January

Adventure

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THE BIRDSWAY

The Woman Speaks:

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ADVENTURE *for* FEBRUARY

"A MAGAZINE wherein men and women can satisfy their natural and desirable hunger for adventure."

We *know* by this time what we so strongly *believed* a few months ago—hat there was a welcome waiting for such a magazine as ***ADVENTURE*** vas planned to be. By numberless cordial letters from friendly readers, y sheaves of enthusiastic newspaper comment, and, most convincing vidence of all, by the phenomenal sale of the first and second numbers f the magazine, we are granted the proof.

Complaints? Yes, a good many, from readers who have reported that hey had to sit up till all hours because they couldn't put the magazine own unfinished, and because they have to wait month by month for the uccessive instalments of ***Yellow Men and Gold,*** the tremendous adven-ure story of the South Pacific, by Gouverneur Morris.

The next number of ***ADVENTURE*** will contain as its complete ovel, ***The Mahogany Garden,*** by Frank Stanton, Jr., a thrilling story of American adventure in Mexico, with love, mystery and jealousy mingled. The recent threat of complications between the United States and Mexico ives timeliness as well as additional interest to the tale.

The two big serials advance through more powerful climaxes, *'ellow Men and Gold* to a splendid conclusion of treasure-tragedy nd romance, and ***Can A Man Be True?*** to a situation of great intensity.

Flies in Amber, by Robert Dunn, is a big story of danger and evotion through Alaskan cold, while in contrast with it is ***The Palm-)il Ruffian,*** by Thomas Samson Miller, a tale of primitive passions n the torrid West Coast of Africa.

For romantic, swashbuckling adventure of centuries ago, there is he charming, spirited story by Agnes and Egerton Castle, ***The Great Codescan's Secret Thrust,*** of almost novelette length.

In the field of adventure in wild life there are ***Tigre and Isola,*** y Will Thompson; ***The Ends of Justice,*** by C. Langton Clarke, and ***)ixie Pasha,*** by Thomas P. Byron.

In humorous adventure we have ***Henery's Literary Success,*** nother story of Hiram Bunker, Bill Bosun and Captain Moses, by . W. Muller; and ***The Smooth Bore Hermanos,*** by Carl Henry.

When we turn from fiction to fact adventure, the tales are equally lluring. ***Captain George B. Boynton, Master Adventurer,*** continues he revelations of his career as begun in the present number under he title ***Looking for Trouble,*** and Alfred Jordan tells stories of ***Elephant Hunting in East Africa*** that are stirring indeed. See the oregoing only by way of example.

One last warning. This is no magazine for Insomniacs.

ADVENTURE

Vol·1 January 1911 No·3

The Bonds of Circumstance

By Elisabeth Woodbridge

IT WAS early morning on Mt. Darwin. From base to summit its whole stupendous bulk was clear of cloud, though the practised eye could discern signs of the cloud-cap that would gather later about the peak. On one of the upper slopes of the mountain Newcome Olcott was advancing slowly. Every few hundred feet he paused and bent forward in the position that at these altitudes brings most speedy relief to the heart—alpenstock set ahead, hands resting on its butt, forehead on hands.

He was on the keen edge of a long *arête* leading up toward the summit itself from the ice-walls he had just surmounted. It was like the back of a horse—a thin white horse. On the east it slanted off in vast and dazzling snow-slopes; on the west, where the blue shadows still lingered, it fell away abruptly in masses of jagged, crumbling rock, treacherous with ice-glare and snow-troughs, to the glaciers, thousands of feet below. Straight ahead, it was blocked by a low peak.

Olcott, scrutinizing it, took out his pocket aneroid. It registered 19,800 feet. This, then, was not the main summit, for that was rated at 22,000. He plodded forward. At each step his feet sank deep in snow, but it was light, and he kept on steadily, save for the pauses now and then when he bent over his stock.

In half an hour he had almost rounded the

rocky base of the small peak and—yes, there ahead rose the main summit, 2,000 feet and more above him, but with no obstacles between except those of the great altitude. If heart and lungs and stomach held out he could make it. And they would.

He rose from the rock where he had been leaning for a moment, put up his aneroid, and began working his way carefully among the rocks toward the ridge that he was to follow. It was a ridge like that he had just left; rather, it was the same ridge, of which the minor peak was only an interruption. The sun was too low still for a photograph. When he came back he would photograph this ridge and the main peak from here, and the ridge would have his own footprints in its gleaming snow—the first footprints these solitary reaches had ever known. He could see the picture as it would look.

As he drew himself around the last great rock and turned to face up the *arête*, he stopped, staggering as though he had been struck. That line of marks in the snow ahead of him! Tracks—footprints in the snow—a man's footprints! He stood, swaying a little under the shock, staring at the silent trail where it stretched away up the ridge, its snow hollows blue-shadowed, its mounded edges dazzling white.

For a moment, with one of those strange mental twists that come to men on these heights, he thought the footprints were his own. "Been up there already," he muttered. "Coming back now. Mighty quick work that—hold up!" His forehead knotted, he pulled out his watch: "Eight-thirty—Brockmann turned back at seven-thirty—that's an hour—oh—!" He sank down again on the rocks as his mind cleared and the truth burst upon him. Some one was ahead of him!

They had been up, and returned—he saw now that the tracks were deep and broad, as by feet going two ways. That camp around on the west slope of the mountain! They must have come up the west face, the impossible west face! Darwin had been conquered—and he—he—"Oh—!" he muttered again. He had not given up a whole Summer, left his work in the hospital, and broken his heart over that awful climb—half-killed Brockmann, too, and sent him back alone and sick—all for the sake of coming in—second—or third! He sat dazed, weak, all the strength gone out of him.

Suddenly he was aware of a sound; it was almost like—it *was* a voice—a call! He pulled himself up out of the huddle in which he had sunk down, and listened. He turned his head this way and that to locate its direction—behind him, it came from behind, and from the west side of the rocky peak he had just passed. He scanned it closely. It was on that side a jumble of rotten rock like all the west side of the mountain, with deep snow in the hollows and glare ice on the steep faces. At one point, close to the precipitous main ridge, his eye caught something that was neither snow, rock nor ice. It was a brown woolen cap.

He scrambled over the rocks toward it, sinking waist-deep in snow here and there, and choosing his holds carefully on the jagged rocks that crumbled sometimes under his touch. In a few moments he could see, in a protected angle, the prostrate figure of a man. He was rather a ghastly sight as he lay there. His head had evidently been badly knocked up against the rocks and had been bleeding from gashes on the face and under the hair. "It's my head!" he gasped, as Olcott bent over him.

Olcott pulled out his whisky-flask, drew off the metal cup from its bottom, filled it, and kneeling beside the stranger, raised his head and poured the whisky into his mouth. The lips drank and the throat swallowed mechanically. Then the eyes opened—blue eyes, bleared by glare and exposure. He tried to raise his head, but it fell back on Olcott's knee. Another drink, however, and he was able to sit up, though with considerable effort.

