered in his throat. His head went down between his shoulders. His lower lip drooped, thick and moist. A knife appeared in his hand.

Gales was upon him. The girl shrieked. In the dim light the knife flashed dully. Cloth ripped—Gales' left sleeve. His tough, hard-sinewed body crashed into the huge, solid body before him. Then they were swaying, weaving, shuffling at close quarters. Gales held the Chinaman's knife hand aloft and kept the other away from his own throat. They pivoted, well locked, straining, tense, set-jawed.

The girl had sunk to a mat, gone pale as if with exhaustion. She was limp, her eyes closed, her head flung back and resting against a teakwood pedestal. The curve of her white throat stood out with cameo clearness against a wealth of dusky hair.

McGill, bounding into the room, was met by another Chinese, possibly a servant, who appeared from another room. McGill left the floor in a zoom,

escaped a wicked knife-thrust by luck more than anything else, and crashed with his opponent to the floor. He wasn't sober, but he was a man who could fight, drunk or sober.

Gales, knowing a trick or two of the game of rough-and-tumble, was proving to be more than a handful for the big Chinese. In a swift, clever maneuver he wrapped the Chinaman's arm backward, jerked it up with sudden force, and before the Celestial knew it he had lost his knife.

Gales did not attempt to recover it for himself. He knew too well how to use his hands. He tore away from the Chinese and then sailed in with an array of rights and lefts that sent the man staggering back against the wall. He did not let up. He went right after him, while perspiration ran from his face and seeped through his clothing.

Another Chinese blew in to join the free-for-all. He catapulted at McGill. But McGill, who was quick as a flash, sent his own opponent crashing into the newcomer and reached for a teakwood stool. The two Chinese, regaining their balance, turned to charge again, and McGill let fly. The stool banged into one's stomach and knocked the wind out of him. He stood for a moment on his feet, writhing and clawing at the air, then he spun down, choking for breath.

The other McGill met square on, warded off the thrust and smashed him between the eyes. He hit him six times in the same place, and the Celestial finally folded up on the floor and remained there.

Gales was shouting: "Take the lady, Mike, and beat it! Get her out of here!"

McGill did not hesitate. He ran across the room, picked up the girl and hurried out of the door.

"Be right back, Bill!" he yelled, and disappeared.

Gales found his man a hard one to bring down. He hit him again and again, brought blood and puffed up the Chinaman's eyes, but the big man somehow held his feet despite it all. Then they both rushed at the same time, collided head on and crashed to the floor. The Chinese clawed for the knife which lay there. He grasped it and thrust from where he lay. Gales blocked it and turned it back savagely, heaving his body with the movement. The knife reversed, oddly enough, and the weight of Gales' body drove the blade into the Celestial's chest. He choked, threw up his hands, knotted his fists and convulsed. He groaned, and the groan died to a whisper. In a moment he was rigid. Dead.

Gales heaved to his feet, grimacing. He was soggy

with sweat and his breath came laboriously. He reeled toward the door, and one of the other Chinese, leaning on an elbow, unable to rise, yet conscious enough to speak, glared up at Gales with burning eyes. He pointed at the dead man, then pointed at Gales and chattered madly in his native tongue, baring his teeth, twisting his face horribly, jerking his body back and forth, hissing, spitting.

“Shut your trap!” muttered Gales, and sagged out.

But he sensed, vaguely, that in all that mad harangue there was a bitter threat, a portentous warning, a promise of vengeance.

Outside, he paused, looking for McGill and the girl. They were not in sight. Business was going on just the same. It was patent that in the din and hubbub of the bazaars the sounds of the conflict above had not been heard. But news would spread soon, no doubt of that.

Gales moved on, undecided where to go, yet realizing the necessity of putting some distance between himself and the tragic shop. A thought struck him suddenly. It was possible that McGill had headed for their plane—taken the girl in a sampan and gone out to it. In fact, it was most probable.

Hence he hailed a rikisha and drove down to the waterfront. He hired a sampan and was taken out to the plane. But McGill was not there, nor the girl.

He told the native to wait while he climbed aboard. No, McGill was not there.

“That’s funny,” he thought, and then, “Well, it’s go ashore again and find Mike.”

From the fuselage he took a Colt’s automatic and shoved it into his pocket. In another pocket he thrust some extra clips and added a jack-knife to his equipment. Then he went back ashore.

McGill’s hunch, he mused, had come true. They certainly had run into trouble.

## CHAPTER II YELLOW VENGEANCE

HE WANDERED aimlessly through the streets. He even dared to pass near the scene of the fight. He saw a crowd gathered outside and a couple of policemen. But he did not see Mike, nor the girl. He cursed softly and wandered on. He was worried about Mike. That small, wiry partner of his had a habit of getting into situations not altogether propitious to the attainment of a ripe old age.

Gales again found himself in the sailors’ quarter, and he stopped in at every saloon, bar none. Invariably, in other cities, when Mike dropped out of sight Gales had steered first of all for the saloons, for to McGill a saloon was as a magnet to a bit of steel. But this time he did not find McGill. However, he caught snatches of conversation that interested him. For instance—

“Yeah, he was killed, stabbed. Yeah, this Tsing Fow. There’s four brothers, y’ know. Fow, Lee, Yut, Chong, a helluva mean combination, if yuh ask me, matey. Nope, they don’t know who done it, but I sure pity the guy who got mixed up in it. Oh, they’ll get him—I don’t mean the police. That’d be soft for the guy. I mean this tong, the three brothers. Sure, the guy mighta had all the reason in the world for knifing Fow.

Bet he did. But I pity him, anyhow!” Gales drifted on, his anxiety for McGill’s safety rising. He was nearing one of the iron bridges that span the Singapore River, when he caught sight of the girl rolling along in a rikisha. She saw him, too, waved a handkerchief and indicated for him to follow. He nodded, hopped into the nearest rikisha, and told the boy to trail the one ahead.