"How long have you been here?" said Olcott.

"Yesterday," he murmured.

"You spent the night here?"

"There." He waved his hand toward a snow-hollow in the rocks, where a deep hole had been scooped out. A camera was wedged in the rock beside it.

"Anybody with you?"

"Not now—rope broke." Again he gestured, this time toward the rotten crumble of precipice to the west. Olcott instinctively gripped the rock beside him as he looked off. Then he administered more whisky and took a swallow himself. "Did you—" he hesitated—"had you made the top?"

"Yes." There was a faint gleam of satisfaction on the mauled face.

"I congratulate you," said Olcott dryly. "Now how are you going to get down?"

"Oh, somehow. I'm better now. You see," he paused to draw some short, hoarse breaths, "my guide had—most of the—whisky—and the food and stuff."

"Food! Here!" He swung round his rucksack and pulled out a sherry-bottle. "Egg and sherry shaken together."

The man drank. "Gad, that was good! Think I'll crawl back into my hole and have a nap," he murmured drowsily. "You go on to the summit."

"——the summit! Can you stand? Try."

The stranger threw an arm over Olcott's shoulder and rose unsteadily. His head swayed, and he laughed, gasping hoarsely. "Are my feet under me?" he said. "I don't feel them."

"Never mind. Work your legs. Try a step."

They moved a few feet, then stopped for more whisky. The sun was on them now, and its direct rays were hot. They sat a few minutes on the rocks, feeling its warmth, and Olcott drew out an extra pair of dark glasses. "Here," he said curtly. The excitement of the adventure was passing off.

"Thanks. I'm fit. Where's the camera?"

"Don't load yourself up, man!" said Olcott sharply.

"The camera," he insisted. "It's got the whole panorama from the summit."

"Lord! Sit here while I get it." Olcott climbed back, and reached a long arm across the rock. "Same make as mine." He swung his rucksack round, opened it, took out his own camera, and substituted the other. "No room for both," he remarked. "And mine's empty," rather grimly.

"See here, stranger! I'm all right now. Load me up with whisky and I can go down alone. You go on up."

"Get on, will you?" said Olcott crisply. "I know what I'm about. I'm a surgeon. That head of yours needs attention. You must come back to my camp."

They moved slowly around under the peak, back to the ridge up which Olcott had come. "Now," he said, "you can never go down the way you came, nor the way I came either. But there's a chance if we glissade here. Can you do it?"

"If I'm drunk enough. How much whisky is there left?"

"Enough. Finish this. Now here's a fresh bottle—no, keep it yourself. We may get separated. Now can you go?" For answer the other grasped his stock and set it behind him, rudderwise. It was evidently not his first experience. Olcott did the same. As they stood there, braced, the stranger turned,

"My name's Hathaway—George Hathaway."

"Mine is Newcome Olcott."

Ready—they were off—a whirl of white, a trail of broken snow.

The character of Mt. Darwin, as all mountain-climbers will know, makes ascent difficult, but descent comparatively easy. Snow slopes and snow-filled clefts whose pitch necessitates long detours may be taken by glissade, and, barring possible accidents, present no serious obstacles to the trained Alpinist. By half-past ten the two men had descended the upper third of the mountain, and had gained the 15,000-foot level, where breathing began to be easier. By noon they were down to 10,000 feet, about on a level with Olcott's base camp, but several miles away from it, since their glissades had of necessity carried them down on the eastern face and the camp was on the southern one.

Then began the task of getting around to the camp. The wounded man's gashes, under the stimulus of the exercise, the whisky and the lower altitude, began bleeding afresh, and snow-packs only partly checked this. However, they worked their way around the east face, along the rock ledges. Hathaway was growing delirious, but his strength held out marvelously, and it began to look as though they might make camp before dark. They had reached ground familiar to Olcott, the trail of a high pass used in Summer by the native tribes.

The only bad spot on it was a narrow *couloir* of half-frozen snow which interrupted the rock-ledge, slanting down almost vertically some five hundred feet to a basin, where a glacier torrent roared. Before crossing this spot they roped; Olcott went first, and reached the rocks on the farther side without difficulty. Hathaway followed. Delirium had loosened his tongue and he was talking continuously now, in tones sometimes thick and scarcely audible, sometimes loud and distinct. Occasionally he broke into snatches of college songs.

As he passed from the rock to the snow,

he set his foot down heavily. The snow edge gave way under him, and he lost his footing.

Olcott threw himself flat upon the ledge, smashing his head against a sharp rock beside him. But the rope did not tighten. Hathaway's body had wedged under a rock just to the left of the narrow foothold. Olcott, partly stunned by the blow on the head, never knew just what happened next. He was dimly conscious of letting himself down to the rock that held Hathaway, and of pulling and pounding at him to get him out from under it; of giving it up and crawling back to the ledge again, leaving Hathaway wedged fast and gaily delirious, filling the twilight with a mad mixture of talk and song. Olcott staggered on down the trail, with sickening tumbles, over ground that under ordinary circumstances would have been easy going. He reached the camp, and pitched forward against the corner post. He remembered being pulled in, and feeling whisky on his tongue; remembered making a desperate effort to force his lips to form words. "Send back," he muttered, "send back!"

II

CONSCIOUSNESS returned to Olcott long before he had any power either of speech or of motion. He lay with his eyes closed, hearing voices now and then, a long way off and very indistinct. Later they seemed to be nearer and clearer and he made out words:

"Yes, he is holding his own. Heart action growing stronger. He'll pull through."

Again he heard a voice, and this time he knew it. It was Meade, the surveyor of their party. "Yes," he was saying, "chiefly shock—tremendous strain on the heart and lungs, you know."

Another voice asked, "Was there any one with him?"

And Meade's voice answered, "Yes, the guide, Brockmann, but he didn't get to the top, you know; had to turn back—mountain sickness."

Olcott at last lifted leaden lids. There was no one with him; the voices came in through the window. Where was he? But it didn't matter. Nothing mattered.

The other voice went on, "Are you sure he made the summit?"

"Oh, yes, sure. Awfully quick time, but there's no doubt. He isn't conscious yet, but we've developed his films and they tell the whole story—a wonderful panorama of the whole range—obviously taken from the top. You get the whole sweep—eight views, overlapping, and two that seem to be of the main peak, taken on the return, for you can see the footprints in the snow leading up toward it. The last two films were blank."

"Could you give us one or two of the views for publication?"

"Well, I rather guess not! We don't let them go out of our hands. They belong to Dr. Olcott. We've notified the railroad people and they wired congratulations. We sha'n't do anything more until the Doctor's better. But you're all right to say he got to the summit. There's no question about that."

"Dr. Olcott, did you say?"

"Dr. Newcome Olcott, surgeon, cranial specialist, St. Paul."

"Any family?"

"Not immediate."

"Shall you take him back soon?"

"As soon as it is safe. We brought him down here the next day, where we could make him comfortable. It may be a matter of a week or more."

"Thank you."

"By the way," Meade's voice rose, "do you know anything about the other party that started up Darwin? We hear there was a camp on the northwest shoulder."

"Yes, men from New York State. They've gone. Two of them lost. They've found one on a glacier."

"Fell?"

"Yes. But they couldn't find the other."

Olcott's eyes closed again. When he became conscious once more, Meade was in the room. He came over beside the bed: "Hello, old man! Waked up at last? Don't try to talk. You'll do that later. We know about it anyway. We've got your films, you know. Now drink this, and go to sleep again."

And he went out.

The next day when he came in, Olcott made an effort to speak. "Did you send back?" he murmured faintly. He could not think of Hathaway's name, nor indeed was he quite clear what ought to be done, but he knew they must send back for something, and he connected it with a vision of

a man lying under a rock. Meade looked puzzled. "Send back? Oh, yes, that was what you said when you tumbled into camp. We thought you might have left some of your stuff up above, though it seemed to be all there. And Brockmann did go back next day, as far as the Caldron. You must have had a nasty time there, the place was all blood-stains, he said. Anyhow, there's nothing missing, so you needn't worry. Guess you don't know much about what did happen on the way down. You were 'nutty' when you got in all right."

Olcott's eyes closed again. Meade's speech, strung out to soothe him, only troubled him and immensely wearied him. He was too weak to reason anything out, but he grasped the fact that the man was gone. He must have tried to climb up, and slipped over into the Caldron. In his sick fancy he saw Hathaway wedged under the rock, saw him turn to free himself, saw him slipping, singing as he went, slipping and singing, slipping—the vision became a dream, through which he could hear Meade saying, "Delirious again! Where's the bromide?"

The next time he waked he felt like himself, though weak. Meade came in, "Gad! You look more natural! Know where you are? We got you right down here to the railroad surveyor's place. Better than camp, anyhow. No, don't talk; I'll tell you everything. We've developed your films—dandies—they show up the whole range. What a time you'll have at the club! And a newspaper man was here last week—rushed all the way from St. Paul—and wanted some of the views! The cheek of these reporters!"

"But, Meade——" began Olcott, fumbling for words and ideas. Meade's large hand came down over his mouth, and Meade's large, kind voice said, "Shut it off, Doctor. You'll have talking enough to do later—more than you want. You're famous, you see. Everybody knows you've climbed Darwin. Now go to sleep."

III

ON A WARM evening in late May of the following year, Dr. Olcott sat in his study smoking. It was a typical man's room—books, skins, antlers, pictures—the last chiefly of snow mountains: the Matterhorn, the Monte Rosa group, Mt. McKinley, Aconcagua. The Doctor sat in his favorite lounging-chair, his head resting against the white fur of a bear-skin thrown over its back, the cigar poised delicately in his shapely fingers, while his golden-brown eyes now idly followed the blue rings of smoke as they rose toward the ceiling, now fixed themselves, with a quick change to professional attentiveness, upon the face of a young man who lay on the lounge opposite. Finally he spoke:

"You're looking well to-night. Taking that beard off is an improvement." The young man rubbed his chin appreciatively.

"Feels good, too." Then his hand went to the light brown stubble of his late shaven head and he added with a rueful smile, "I sha'n't need a hair-cut for some time, though. Your hospital barbers know how to do a thorough job."

He let his long legs slide lazily off the lounge and, rising slowly, wandered over to a small mirror. "Makes me look like a baby!" He turned to the Doctor, his blue eyes full at once of drollery and vexation. "Wonder how old I am, any way! What a blamed queer business it all is—not to know my own name, and all! Makes me feel like a fool! There's my mother and sister—I've been thinking all day about them, while I've been alone here." He dropped on the sofa and went on, "I know I have a mother and sister—I can see them. But so long as I can't get hold of any names, they might just as well be in another world—or I might."

"We advertised you in the papers, of course," said Dr. Olcott, "and several people came, before and after the operation, to look at you, but nobody was willing to claim you."

"Don't blame 'em. Wish I could claim myself, though."

"Now, if you had had red hair, or brown eyes, or a Roman nose——"

"Mine has a sort of knob in the middle," the young man remarked meditatively, running his finger carefully up and down the member in question.

"—or a broken front tooth, we might have been able to dispose of you. All those things were asked for. And once we thought you'd just suit; the colors were all right, but you proved to be four inches too tall."

"Hard luck!"

"The fact is, your people, wherever they are, probably gave you up long ago. I should judge from the length of that beard that you'd been in that condition a good many months."

"What a crop it was! The barber got enough to stuff a pillow." While he talked his eyes kept returning to the photographs of the snow mountains, especially the big one of the Matterhorn that hung opposite him. "Seems as if——" he murmured. He rose again and sauntered over to it, then to the others in turn.

"Perhaps you were a mountain-climber in your previous state of existence," said Dr. Olcott, making more rings.

"These certainly seem very familiar. What are these? Some more?" He had paused by a table set in a corner, and began removing some pamphlets that overlay a large framed photograph.

The doctor stopped making rings. "Those are views of Mt. Darwin."

"'Presented by his friends of the Alpine Club,'" the young man read slowly. "Jiminy! What a splendid lot of peaks! Darwin—Darwin—where's that? Must be a big fellow. Here—what's this?" He drew out a smaller picture that had lain under the other. "'Alpine Club' again—more Darwin—a snow-ridge. And look at the footprints! How the shadows stand out!"

He carried the picture over and set it on the floor against the big desk that occupied the center of the room, so that he could see it from the lounge. Then he stretched himself out again and went on smoking, his eyes wandering from the smaller picture to the larger one in the corner. "Darwin—where is it? Seems as if I'd known something about it once. Oh, Lord! Why can't I remember *something!*" He sat up, rubbing his forehead dejectedly.

A wave of dark color swept over the Doctor's face. He threw his cigar in the fire, saying sharply, "If you worry so, you'll give yourself a set-back. These things can't be hurried. Now go to bed."

When he had seen his patient to his room, he returned to the study, sat down at his desk and wrote out the following telegram:

Supt. Post Hospital, Fort George, British Columbia.

Man sent by you April twenty-first recovering. Cranial fracture, operation successful, but memory defective. Have you data assisting identification? NEWCOME OLCOTT.

After he had written this he sat looking at it irresolutely. Finally he threw up his head with a sharp, half-defiant motion, drew the telephone over to him, and sent off the message.