In an out-of-the-way alley the girl’s rikisha stopped, and Gales drew up beside it. The girl leaned out.

“Have you found your friend?” she asked in a low, husky voice.

“No, I haven’t. I’ve been hunting high and low for him. I can’t find him. Thought he was with you.”

She bit her lip. “He was,” she said. “He took me to my hotel, left me there, and returned to meet you. I told him to bring you back. Oh, God, has the tong got him already? I’m so sorry I dragged you men into this!”

“Being sorry doesn’t get us anywhere,” replied Gales. “But we’d better talk somewhere else.”

“Let’s drive to my hotel. I’ve just come from there. I was anxious about you men and wanted to see how you made out.”

Once at the hotel, they retired to a secluded corner in the lounge. They had exchanged names, hers was Stafford, Judith Stafford, young wife of Brett Stafford, one-time doctor in the Indian Army. Briefly Gales remarked about his plane, and when he spoke of McGill she remembered the names.

“I’ve heard of you,” she said. “Didn’t you both take part in that Chinese uprising up the Tai Hu?”

“Yes. Mike was wounded there.”

“I don’t know what to do now,” she confessed, with a shudder. “My husband, Brett, disappeared three weeks ago. He’s reckless, too, Brett is. Gave up

doctoring and went in for collecting jewels. Now your friend has disappeared. It's terrible. Tsing Fow sent me a note today saying he could give me information regarding the whereabouts of Brett. It was a trap. He has one of the famous Palladium rubies, a pair handed down by Phra Puttha Yot Fa Chulalok who began the great Wat Phra Keo, temple of the Emerald Buddha, in Bangkok, back in 1785. Brett has the other, but Tsing Fow has been unable to find it. He intended holding me as hostage until Brett turned over the other ruby. In a fit of rage he told me that Brett was being held prisoner in southern Burma, in the Temple of Vengeance, beyond Tenasserim. It's the Tong's hide-out. The English are too prying here, so the Tong takes its victims north into the hills by automobile part way, and a short way on horseback. None of the victims has ever returned."

"I'm sorry," said Gales gravely. "I'll try to give a hand where I can. But first I've got to scout around for my partner. Mike's in a bad way, and there's no alternative but that I find him."

"Of course," nodded Judith. "But be careful. The three brothers of Tsing Fow are beasts. Two are in Singapore. One holds sway in the Temple of Vengeance. They, or their henchmen, will hunt you like bloodhounds. Every street in Singapore will be dangerous. One of those present at the fight may recognize you, and that will be the end. Be careful, please!"

Gales stood up—lean, tawny-skinned, capable-looking. A ghost of a smile played at his lips, and the old twinkle showed bravely in his eyes.

"Don't make a move till you hear from me," he said. "Everything will be all right. We'll save Mike and we'll save your husband. That plane of mine is going to figure largely in this business. Be ready to shove off at a moment's notice."

"Be careful!" she urged tremulously, and extended her hand.

Gales took it, pressed it briefly. Then he strode off.

TWILIGHT was settling. There was a pink and orange afterglow in the west, and shadows were broadening in the crooked streets.

Gales was determined to find McGill, one way or the other, and at times Gales had a blunt, suicidal way of getting information. Life with him was a thing that hung precariously in the balance. Tonight he was resolved to learn of McGill's whereabouts by the shortest route and in the least time possible. It was,

to say the least, a move that not only challenged, but practically, invited death to take a crack at him. On the surface it was madness, pure and simple, but with Gales it was, under the circumstances the most natural thing to do.

Deliberately, purposefully, he took a rikisha and told the boy to take him to the street of the bazaars in which was located the fateful shop. He smiled grimly to himself. He felt the gun in his pocket. They would never take him alive.

A few blocks from the shop he alighted and proceeded on foot. Lanterns glowed in the murk. Many people were abroad. He walked briskly, his chin up, his eyes taking in every detail. With every nerve tense, he passed directly in front of the shop. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the tubby Chinese whom he had first knocked down on his way to the room above. The Chinese saw him, too, and nudged two others who stood on either side of him.

Gales kept on. He took a quick look over his shoulder and saw that these two were now trailing him. He chuckled under his breath. It was just what he wanted. He did not hurry. He turned into a narrow, crooked and filthy street, and his hand closed over the butt of the Colt in his pocket.

The two Chinese were drawing nearer. Gales cut into a dark alley, and the two followed. He slowed down and idled along. The two padded near until they were no more than ten yards behind. Gales spun sharply as they broke into a run, knives drawn.

They did not stop, and he fired. One went down, but the other lunged on. Gales knocked aside the thrust and brought his automatic down on the Celestial's head. The man reeled. Gales stepped up to him and jabbed the Colt against his stomach, relieving him of his knife. Then he gripped his arm and dragged him, through the alley.

"You come with me!" he rapped out. "Make a crooked move and I'll blow your brains out!"

The Chinese, at first protesting, finally decided that this white man was in earnest. On through black, dismal alleys and through narrow thoroughfares where yellow and amber lanterns glowed forlornly and shrouded, silent figures stood in doorways. On and on down to the waterfront.

Gales forced the Chinese into a sampan, jumped in at his heels, and the Malay boatmen drove them out to the plane. Ship lights glowed upon the dark, flat surface of the water. There was music, and near at hand the clatter of pots and pans in a freighter's galley.

When they drew up beside the plane Gales forced the Chinese aboard it at the point of his gun. Then he told the Malay to wait. He sat on the edge of the cockpit and waved his gun carelessly in the Chinaman's face.

"China boy," he said, "I'm going to kill you."

The Chinese cringed and raised imploring hands.

"I'm going to kill you," Gale went on, "because you killed my friend today."

"No-no-no," chattered the Celestial. "Your friend he is not dead. I swear it!"

"You lie!" rasped Gales. "He is dead. You have disposed of his body. Hence I am going to kill you and dispose of yours."

"No—no! Your friend is not dead. I swear, I saw him with my own eyes being taken to the Temp—" He cut himself short.

"Say it! The Temple of Vengeance!" barked Gales, pressing the gun against the yellow forehead. "Say it!"

"Yes, yes!" wavered the Chinese. "But three hours ago."

"By automobile?"

"No." The Chinese looked around. "In one of these winged devils, operated by a white. The automobile route was too long, and the police on the Burmese frontier were too vigilant."

"All right," nodded Gales. "You'll fly with me and show me the Temple of Vengeance."

"No—no—no!" pleaded the Chinese.

"But yes!" clipped Gales.

He bound the man with wire which he found in the fuselage, and gagged him with a piece of cloth torn from his own blouse. He belted him into the forward cockpit and then climbed back aboard the sampan.

"Go like hell, you fella!" he urged.

"Ay, tuan," murmured the Malay.

Gales landed, hopped into the first rikisha he could find, and was whisked away to the hotel at which Judith Stafford was staying. He met her in the lounge, and lost no time in getting to the point.

"I've got one of the tong bound on board my plane," he explained. "My partner's been taken to the Temple of Vengeance by plane. They've given up the auto route. A white man's flying for them. I'm going to make this Chink show me the Temple of Vengeance."

"I'll go, too," said the girl, rising.

Gales raised his hand. "You'd better not. It'll be in the wilderness, practically; no place for a woman."

"But Brett's there, too, and my place is with him. I must try to save him. I'll get into riding breeches and

khaki and I'll carry an automatic. I can shoot, you know—won lots of prizes on the range."

"I know, but—"

"I'll run right up and change my clothes," she put in, and was off.

Gales shrugged and sat down. A woman alone didn't appeal to him. Still, he had to admire her nerve. He liked the way she'd said her place was with her husband. A fit mate for an adventurer in the turbulent East. And Brett Stafford was an adventurer. Gales was rather pleased with the picture Judith had painted of him. Wild, reckless. Giving up medicine for a fling in the game of chance. A man after Gales' own heart.

Judith appeared dressed in tan khaki and mosquito boots and carrying a small leather bag fastened to a shoulder-strap. She looked very trim and very determined.

"Let's go," she said.

They went. On the way they bought some provisions and a dozen bottles of Apollinaris water, which a native packed out to the plane. Gales found the Chinese as he had left him. To Judith he said:

"You'll have to crowd in beside him."

"All right," she nodded. "I'll keep my gun handy, too."

Gales had to grin. She was determined, all right.

He took the gag from the Celestial's mouth and relieved him of his bonds. The safety belt he strapped around Judith, and removed the joy stick from the front cockpit. It was a dual-control plane. He wedged down in the after cockpit, clicked on his belt and pulled on his goggles. He used no flying suit. After a few unsuccessful tries, the starter finally kicked over the engine.

The girl looked around, waved her hand and adjusted her goggles. Gales grinned, warming up the motor. Then his eyes settled on the dashboard. Oil pressure, oil temperature, working. The motor roared, spat, raced and then smoothed out. The fore and aft anchors were up. Everything was all right. Somewhere in the wilderness to the north, beyond Tenasserim, brooded the Temple of Vengeance.

### CHAPTER III WINGS TO BURMA

GALES eased the joy-stick forward as the plane taxied away, her nose into the wind. Ahead of him, lay a

broad, clear stretch of water. The speed increased, and the cedarwood pontoons began to spank the low ripples. Soon they lifted from the surface, touched again slightly, and Gales drew back on the stick.

The plane went up in slow spirals, and Gales, his left foot on the rudder-bar, eased the stick to the left and brought the nose around slowly. He climbed in a circle, droned over buzzing, throbbing Singapore, climbed to two thousand feet and then headed into the northwest, up the Malay coast.

His course lay up the Malacca Strait for Penang and over the Mergui Archipelago, cutting due east at Dome Island at the southern tip of Burma. He had his chart handy, and he was something of a navigator. The crate he flew was nothing much to brag about. He had bought it for a song over near Macassar. He had to push it to get eighty miles an hour. It rattled and creaked in the framework, and there was always a knock in the engine. It took a man with sky-high nerve to fly it.

The renegade Portuguese, with McGill captive, had a four-hour head start. Gales knew that he could not overtake him. He doubted if he could even hold his own. He knew nothing of the landing facilities near the Temple of Vengeance. He was taking a chance, but he was used to taking chances and he was the kind of man who never crossed bridges until he reached them.

Below him lay the dark waters of the gulf. Below, on his right, dim coast lights wheeled and flickered. Ahead he could see the many lights of a southbound passenger liner. Ahead, beyond that, a dark horizon and a sky palely aflame with low-hanging stars. The big plane rocked on the air like a ship at sea. The wings crunched. The struts twanged. The night wind rushed by, whistling and droning.

The Chinese sat motionless, gripping the coaming of the cockpit. The girl let her eyes wander about, and occasionally she looked back and smiled at Gales. He could see her teeth, her white face framed in the flying helmet. He grinned back.

All night he flew northward. At the first crack of dawn he flew over Puket Island. Two hours later he was off Maliwun, and he began to consult his chart more frequently. The Mergui Archipelago was beneath him. To the eastward the sun was glinting on tawny-shouldered mountains. To the west stretched the Bay of Bengal, sprawling its lean miles far and away to India.

Soon he spotted Dome Island, and curved in toward the Burmese coast. Tenasserim lay sixty miles

beyond. Later, he passed over it, drowsing in the wilderness near a winding river. He leaned forward and tapped the Chinese on the back. He throttled down and shouted:

“The Temple of Vengeance!”