As he hung up the receiver and pushed the telephone back, he wheeled his chair a trifle to face the Darwin panorama over in the corner. His foot struck the smaller Darwin picture which still rested against the desk where Hathaway had placed it, and it fell over. He stooped and picked it up. The glass was cracked. He held it on his knee a moment, looking at it; then rose and carried it back to the table. He walked slowly to the door, pushed the button that turned out the lights, and the snow-mountains and the furs were left in the dark together.

Three days later Dr. Olcott received a letter from Fort George. It read as follows:

General Hospital, Fort George.

DR. NEWCOME OLCOTT,

Dear Sir:

Yours of the 29th received. The man you speak of was sent to us from Caribou Point. At the time that we sent him to you their statement about him had been mislaid, but we have succeeded in finding it, and inclose it. Dr. Swain wishes to extend to you his congratulations upon your success.

Very truly yours, JOHN H. PETERS, Supt.

The inclosed paper was unsigned:

This man was found at Caribou Point, the present terminal of the new branch of the Fraser and Yukon. He was with a bunch of the Chilkat Indians from the north, and seemed to have a privileged position among them. He spoke a few words of their language, but was clearly not an Indian. His features did not indicate idiocy, and the surveyor of the party has got him away and sent him down to be looked over at some hospital. We understand that the Indians picked him up last Summer in the north.

The Doctor read this at the breakfast-table, where he sat alone, for his patient slept late these days. As he read, the color mounted to his forehead, then faded and left his face gray. So the impossible had happened!

He rose, crushed the papers, tossed them in the waste-basket, and walked to the window. But he had scarcely reached it when he turned, pulled the papers out and, sitting down at his place, began to smooth them out again. His lips were set in a thin line. While he was folding the last paper his man came in with the coffee.

"Martin," he said, and his voice had a metallic ring in it, unlike its usual mellow tone, "telephone to the club, will you, and ask Hendrickson there to look over the files of newspapers for last August. I want everything he has between the eighteenth and the twenty-fifth."

"Yes, sir."

"And will you go down there some time to-day and get them? Leave them in my study."

"Yes, sir."

The Doctor did not see his patient before he left for the hospital. He went through the routine duties there with a blank mind, though his fingers worked with their accustomed clean dexterity. He had an out-of-town operation for that noon, and it was six o'clock when he reached his own study again. He found his guest sitting before a revolving stereoscope filled with Swiss photographs. On the desk lay a big pile of newspapers.

With a brief "good day," he sat down at his desk and began looking over the files. His face was rigid, his long hands manipulated the sheets with an almost dainty facility, his alert eyes ran over the pages with nervous swiftness. At last he caught a headline——

MT. DARWIN CONQUERED—Peak Scaled by Detroit Doctor—Two More Victims This Summer.

He glanced rapidly over the conventional phrases—"impregnable heights," "brilliant achievement," "wonderful photographs," "slowly recovering from strain;" then he read carefully:

As if in premature revenge for having been conquered, Mt. Darwin has this Summer added two to the list of its victims. A party has been camped under the west face, ten miles from Dr. Olcott's camp. Two of the party attempted the ascent at the same time that the daring surgeon made his successful dash, and both were lost. The body of one, Johann Bonn, a Swiss guide, was found on a glacier, to which he had evidently fallen from the precipitous heights above. The other body has not been found, and it is supposed to have disappeared in one of the numerous crevasses, or been buried under an avalanche. The lost man was the geologist of the party, George Hathaway, of Rochester, N. Y.

George Hathaway—of course, that was the name. Olcott sat motionless, holding the paper so tightly that his finger-tips were white.

"By George! these are simply great!" This from the man at the stereoscope.

The Doctor started, wheeled his chair about, and regarded the back of the young man. When he spoke his voice was steady and colorless.

"How are you feeling to-night?"

"Great." The young man went on turning the knobs of the stereoscope.

"Any new clues?"

"Same old story. I know I've seen these places. I'd swear to that, but I can't pin myself down about them."

"Any headache to-day?"

"Not a bit."

"Then read that. No, never mind the first part—begin here." He pointed over his patient's shoulder and then walked around to the other side, where he could watch.

The young man read: "'Johann Bonn'—Bonn—why, I knew him—good man—'the other body—crevasses—George Hatha'—God! *It's me!*"

The paper dropped and he flung himself forward on the table beside the stereoscope, his head buried in his arms and his whole body shaking. The Doctor's set face relaxed and his eyes were moist as he stepped forward and slipped two fingers under the wrist that lay uppermost. He went to a little cupboard in the wall, took out a bottle and a glass, and filled. "Here," he said, "you need it."

Hathaway raised his head. His eyes were wet, his lips were trembling. He drank, then, with an unsteady laugh, "Gad! it knocks a fellow over, you know, to find himself again—that way!"

He rose, swaying a little, and holding by the back of the chair. Dr. Olcott slipped an arm under his shoulder. "You needn't. I'm all right." His eyes were bright.

"George Hathaway," he murmured. "Rochester, of course—My mother!" He turned, "We must send word to her right away—my poor mother!" He sank upon the lounge, his elbow on his knee, his cheek in his hand.

"Can you think of your address there?" said the Doctor, trying to get back to a business tone. "No matter," as Hathaway sat pondering. "I shouldn't advise you to telegraph her direct in any case. The shock might be too great. Remember, she thinks you dead."

"What would you do?" Hathaway sud-

denly looked very happy and boyish as he sat there.

"I would—let me see—here, this will do. I know the head surgeon in the Rochester hospital. I'll telegraph him a statement of the case and ask him to look up your people and have somebody break the news to your mother and sister. He can find out how when he's on the ground."

"Couldn't I go on?"

"You oughtn't to travel for a few days yet. No, we'll telegraph."

He sat down at the desk again, pushed the pile of newspapers to the floor, and wrote.

"Here, see if this is all right:"

George Hathaway, geologist, of Rochester, lost on Darwin, August 15, 19—, is found alive. Cranial fracture, loss of identity, operation successful, patient recovering. Break news to Mrs. Hathaway. Address Dr. Newcome Olcott, St. Paul, Minn.

He pulled the telephone over to him and sent the message. When he swung round again to the lounge Hathaway was lying back on it, his face covered by his crossed arms.

"And now, Mr. George Hathaway, you'd do well to have something to eat and go to bed at once. You've had enough for one day."

The arms came down slowly and the boyish blue eyes regarded the ceiling in dreamy happiness. "My, but it's good to have a whole name all to yourself!" He turned his head, "Bed, did you say? Do you suppose I can sleep until we get an answer? How long do you suppose it will take?"

"It may be several hours or it may not be till to-morrow. It depends on whether Dr. Hanscom is easy to find—it depends on a good many things."

Hathaway glanced at the tall clock in the corner. "Quarter of seven—eight—nine—we might possibly hear by ten, don't you think so?"

"We might, of course. No, really; we couldn't possibly. Hanscom will have to look up friends of your mother; they will have to see her—no, it may take a day or two."