The Chinese pointed ahead. Gales began using his glasses. Ten miles farther on he saw a pagoda glinting in the sunlight. Jungles surrounded it. It lay a mile or so to the eastward of the wilderness river. There was only one thing to do: land on the river and then proceed on foot. He began circling downward, shoving the stick gently forward, then to the right a bit, while he pressed on the rudder-bar.

He made a perfect landing and swung the plane as near to the shore as he could. He shut off the ignition and the motor died. The girl pulled off her goggles and looked around. She smiled.

“Well, what now?” she asked brightly.

“First, keep your gun in that bird’s ribs,” replied Gales, as he flamed a match to a cigarette. “Unhook your belt. We’ve got a little march ahead of us. We’ll wade ashore. I’ll drop an anchor first.”

They slushed ashore, the girl up to her waist, Gales knee-deep. The Chinese was between them, his hands bound behind his back. Gales now wore a sun-helmet and a belt-gun. They all drank some bottled water, and then Gales addressed the Chinese:

“You’re going to lead us to the temple. Understand?”

“Buddha has turned his back on me. I am forsaken. The tong will strip the flesh from my bones.”

“Anyhow, you’ll lead us there. You don’t have to go in. You can turn back when we’re in sight of the temple. No one will ever know you showed the way. Now you march ahead, quietly, and don’t try any tricks. You’re getting a better break than you deserve. Shove off!”

They marched in single file, Judith bringing up the rear, Gales at the heels of the Chinese. The sun steamed in the wet jungle. Insects hummed. Vines and creepers cluttered the way, and in places the trail was boggy and alive with crawling things. It took them half an hour to beat through the thickest of the jungle. They came out upon an open stretch and crossed through a field of tall, parched grass. Then they entered more timber, but it was sparse by comparison, and there was a well-worn, solid trail. The Chinese stopped ten minutes later and pointed through the foliage to the yellow-tile roof of the temple. He was nervous, and wanted to retreat.

“All right,” nodded Gales, who was a man four-

square, "you can go where you like now." He cut away the man's bonds.

The Chinese pivoted, looked back once and then ran at top speed back toward the river.

Gales and the girl continued until they reached the edge of the jungle. Before them spread a level plain, at the other side of which stood the ancient temple, surrounded by a few small buildings, all bleached and decrepit, for the Burma sun is a hard sun.

"The priests," explained Judith, "deserted it long years ago. The Tsing Tong took possession of it, and there they hide their loot and torture their prisoners."

Gales nodded. Then he said: "I want you to stay here until I sneak around and look the place over."

"I'd better go with you," she ventured.

"No, you stay here. I'll get back soon as I can."

He left her hiding in the bush, and himself crept up along the edge of the jungle, circling the open terrain and coming around to that part of the jungle directly behind the temple. He could see men moving about, some of them carrying water. He saw a shed built of corrugated metal, the open end of which revealed the nose of a plane. Then McGill was already a prisoner inside the temple, at the mercy of the tong.

Gales paused to think up a plan of action. Judith, for the time being, was safe. She had a gun, water and sufficient concentrated food to sustain her for a day or more. It was up to him now to gain admittance to the temple. He thought of several plans, and chose the simplest, most direct of all. Also a dangerous one.

It was logical to conclude that none of the tong knew his name. Some had recognized him in Singapore, but Singapore was eight hundred miles away, and the tong was using but one plane. The Portuguese renegade had not seen him there, and it was safe to suppose that those who had seen and recognized him in Singapore were still in that city. He would match wits with the Tsings.

He stood up and strode out into the open. He was grimy from his trip through the jungle, and a little ragged. There was a bit of stubble on his face. His sun-helmet was slanted over one eye, his hands hooked on his gun-belt.

As he passed the shed he looked the plane over. It was a big monoplane, new and gleaming, sleek and fast-looking, with a huge whirlwind motor. One of the neatest planes of its kind that Gales had ever put eye on.

He passed on, however, nonchalantly. Water-carriers paused to stare at him, but he gave them

not the slightest attention. He drifted past a heavily gilded *prachedi*, or shrine, guarded on either side by two enormous dragons of white tile. Everything was ancient, dilapidated. He approached the temple, with its huge mosaic pillars and tile steps.

A dark, saturnine man in white shirt and puttees came out and stopped short, wrinkling his forehead quizzically. Gales waved his hand briefly.

"Hello, there," he said. "Didn't happen to see a gang of roaming Karens go through here, did you?"

"No," replied the man, "I didn't. Come in out of the sun."

Gales went up the steps slowly, mopping his forehead. He stopped in the shade beside the man and waved a hand toward the north.

"I'm from the teakwood station over the mountain. Went on a prospecting trip, and my boys picked up and left me flat last night. I'd like to wring their damn necks. Whew! It's hot! Wonder if I could get a drink. Guess I'll back-trail soon as I get a little rest."

"I guess we can fix you up," said the dark man, boring Gales with dark, intense eyes. "Come along. My name's Badajoz."

"Galeson's mine," lied Gales.

They entered into a high, cool chamber, at the farther end of which stood a fantastic, jeweled altar fifteen feet high. At the very top of this was a jade Buddha squatting under a golden umbrella, and flanked by praying devas.

"This way," said Badajoz, and proceeded toward a chamber on the left.

Presently Gales found himself in a room exquisitely furnished after the Oriental manner. There were many teakwood and mahogany chairs, many small tables and taborets, small Buddhas here and there, and in one corner a small shrine. The room was lighted from the east by long, narrow windows.

Badajoz strode to the wall and pulled on a rope. Somewhere a bell tinkled faintly. A servant padded in. Badajoz spoke briefly. The servant effaced himself. After an interval the curtains parted and a Chinese, wearing a black silk kimono embroidered with red dragons, glided slowly in, stopped and stared expressionlessly from Gales to the Portuguese. The servant was entering with liquor and a syphon.