Martin appeared to announce dinner, and they went in. It was a one-sided conversation. Hathaway was full of talk, the Doctor courteous but colorless. When they returned to the study Hathaway picked up the paper from the floor where he had dropped it and reread the notice attentively.

"See here, Doctor, it says we were up there at the same time. Do you suppose that was really so? Of course it wasn't, though—they were just speaking roughly. And anyway, I suppose I didn't get up very far. Isn't it the darnedest thing the way I can't remember anything about that Darwin expedition!"

"Not a bit;" the Doctor's tone was crisply and professionally impersonal. "It would be stranger if you did. An accident like that always destroys memory of the near-by events. Sometimes it comes back after a while, sometimes never."

"Well, I'd like to know what happened to me up there on Darwin. Queer! To think we might have met on top!"

He sauntered over to the Darwin pictures and stood studying them. Dr. Olcott from his desk-chair watched him curiously, his muscles tense as for a spring. With all his professional experience he yet could not help expecting Hathaway to show some sign of recognizing the spot.

None came, however, and the young man set the pictures back against the wall and turned to the Doctor with his usual frank look of admiration and confidence.

"Why do you tuck them away behind a lot of rubbish like that?" he said. "If I'd done it, hanged if I wouldn't have them up on the wall where I could look at them and show them off. One of them's got the glass cracked now."

He came over to the desk and perched on its edge, hugging one knee. He was in buoyant spirits, which were momentarily checked as he looked down at Olcott.

"Perhaps you'd like to work to-night?" he said with sudden compunction. "I don't believe you ought to, though. You look positively sick, Doctor."

"I'm all right. I think I'll go at my letters."

"Well," he slid off the desk, "I'll go back to these." He sat down before the stereoscope. "I'm no good for anything useful, and I suppose you won't let me read."

"No, let reading alone for awhile." Dr. Olcott drew up his chair, pulled out a pack of letters and began looking them over.

Hathaway sat a moment, doing nothing, then he half turned, his elbow over the back of his chair:

"I don't mean to interrupt you, Doctor, but it seems as if I had to tell you how I appreciate what you've done for me. I don't mean the operation only, you know, but your taking me in here with you and all that." He hesitated. "I can't talk about it, you know, but I'm grateful."

The Doctor did not turn. "I understand," he said quietly. "You needn't be grateful. I am interested in your case."

The young man sat a moment, regarding Olcott's back, with a wistful expression in his eyes. Then he faced around to the stereoscope. For an hour the room was silent, except for the creaking of the axles as Hathaway turned the knobs, the sharp tearing of a letter now and then as Olcott threw it into the basket beside him, the crackle of a sheet, and the soft rubbing of the fountain pen. Finally Hathaway sauntered over to the lounge, lay down and closed his eyes, opening them now and then to glance at the clock. A contented half-smile lurked about the corners of his mouth.

At ten o'clock, just as the Doctor was putting up his letter, the telephone rang. Hathaway sprang up and Olcott took down the receiver.

"Yes—yes—talking—yes—all ready."

His pen was still in his hand, and he wrote, with Hathaway looking over his shoulder:

Take midnight train. Reach St. Paul 7.25 Thursday morning. ELLEN M. HATHAWAY,
ALICE HATHAWAY.

The young man stumbled back to the lounge and dropped his head in his hands. The Doctor hung up the receiver and went on putting up his papers. There was nothing said for half an hour. Finally Olcott folded the last letter and put up his pen, saying, without turning round, "Hathaway, it's late, but I have something to tell you."

There was no answer. He whirled around sharply. Hathaway lay on the couch, his face toward the wall. Dr. Olcott sprang over to him and laid his fingers on forehead and wrist. Then he sank on the edge of the lounge, laughing unsteadily.

Asleep! He had not realized how much he cared for the boy. Roused by the touch and the jarring of the lounge, Hathaway turned and opened drowsy blue eyes.

"Has mother come?" he murmured. Then, as consciousness returned, "No—what an idiot I am! I must have been asleep."

"You gave me a scare," Olcott's tone was not quite steady. "I thought you had fainted."

"Me! Not much!" He stretched himself luxuriously. "My, but I'm comfortable!"

Olcott went back to his papers and stood a moment, rearranging them aimlessly. Suddenly he turned to face Hathaway, leaning back against the desk and gripping its edge with his hands.

"Hathaway," he said, "we've got to have a little talk."

There was something new in his tone, and Hathaway sat up, the sleepy happiness in his eyes giving place to a puzzled look as they fixed themselves on the Doctor's face. Olcott did not look at him.

"There's something I've got to tell you."

Hathaway turned white. He rose. "Don't tell me I'm not going to be well—that I can't work, and all that!" he stammered.

Olcott shook his head.

"Then it's my mother!" he persisted. "What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened. Your mother is all right, so far as I know."

The color came back in his face and he dropped to the couch again. "Then fire away. You scared me, though; you look so blamed serious. Go ahead."

"Well—it's about your Darwin climb——" he paused.

"Well?"

"You said yesterday you wished you had got to the top. Well—you did."

Hathaway's eyes were fixed on Olcott's face—the eyes of a puzzled child.

"I did!"

"You did."

"What makes you think so?"

"I know."

"How, in thunder——"

"I saw—I found you."

"What!" he rose excitedly. "Then we *were* up there at the same time?"

"Yes."

"On the summit?"

"No, lower down, some distance."

"And you found me, on your way down? How did you know I'd been up, too?"

"You told me, and I saw your footprints. There they are." He pointed to the picture in the corner.

"Mine? I thought—and you took that picture for me?"

"No, you took it."

"Then how—hang it! I don't see—I don't understand anything."

"I'm trying to tell you. I found you in the rocks some distance below the top. You were pretty well done up. You had spent the night there, and your food and whisky and matches and alcohol had—gone with the guide."

"Gone?"

"Over the edge—to where they found him."

"Ah!"

"That had happened the day before—the afternoon. You had been on your way down."

"I see. And you went up next day, by a different way, and found me on your way down."

"I found you the next morning—" the Doctor paused and spoke very slowly—"on my way—up."

"Up! Well—then what?"

"I started down with you—you weren't fit to leave. I had whisky and stuff, and you got down somehow—nearly down, that is."

He paused again. It was hard pushing, this, against Hathaway's wall of ignorance and prepossessions. The young man sat gazing at him with puzzled, trustful eyes.

"Well, then you fell and got wedged in some rocks, and the whisky was in your head and I couldn't make you understand, and I couldn't haul you out. I was nearly done up myself, too, by that time, you see."

"I should think you might have been."

"So I went on to camp, but I didn't keep my head long enough to explain fully. However, they sent men back, but you weren't there. There was a bad spot just under you—the Caldron. I was sure you must have got yourself free from the rock and fallen into it, and that would have been the end of you. I don't yet see how you didn't. But of course you were delirious, and delirious people can do things."