"This is Galeson, from the teak concessions over the mountain," Badajoz said to the man in the black kimono, "His carriers gave him the slip. Galeson, this is Tsing Chong."

Tsing Chong! One of the Tsings, a brother of Tsing

Fow, whom Gales had clashed with above the shop in Singapore.

"Greetings, friend Galeson," pronounced Chong, his hands crossed on his bulging paunch. "Pray, rest a while. Spend the day and night here, and it may be that I can send two men to accompany you back to your station on the morrow."

"Thanks," nodded Gales. "Glad to, if you don't mind."

"Whisky and soda?" Badajoz was asking, holding up the bottle.

"Right," said Gales, and sat down.

Tsing Chong sat down, too, slowly; drew a fan from his sleeve and worked it languidly. He was a fat, lethargic man, with drooping eyelids and moist eyes and an asthmatic voice. He spoke good English, pronouncing each word slowly and carefully.

Badajoz was lean, jet-eyed, intense. A hard-boiled, ruthless man, who snapped out his words with quick jerks of his head and shoulders. A lively conversation got under way. Badajoz flayed the English rule in the East, prophesied its decline. Chong spoke of China coming into her own. Gales argued tactfully.

And all the while he was thinking about McGill and Stafford, unknown to each other, yet both prisoners somewhere in the dark depths of the temple. It was easy to see that Gales had been taken for what he pretended he was. They did not suspect him of being any other besides a station man from over the mountain. After a couple of drinks, Chong ventured:

"Perhaps, my dear Galeson, you would like to bathe and brush up a bit."

"Thanks. I'd like to," grinned Gales.

"See you at tiffin," put in Badajoz.

Later, having bathed and shaved and put on a clean white shirt which a servant had brought him, Gales sat in his bedroom and stared across the thick Burmese jungle. He hoped Judith had not strayed from the spot where they had parted. He hoped McGill was still all right—Stafford, too. It was logical to conclude that the devils would refrain from inflicting their torture until he himself had gone on his way.

Tiffin passed, and the men smoked and chatted for an hour. Then Tsing Chong went off for a nap, and Badajoz drifted out to one of the other buildings. Gales went to his room. There was nothing much he could do until nightfall.

About four o'clock that afternoon he received a distinct shock. Getting up from a siesta, he went over to the window. He looked out, and his hands knotted,

his jaw set hard. Badajoz was leading Judith across the square toward the temple.

"God!" he bit off.

She had probably become restless and, thinking he had walked into a trap, had come to investigate. Badajoz had picked her up. Now what to do? Judith, Stafford, McGill—all three in the hands of the tong. And perhaps his freedom was being imperiled even now. It all depended on how Judith spoke, what she said. Would she, too, be clever enough to play a game?

He pivoted sharply. It would be best not to go down directly. If they met, Judith might show surprise. He paced back and forth, hoping against hope that luck would stay with him, for only through himself, now, could the others be saved, if at all.

At the end of half an hour he pulled himself together and went downstairs. He ran into Badajoz in the chamber below, and remarked, curiously and with a roguish twinkle in his eye:

"I didn't know there were any white women in these parts."

Badajoz winked. "Oh, you saw her?"

"Was looking out the window."

"Just so." Badajoz looked around and then said: "Strange case. She's dazed. Doesn't know her name. Doesn't know where she comes from. Doesn't know why she's here. Just keeps staring ahead of her all the time." He lowered his voice and winked again. "Pretty, Galeson—pretty as hell! I think I'm going to have a fine time here."

Inwardly Gales felt like breaking the man's jaw. On the surface, he smiled and shrugged. He rather sensed that Judith also was playing a game.

"Where do you suppose she's from?" he wondered aloud.

"Hell knows," replied Badajoz. "But I'm not worrying much. She's here, and that is all that matters."

He walked off, and Gales stared after him with bitter eyes. She was, evidently, in the hands of Badajoz now, which was a fate no less worse than if she had been ensnared by the tong. On his way to dinner that evening he heard hot words in Chong's private room. Badajoz and the Chinese were arguing. "The girl is mine," he heard Badajoz snap. "I found her, and you leave your hands off. You've got one ruby, and when this Stafford comes across you get the other one. I don't know who she is, but she's mine."

"She is desirable, Badajoz, and I desire her," said Tsing Chong.

"Not if I'm standing up."

“Well, let it drop for the present,” sighed the Chinese.

“For all time,” supplemented Badajoz. “She’s mine.”

There was no reply to this, and when Gales heard them walking around, he moved. From a niche in the corridor he saw Badajoz come out, walk a short distance and pause before another door, stroking his chin musingly. After a moment Badajoz chuckled, sighed and walked away. That, then, was the door leading to Judith’s room. Gales marked it in his memory, and went on in to dinner. Over the meal Badajoz and Tsing Chong spoke little. A woman had come between them, and bitterness existed in each heart.

After an hour of smoking, Gales got up, yawned and said: “Guess I’ll turn in, if you don’t mind. Want to get an early start.”

They seemed pleased at this, and Gales went upstairs, but not, by any means, to bed. Before him, he knew, lay a night heavy with danger. Three lives were on his hands. Somehow, he must free Judith, McGill and Stafford. And he must do it from darkness to dawn. Tomorrow it was expected of him to move on. Well, he was ready—himself against every devil in the Temple of Vengeance!

#### CHAPTER IV GALES ZOOMS TO ACTION

IT WAS about ten that he slipped out of his room and went downstairs. Voices below made him descend cautiously, with his hand in his pocket, gripping his Colt’s automatic. Curtains barred the way, but he could tell from the needles of radiance that the main room was light. He crept up behind the curtains and peered between the folds. The scene before him was a dramatic one.

Tsing Chong was sitting before the table—large, obese, lazy-eyed, smoking a long-stemmed pipe. Badajoz leaned indolently against the wall drawing on a cigarette. Facing Tsing Chong stood a tall, militarily straight man. On either side of him was a ragged, piratical-looking guard. The tall man had a ragged, unkempt beard, but he was young, and there was a set, resolute expression on his haggard face and steady defiance in his gray eyes. His hands were bound behind his back. There were bruises and welts on his naked back and arms.

“Stafford,” Tsing Chong was saying, “you cannot beat me. I have you in my power. One of the rubies is in possession of the Tsing family. The other you possess, somewhere. You will tell me where it is hidden.”

“No,” ground out Stafford.

“Ah, but yes,” insisted Chong. “The torture you have undergone is nothing to what you will receive if you do not speak. You will be thrown into the den of the reptiles. Does that intrigue you?”

“No, it doesn’t! But I’ll not speak. So far I have been on the receiving end of bad luck, Chong, but the tables will turn. Yes, I have that ruby somewhere, and I’m going, to get the one you have.”

“Stafford, you are just a little out of your mind. Such talk when you are at my mercy!”

Stafford chuckled harshly. “You won’t do away with me, Chong. No, you won’t. What good would it do? It wouldn’t get you the ruby. Oh, you may try some of your rotten tricks, and give me some more of the whip, but I’ve stood it so far and I can stand it longer. You’re a hound, Chong, a yellow dog, and so is that damned renegade standing against the wall!”

Tsing Chong heaved and his face darkened with anger. Badajoz chuckled and went on smoking.

“We will see,” threatened Chong. “Bit by bit you shall die, and with your last breath you will tell me.”

“Never!” said Stafford. “I’ll get away before that time. You can’t beat me, Chong. I’m a lucky man.”

“Take him away!” Chong flung at the guards.

The guards prodded Stafford, and he strode out, limping a little on his right leg.

When they had gone Badajoz said: “Better save the fellow I brought in this morning, until this station man leaves.”

“Yes,” growled Chong. “Tomorrow night we’ll give him to the snakes.”

Badajoz yawned, said good-night and headed for the curtains.

Gales stepped back and darted behind a pillar. He saw Badajoz again pause before Judith’s door, then chuckle softly to himself and move on toward his own room. After a moment Gales returned to the curtains and seeing that Chong had gone, crossed the room, passed on into the shrine room and groped his way through the darkness. In a minute he was outside.

Casually he drifted over to the shed in which the monoplane was kept. A few natives stirred here and there, but made no move. They were used to seeing him around, and apparently assumed that he was merely out for a walk in the evening cool. He edged

his way into the shed and cautiously looked in the rear cockpit. He lit a match and ran his eyes over the dashboard. He knew the plane. He had driven one of the same type before. He found, too, what he had hoped he would find—a gasoline gauge. It registered about two-hundred-and-fifty gallons. Badajoz must have loaded up again after the flight from Singapore.

Satisfied, he left the shed. Now to locate McGill, and then Stafford. He was heading back for the temple when he saw a strange shape moving swiftly through the shadows. He paused, unable at first to make out just what it was. And then he saw. It was somebody carrying somebody else.

It was Badajoz escaping with Judith! He was running toward the shed, with Judith in his arms, bound and gagged. Doubtless Tsing Chong had wanted her too, and Badajoz was double-crossing him. Gales did not move until Badajoz reached the shed. Then he started, with his gun drawn. He did not want to make any noise and rouse the Temple, but if he were forced to, he would.

He reached the shed just as Badajoz was lifting Judith into the front cockpit. Badajoz heard him and whirled, leaving the girl draped over the coaming. He pulled his revolver, but did not fire. He, too, it was patent, wanted silence. He struck with the barrel as Gales sailed into him.

“What are you butting in for?” he snapped.

“Just for fun,” shot back Gales.

They clashed and wheeled around in the darkness, clubbing their guns savagely. Badajoz was a tough-limbed man and he knew plenty of dirty tricks. But Gales had not knocked around the Coast with his eyes closed, and he knew some tricks himself. Silently, intensely, they struggled back and forth, and Badajoz proved a hard and slippery man to handle. Twice he cracked Gales on the jaw, but Gales held on until his head cleared, and then bored in.

He told himself that he must win this fight. It was, in a way, the key to any success which he might win. If Badajoz keeled him over, knocked him out, and zoomed away with the girl, the temple would be awakened and Tsing Chong would boil with rage. It would eliminate any chance for Gales to snoop around and find the whereabouts of McGill and Stafford, for the temple would be in turmoil all night, and every move he might make would be watched.

Hence he fought as he had never fought before. He was fighting not only for his own life, but for the lives of three other persons. Upon his initial success

depended the safety of the others. Badajoz must have sensed this new fury, for he found himself entirely on the defensive, warding off blow after blow, giving ground, panting, trying with all his might to curb the terrific attack of his opponent.

And Gales felt that he was gaining. Yet he did not let up. He drove in relentlessly. He struck out with both fists, hitting as solidly with one as with the other. He rocked Badajoz' head with terrific rights and lefts, slashed at his stomach, crashed to his jaw, blackened his eyes. His own face was streaked with blood, but his opponent's was a mess. His final blow was a long, straight right that collided squarely with Badajoz' jaw and felled him like a log. Gales bent down, found his own and Badajoz' gun on the floor, and shoved them into his pockets.

Then he turned to Judith, pulled her down from the coaming of the cockpit and with his jack-knife cut away her bonds. She held on to him, panting.

“Oh, thank God you came in time!” she shuddered.

“You were clever,” he said, “to act your part.”

“It was the only way. I thought they had caught you.”

“Listen!” he said crisply. “This has only just begun. I've got to get McGill and your husband. I saw your husband tonight. The Chink hasn't got the ruby out of him yet—”

“Brett's still alive?” she cried.