"Well—and then what?"

"Then I don't know what did happen. You must have wandered off on the mountain somewhere, and been picked up by the Indians, and, being delirious, they would think a lot of you."

"How do you mean—being delirious?"

"Oh, don't you know? If a man is out of his head, they think it's a god—think he's inspired."

"And that's why they took care of me?"

"I suppose so. But you must have got that worst knock on the head afterward. If you'd had it when I saw you, you wouldn't have acted as you did."

"How do you suppose I got it?"

"Can't say. Perhaps before the Indians found you, perhaps afterward."

"Well—but still I don't see—about you. Did you go up later?"

"Up?"

"Up Darwin."

"No. I was sick for weeks after that."

"But you say you found me on your way up——"

"Yes."

"Well—oh, hang it! of course I'm dead stupid, but I can't get through my head *when* you made your ascent of Darwin."

"I didn't make it."

The light died out of Hathaway's face, leaving it a blank. "I don't understand ——" he faltered.

"Heavens! It's plain enough, man!" Olcott lost his control for a moment, and the words broke from him almost angrily.

"You didn't go up?"

"I didn't go up."

"And I did?"

"And you did."

"And I took that picture of the ridge—and——"

"Yes—say it!—and all the others. Those from the summit—they're all yours! Now you know. I have nothing further to say."

He turned, dropped into his desk-chair and, picking up some files of hospital reports, began mechanically turning them over. But his fingers trembled.

Hathaway sat a moment, looking vaguely at the Doctor's back. Then he rose and half-stumbled across the room to the corner where the pictures stood. Suddenly he straightened himself and turned. "Dr. Olcott, I don't believe any of it! It's all too absurd—too idiotic—it doesn't hold together."

The Doctor did not look up. "It is rather idiotic," he said bitterly. "But it does hold together, and it's so, anyhow."

"It doesn't—not with you—it doesn't square with—don't you see?—with the kind of man you are. Because—don't you see what it would mean?"

"I see precisely what it would mean—

what it does mean." Olcott's voice was cold. "It means that I am a liar and a scoundrel and a cheat!"

"But, man, you're *not* a liar and a scoundrel and a cheat!" burst out Hathaway eagerly. "And so it can't be true."

"I wasn't—until then. But since then, I am—that's all."

"But—oh, it's against reason! A man can't be one kind of a fellow all the time and then, all of a sudden, turn into another kind of a fellow. What would be the good of having a character, you know, and that sort of thing?—you know what I mean! Why, if a man believed that, he wouldn't want to live!"

"No, he wouldn't," said the Doctor wearily. "But if he did live?"

Hathaway strode back to the lounge and sank on it in his favorite attitude of thought, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands. The room was still.

"Dr. Olcott."

"Yes."

Hathaway rose, wheeled the Doctor's chair around, and laid his hands on his friend's shoulders.

"You can talk from now till doomsday, but you won't make me believe that you deliberately went and stole my pictures and lied about it all. You're putting it the worst way because you're too proud to seem to be trying to excuse yourself." His blue eyes looked pleadingly, almost as a girl's might, into the Doctor's veiled brown ones. "What else is there?" he urged. "Tell me the rest!"

"That's all," said Olcott wearily.

"It isn't! How did you get my pictures?"

"I was carrying your camera."

"There! I told you! You were carrying my stuff for me."

"Only your camera."

"And after you struck camp you say you were sick?"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Three weeks. At least it was three weeks before I knew much of anything. It was two months before I was good for much."

"Three weeks! And what happened to the camera meanwhile?" Hathaway had straightened up and stood regarding his friend with brilliant eyes, stern with the eagerness of his defense.

"They developed them—the fellows in the camp."

"While you were unconscious?"

"Yes."

"I see!" A triumphant light broke over the young face. "I see the whole thing! They developed your films, they thought they were yours, of course—and they saw they were taken from the summit, and then—why, of course! Then they told everybody, and when you came to your senses it was all taken for granted and settled."

"Have it your own way!"

"I will have it my own way! And you were sick, and you thought I was dead and you just let it go."

"I don't see that it makes much difference." Olcott wheeled round to his desk. "For all practical purposes I am a cheat and a liar. It all comes back to that."

"It makes *all* the difference! Why, hang it, for all *practical* purposes you went to the top—you did something a lot harder—and took those pictures! I don't more than half believe you didn't even now. I don't believe you know *what* you did up there. People often get flighty, at those heights."

"I was confused for a time," said Olcott steadily, "but after a while it all became perfectly clear."

"Of course! You were confused. Now you've admitted it. You weren't responsible."

"That may be—at the time, perhaps. But afterward——"

"Afterward—what was the good? I was dead. Very likely you wouldn't have been believed."

"I could have tried. You would have." The Doctor faced his young friend with a flashing glance, then wheeled back to his desk and rested his forehead on his hand.

"I don't know. I don't believe any one knows what he'd do till he's been there."

"Well, it's no matter. And you have your wish—you've been up Darwin." The voice was low.

"My wish! Man alive, do you think I care about Darwin? Do you think I care"—the young voice broke—"about the infernal pictures? Hang it! I can't say what I mean, but you know the only thing that matters is—about you. If you had done it the way you said, it would have been—pretty bad."

"Well, I did. And it is—pretty bad."

"You didn't!"

The Doctor fingered the papers, his hand still shading his eyes. Hathaway bent again and turned the chair once more. He was smiling, but he looked as old as Olcott.

"If you were that sort, why did you tell me now? A liar and a cheat would have kept his head shut. If I could only make you know how I admire you!"

For the first time since the beginning of their talk, Dr. Olcott looked in Hathaway's eyes. It was a long, steady look, and the blue eyes looked back steadily. There was love in them, and pity, and reverence, but the good mouth of the boy, with its long, set line, was trembling at its corners. Suddenly a mist came over Olcott's eyes, and his own lips quivered. Hathaway held out his hand. The other slowly rose, hesitated, then held out his own, and the two men stood a moment together.

"Bless you, George!" said Olcott finally, in a low, unsteady voice. Hathaway threw his left arm around his friend's shoulders and drew him back to the couch. They sat there together a long time. At last the silence was broken:

"Dr. Olcott."

"Yes, George."

"I've been thinking it all out."

"Well, boy."

"Will you let me tell you just the way it seems to me?"

"Go ahead."

"Well, now, it's this way. Say I got to the top; say I took those pictures; say you didn't. Well, what *did* you do? Saved my life, got me down—which was harder. If it hadn't been for me, you would have gone up—done the whole thing. You gave them up to save me. And now you've saved me again—more than my life—my mind."

"That's nothing," interposed Olcott. "That is my profession."