“Yes. A bit ragged, but still strong. Refused to give up the ruby.”

“I don't, I can't understand where he has it.”

“Anyhow, let's get this over with first,” cut in Gales. “You hide in here, and for Lord's sake stay here. I'll truss up this renegade. Then I'll sneak back and try to locate Mike and Brett. When you hear shots beginning to pop, start the engine in this plane. I'll show you where the starter is and just what to do.”

He explained briefly about the plane's mechanism, and then turned to Badajoz, who was groaning faintly. He leaned down, tore strips of cloth from the man's own shirt, bound him hand and foot and gagged him securely. Then he carried him into a dark corner and covered him with a piece of canvas.

“All right,” he said to Judith. “Now keep on your toes, and under no conditions leave the plane. That clear?”

“Yes,” she breathed. “Be careful!”

“Leave it to me!” he clipped, and crept out.

He might have been a little brusque, but he was in a tight corner and had to work fast. There was no time for gentle, rounded phraseology, and Gales was

not a gentle man anyhow. It was Gales in action, of the notorious partnership of Gales and McGill, free-lances of the air, birdmen of fortune, the wildest brace of adventurers that ever came out of America. Ordinarily they went into action to make money, in pursuit of a fortune, but in this case they had jumped into hot water to save a woman, and they were not the ones to back out when the water got too hot. McGill had got caught doing it, but Gales had carried on, and was still carrying on. Nor would Mike McGill have done less.

Gales reached the temple and entered with a resolute step. Once inside, he slowed down, proceeding casually. On his way across the next room he stopped short when Tsing Chong entered from another chamber. The Chinese showed surprise at his bloody condition.

"What is the matter?" he asked, bending his brows.

Gales had to think quickly. He barked, a little angrily:

"It's pretty tough when a man can't go out for a walk. I couldn't sleep, so I went out for a stroll and smoke. One of your gang around here took a crack at me. What's the idea, anyhow?"

"It is most unfortunate," said the Chinese. "Where is the man? I shall deal with him."

"I dealt with him," lied Gales. "Pounded his head off. Guess he's still running. Was, last time I saw him."

"I sincerely deplore the occurrence," went on Tsing Chong. "Please accept my apologies."

"S all right," shot back Gales, and headed off for his room.

But he did not go there. He switched off into another corridor, proceeding cautiously, his senses on the alert, his ears attuned to every slight sound. There were no lights. It was pitch dark, and he had to feel his way with his hands rubbing along the walls. He could feel that he was going- down an incline. He reached a niche in the wall and paused.

There was a sound somewhere behind and, looking about, he saw a faint yellow radiance cast by some light that was not yet in sight, but coming his way. He pressed far back in the niche, and presently he heard soft-padding footsteps. Then he heard a gaunt Chinese shuffle by carrying a candle and a rifle. It was one of the two guards whom Gales had seen beside Stafford in Tsing Chong's room that evening. Gales did not strike out. He could have knocked the man senseless with one blow, but he had other plans. He leaned out and watched the progress of the candle, saw it stop farther on, heard the click of a bolt. The man and

the candle disappeared, but the glow remained in the corridor.

Gales stepped out of the niche and cat-footed in that direction. He slowed down as he heard a familiar voice issuing from the open door. It was McGill talking, and there was no doubt that he was sore as a boil.

"To hell with your lousy water!" he was saying. "Bring me a drink o' gin, something I can trust. Sure, I'm dry, but d' you think I'd take a chance on the water in this here dump? Never on your natural, you dog-faced mutt! Go on! Get the hell out o' here! I'll go dry!"

It was just like Mike, mused Gales, creeping nearer. He drew his gun and looked into the dim, small dudgeon. Mike was lying on the floor, bound hand and foot. The guard stood over him, his back to Gales. Gales moved so silently, so quickly, that even McGill was unaware of his presence until he had struck. The guard slumped down without a murmur. The candle dropped, but Gales picked it up before it went out.

"Bill!" exploded Mike.

"Shut up, you blamed idiot!" rasped Gales. "Want to bring the whole gang down on us?"

"Well, well, my old partner, Bill Gales, himself in person! Here, cut these damn ropes, Bill. How'd you do it, partner?"

"No time to explain." Gales had drawn his jack-knife, and he slashed away the ropes that bound McGill.

"Cripes, I'm stiff!" complained McGill, jumping up.

"You'd be a lot stiller if I hadn't turned up," chided Gales.

"You're right, bud. Got anything on your hip?"

"Yes," clipped Gales. "And you'll need it, old-timer."

He thrust a revolver into his partner's hand, the one he had taken from Badajoz.

"Aw, Bill!" chuckled McGill.

"Now pipe down, Mike. There's dirty work ahead. I've trussed up the bum that brought you here. Judith, the girl we saved, is ready to step on the starter of the monoplane the minute we break for it. But we've got to get her hubansd, Brett Stafford."

"She told me about him, in Singapore."

"Know where he is?"

"Must be next to me, in the other dungeon. Here, this Chink's got keys on him."

Gales found a bunch of keys, took the Chinaman's rifle and went with McGill into the corridor. At the next door they stopped, and with one of the keys Gales opened it and looked in, holding the candle over his

head. Stafford was lying on the floor, well bound. He looked up quizzically.

“Cut him loose, Mike,” Gales clipped.

McGill took the jack-knife and jumped to it. In a trice they had Stafford on his feet.

“Well, friends, what’s this all about?”

Gales handed him the rifle. “We’ll get out now. Your wife is waiting outside in a monoplane—”

“My wife! Judith?”

“Right,” muttered Gales. “No questions, please. No time. The idea is to get out, and get quick. You got that ruby of yours hidden somewhere. If you have, get it fast.”

“I’ve got it,” said Stafford. “Let’s go.”

“And the Chink never found it?”

“No.”

In single file they crept along, closed and locked the door behind the unconscious guard, and proceeded cautiously. A little farther on Gales blew out the candle.

“This is our last chance,” he said in a low voice.

“Take it easy, and if we have to shoot, shoot quick!”

“You said it,” murmured McGill.

“Lead on,” added Stafford.

## CHAPTER V THE EAGLES SOAR

THEY ran into trouble before they expected it. A roving guard bumped into them, and his gun went off. McGill cracked him over the head with his revolver, and the three broke into a run. When they reached the main room two more guards came tearing in from the shrine chamber and fired point blank. The shots went wild, and Stafford brought down one of the men with a low, fast shot. McGill smacked down the other, and Tsing Chong, accompanied by two big fellows, rushed in from another room.

Chong roared and whipped up a blunt automatic. He fired at Stafford, and the slug burned across that man’s shoulder. Stafford returned the shot promptly and Chong reeled sidewise. He roared again and fired while he reeled. The bullet crashed a vase to smithereens, but did no damage. Chong pitched down to the floor.

Gales and McGill brought the other two down, and Stafford leaped to the fallen tong man, ransacked his clothing and then leaped back and up with a shout of victory. In his hand he held a blood-red ruby.

“Got the pair now!” he shouted.

The three bunched and dove for the shrine room. They clashed with half a dozen men armed with knives, and blood spouted. McGill zoomed and banked on a big fellow’s neck. Both went down, but only McGill stood up again. They were fighting in the gloom of the shrine room, but presently more men came pounding in with torches. Occasional shots rapped out from the white men, but most of the brawling was at close quarters.

Gales had a cut over the eye and one on the jaw. He was pretty much banged up, but he was still in mid-career, active, on his toes, fighting a good fight. Stafford hopped about, still limping a bit in his right leg, streaming sweat, slamming his rifle about with deadly accuracy.

The white men were outnumbered, but they were white men who cared not a rap for odds, and they were fighting not only for themselves, but for the woman waiting out in the shed. If they failed, she would be captured by the remainder of the tong. They must not fail.

Gales was battering his way toward the entrance, with Stafford on his left and McGill on his right. Faintly, above the din of the conflict, he could hear the roar of the monoplane’s engine. This acted as an incentive to greater effort, and he cut through the yellow mob like a scythe. The three of them broke out into the starlit night, with the Chinese surging after them.

“Listen!” barked Stafford. “You boys beat it for the plane and take off while I cover your rear. You’ve got to save Judith.”

“I’m covering the rear, Stafford!” shot back Gales. “I’ve got more shells. Beat it for the plane. Mike, you, too. Both o’ you roll it out and taxi along. I’ll hop on later.”

“Let me cover up, Bill,” insisted McGill.

“Darnmit, no! Get going!”

McGill hesitated no longer. He grabbed Stafford’s arm and hustled him along toward the shed.

Gales had slipped in a fresh clip of cartridges. He made it hot for the yellow wolves. They were stalking him en masse with hungry knives, as he backed up slowly, step by step, and shot any man who dared to leap ahead. A ragged, grimy, bloody man, he meant business, and his automatic never spoke in vain. He even challenged the mob with a brazen, hard-boiled grin. He had a habit of grinning at death.

Behind him he heard the roar of the plane rise

in volume. Then he heard it bumping along, and he threw about a quick glance, then spun sharp to bring down a man who had leaped for him. The plane was bearing down on him. The mob saw it and backed away and to one side. He heard the plane right behind him now. He pivoted and raced toward it. The mob saw the trick and tore after him.

Gales leaped, caught, hold of a strut and swung up. Three yellow men sprang for his legs. Gales kicked back, knocked over two, while the third missed his hold. Stafford leaned over the forward cockpit to grip his hand. He hauled hard, and Gales swung up, poised for a moment and then dropped down in the after cockpit beside McGill, who was at the controls. Stafford and Judith were ahead of them.

Shouts of anger and dismay rose from the temple. The wheels of the plane left the field. McGill, grinning broadly, pulled back the stick and drove for altitude in a thundering zoom. The motor was a dream—a twelve-cylinder V-type Hispano—and the entire plane was new, sturdy and swift. At a thousand feet he eased the stick to the left, pressed his left foot on the rudder bar and circled above the temple. Then he climbed higher, went up to seven thousand feet, leveled the plane's flight and throttled, down.

"Cripes, Bill," he shouted, "this crate is a beaut! Listen t' that engine—a charm!"

"Mike," yelled back Gales, "it's ours. Let the Other piece of junk rot on the river."

Stafford looked around, grinned and waved his hand.

"You chaps are the real stuff," he called. "Judith's

been shouting in my ear all about you. I'm going to make you a present of one of the rubies."

"No you're not!" yelled McGill. "You keep 'em. We got our share in this plane."

"Got both o' them, eh?" asked Gales.

"Yes." Stafford grinned again. "The tong searched high and low for mine, but I fooled them. I pulled an old trick. Kaffir trick. I was wounded in the leg in a fight with the Tsing men, and stuck the ruby in the wound. It's still there. A little operation and it'll be out."

Gales remembered his limp, and marveled at the raw courage of the man. Judith looked around and smiled at the two birdmen.

"Where are we bound?" she called.

"Anywhere," shouted back Gales.

"How about Rangoon?" asked Stafford.

"Say," yelled McGill, "do they have good liquor there?"

"You bet!" shouted Stafford.

"'Ray for Rangoon!" boomed McGill, and roared into another zoom.

Gales grinned, and once again his young eyes sparkled through all the battle grime on his face. He poked McGill in the ribs, took the joy-stick away from him, and lifted the plane up to eight thousand feet. At a hundred miles an hour he tore through the moonlight night, while below brooded the jungles of Burma, and behind the Temple of Vengeance.

Beyond—Rangoon, temple bells and maybe adventure.