"Well, leave that, and stick to the other. And now that you've found me again, you've given me what, you say, belonged to me—the peak and those pictures. Well, all right. But now, what next? No, let me finish. I know what you'll say. You'll say you must explain to everybody, just as you've explained to me. *I say you mustn't!* Because—now, just see! What does everybody think about you now? They think you are—just what I know you are! But if you began to explain, what would they think? They would get it all wrong. *Now* they are right—that is, their facts are wrong, some of them, but their conclusions are right—their conclusions about you, I mean, which is all that matters. But if you correct their facts, what happens? Their conclusions get all knocked into a cocked hat. They'll get everything wrong—everything!"

"That's not my affair," said Olcott with something of his former sternness coming back into his tone.

Hathaway persisted eagerly, buoyantly:

"It's *my* affair, though. Listen! If this was a story, or a play, what should we do? You'd get up, I suppose, and tell all the papers the truth—what you call the truth. And the Alpine Club would expel you, and you'd resign from the hospital, and then you'd fit out an expedition and go for Darwin, and climb it, and take a new set of pictures, just like mine, and get killed on the way down. And I'd find you. Oh, I see it all!" His eyes beamed with their gay, whimsical light. "And think what the papers would say! But you won't!" He turned suddenly. "It's nobody's business but ours. Darwin's mine—you say so." He smiled. "Will you let me give it to you? You won't be proud? You'll take it?" He turned and looked into his friend's face.

There was another long silence.

At last Olcott held out his hand again. His voice was husky:

"I am not proud, George. I'll take it. Thank you."

"Thank *you!*" said Hathaway quickly.

If they had been girls, they would have kissed each other. Being men, they did not know what to do, and there was an awkward pause. Hathaway spoke first, as he rose:

"And Mother's coming day after to-morrow—and Alice. You'll go with me to meet them, of course?"

"Of course," said Olcott simply.

"Now let's go to bed." Hathaway went over to the button that turned out the light.

Before he pushed it he turned to regard his friend, half affectionately, half humorously.

"I'm glad they're going to know you," he said. "They'll like you." He pushed the button. "I do," he added in the darkness.

Sage-Brush Law

by John A. Avirette

TWO men lay under the scant shade of a mesquite tree. To the south the desert lay shimmering under the fierce September sun. Bald, skull-like hills rose at intervals above the wastes of sand. On one hand Sombra Peak towered above a confused jumble of volcanic ridges, while on the far horizon the tops of unknown ranges faded away into trembling blurs.

"Shorty," said Jones, "I am sorry that we didn't wait until October, but I was afraid that the dying Mexican had told the Doctor as well as yourself."

"What if he did?" growled Brennan. "No tenderfoot pill-artist has sand or savvy enough to tackle the Gila Desert this time o' year."

"Perhaps you are right," assented Jones. "Speaking of sand, this is the hottest article I ever struck. How is our water holding out, Shorty?"

"The *pinto* burro's cans are full yet, the gray's are almost empty, and the red jack's cans are dry. If the Greaser lied about the water-hole, it'll pinch us some to git back to the Gila River alive. We'd orter brought three more jacks. Besides, these coal-oil cans gits busted easy, and we'd orter fetched kegs instead o' cans."

"True enough, Shorty," said Jones, "but we had to bring a month's grub, and tools were a *sine qua non*."

"Sign he what?" asked Brennan.

"That's Latin, my frontier friend, and means 'Without which, nothing.'"

"Talk English to me, Jones, and dern little o' that, until it gits cooler," growled Brennan. "Shut up and let's go to sleep, fer this night travelin' and day bakin' ain't fattenin' to men or burros."

As the sun sank, the two men drove their patient jacks southward from camp. For an hour daylight lingered among the giant shadows cast by the desert hills; then darkness fell. As he toiled along, Jones's mind was in a strange chaos, where visions of gold, a woman's face and the weird fantasies of the desert night were blended.

As day broke, Brennan halted. "Let's camp here in this arroyo, Tom," he said. "Thar's *guyetta* on the flat fer the burros, and shade fer us under the high bank o' this wash. Them hills over thar in front are the ones the Greaser said the gold finds was in. That white-topped butte marks the mouth of the canyon he said the water-hole was in. We'd orter make that by midnight, and then hunt the water-hole early to-morrer mornin'."

"What if we don't find the water?" queried Jones.

"Waal, my lawyer pard," said Brennan, "you're due to git drier than a Kaintuckian up in Maine. Ef you're goin' to git skeered, you'd 'a' better stayed in Tucson, fer you can't practise no demurrer in this co't. Hell and the desert ain't much on tenderfoot law, nohow."

"Well," said Jones, "let's hope the Greaser told the truth about the water-hole."

"Greasers seldom tells the truth," replied Shorty. "They takes to lyin' like preachers to pie. Ortiz owed me a hundred favors, but if I hadn't seen his nuggets, I wouldn't 'a' walked across the road on his word."

"What on earth brought him out in this howling waste?" asked Jones.

"He said he was smugglin' opium across the Arizona line from Sonora," replied Brennan, "and that one night he camped at that white butte over thar. He seed a lot

o' coyote tracks, all leadin' one way up the canyon, and he 'lowed they was made by critters goin' to water. The next day he investigated, and found the biggest water-tank he ever seen in the desert. Ez his stock was in pore shape, he laid over a couple o' days to rest 'em up. While he was knockin' around, killin' time, he struck a quartz ledge yaller with gold. He knowed he couldn't locate no mine, fer he wasn't no American citizen, but he 'lowed if thar was any placer gold in the canyon he could work that on the sly. He tried a pan o' the dirt and found her full o' gold. After he sold his opium in Tucson he bought a dry-washin' machine and sneaked off out here alone, and worked the diggin's."

"How much gold did he give the priest?"

"None," said Brennan; "I fixed that."

"You are a hard case, Shorty," said Jones.

"Waal, I ain't lonesome. You're a lawyer yourself. Stop this palaver and bile the coffee. I'm hungrier'n a coyote."

"But," persisted Jones, "I am anxious to know how you fixed that priest business."

"I sent him a-hikin' up the Santa Cruz on a cock-an'-bull story," said Brennan with a grin. "When he got back, Ortiz was too far gone to talk."

"Then who got his dust and nuggets?"

"The Baptis' Missionary Society," replied Brennan sarcastically. "See here, Tom, you ask too dern many questions. I ain't in co't now. I tried to save that Greaser's hide, and besides, he owed me money and favors afore I knowed he had any dust, so, by sage-brush law, I'm his nat'ral heir."

"All right, Shorty, no offense," said Jones. "Suit yourself about telling me."

"That's what I 'low to do," said Brennan.

Breakfast over, the two spread a blanket under the overhang of the cliff and lay down for a much-needed sleep. Brennan was asleep at once. He was of the imperturbable type common to wild countries where men daily take their lives in their hands. He was a fatalist. A hostile Apache was a hostile Apache—that was all. The desert was the desert, and was to be endured as such, philosophically. With him, "everything went." Rumor had it that he had killed a man or so when a moonshiner in the hills of his native Kentucky. Certain it was that he had slain the worst desperado in all Arizona, so the gun-fighters and toughs of Tucson let him severely alone.

Jones was different. Born of a good Boston family, bred to the law, he had fallen in love with a poor girl, and his wealthy parents had refused to countenance the match. After vainly trying to induce Jones to give up the girl, his father had shut the door in his face, telling him that, until he regained his reason, he was no longer his son. Jones had never regained his reason. He had asked the girl to wait for him, and had come West to Arizona's capital city, Tucson, where he had put up his shingle.

He prospered fairly well for a beginner, until Ed Sheffelin's silver strike at Tombstone had set all Arizona crazy. The craze got into Jones's blood as well, so he shut up his office and joined the stampede. He returned to Tucson destitute but wiser. Two days after his return Jack Brennan came to him, big with mystery, and said:

"Shut up shop, Tom, and come out across the Santa Cruz to a quiet place whar none kin hear us."

Across the river, Brennan pledged him to secrecy, and then told him the story of the Mexican outlaw's find. When he was done, he said, "Wanter tackle her, Tom?"

"I'll sleep on it, Shorty. Have you faith enough in this Mexican's story to risk your life on the desert to prove it?"

"Yes," said Brennan, pulling some gold nuggets from his pocket, "I have, when it's backed up by this."

Jones's eyes dilated. "I'm your man, Shorty!" he said. "When shall we start?"

"Waal," said Brennan, "this is July. We'd better wait till October. It sometimes rains durin' August on the desert, and it's cooler. Ef we go now, we'll be purty shore to die of heat and thirst. What rainy season thar is ends in September, so ef it rains out thar at all this year, we have a better chance to find a full water-hole in September or October than now."

"Well," said Jones, "let's start on the twentieth of September."

"She's a go," replied Brennan, and they shook hands on it.

That night Jones turned the story over in his mind. Perhaps the Mexican had told a lie to cover his unlawful possession of gold, got by murdering some lone miner. But for the nuggets, Jones would have concluded the story to be this, or the semi-

delirious talk of a dying man. He thought over his past ill-luck; of his sweetheart waiting patiently in far-away Boston; of his mother, since dead; of his father, who made no sign. Yes, he would brave the desert. He could only die, and what better company to die in than that of Brennan?

So here they were, sixty miles south of the Southern Pacific railroad, with their lives, in all human probability, depending on whether or not a certain fabled water-hole existed in a desert canyon.

By eleven o'clock, the shade of the cliff no longer covered Jones's face. He opened his eyes to find the fierce noonday sun staring down resentfully upon the two intruders. As he moved, Brennan awoke and, sitting up, began to fill his pipe with the silent stoicism of an Indian.

One of the jacks came whickering up to the water-cans. "Poor brute!" said Brennan, "we'll have to shoot ye if that water-hole ain't thar, to put you outen yore misery." Turning to Jones, he said, "I'm tough and used to the desert, and ef things go wrong and you peter out, I won't leave you, Tom. We'll hit the trail together."

As he spoke, a desert dove alighted upon a giant cactus a few yards away. Brennan reached for his carbine and, taking aim at the dove, cut off its head with a clean shot. Going over, he picked up the quivering body and tore out its crop. "Tom," he said, "the Greaser didn't lie about the water, fer this dove come from the white-topped butte, and its crop is full o' water."

Jones was radiant. "Shake!" said he. "We're going to win out!"

"Too soon to crow," commented Brennan, "but it's sartin thar's water whar this bird drunk."

At sundown, they made a straight shoot for the white-topped butte. As Brennan predicted, they reached it by midnight, then unpacked the jacks to wait for daylight. Next day they went up the canyon and soon found the Mexican's old camp. A half-hour later they found the water-hole, full to the brim. They watered the jacks and took a bath, then rested the remainder of the day. Brennan picked up a fragment of quartz the Mexican had dropped near the camp. "Tom," said he, "here's somethin' fer Kitty."

"What on earth do you know of Kitty?" asked Jones in surprise.

Brennan looked at him with an indulgent grin. "Some folks talks in their sleep," he said; "and one man I knows on has kissed a water-can in his dreams and called it Kitty."

"Well, Shorty," replied Jones, "Kitty is my sweetheart's name, so if we find a rich mine, let's call it the 'Kitty Mine.'"

"All right, Tom," assented Brennan; "callin's all one to me, so long as I ain't called a liar or too late fer grub."

After supper and a pipe, Brennan went to sleep. Long after his heavy breathing proved him oblivious to all the vicissitudes of gold-hunting, Jones lay awake, staring into the embers of the camp-fire. He was oppressed by a strange premonition of evil.

He looked at the sturdy figure asleep before him, and for the first time noted that Brennan was handsome. He remembered having heard that this man had done many unselfish deeds to others. He himself had seen in Brennan a certain rude chivalry toward women, while his tenderness for children and animals was proverbial. Easy-going by nature, his anger was terrible when aroused. His personal prowess was of the fearless type that is met with but once in a lifetime. As Jones looked at him, an old line of poetry came into his mind, "Mild in his peace and terrible in war." Here was a unique character, recklessly brave, yet cool and cautious with it.

Presently the moon stole over the black ridges to the east. Two thousand miles away the same moon was shining down on the sleeping city of Boston. Over there were home and Kitty; here were hardships and the dread dangers of the desert solitudes. After all, he had better have taken her to his heart, and with her at his side fought out the battle with poverty. He wondered whether her gentle heart would break if she heard of him no more. He believed it would. Ah, how he loved her! He was startled from his reverie by what seemed the distant whinny of a horse. He listened intently; then, convinced that his imagination had played him a trick, he lay down beside Brennan and dropped asleep.

The two rose at daybreak and started breakfast. As he filled the coffee-pot, Jones asked more about the Mexican priest.

"He's a renegade priest," said Brennan. "He was fired outen the Church down in Mexico, and has since been blackleggin' it

around the dives in Tucson. Injuns and the wust part o' the Greaser population has been his meat, fer good Catholics won't look at him."

When they started to hunt the diggings, Jones wanted to leave their guns behind as a useless burden in so lone a place. Brennan would not listen to it for a minute. "See here," he said, "allus take yer Winchester. You may never need it, but ef you does, you needs it bad."

A half-mile above the camp, Brennan paused beside a clump of *canuteo* brush. "This oughter be whar the Greaser hid his dry-washer," he said. Sure enough, it was there, and a pile of fresh yellow gravel showed where the Mexican had worked.

They carried the machine to the spot and set to work. Jones turned the crank and Brennan shoveled in the dirt.

After ten minutes Brennan dropped his shovel. "Let's clean up," he said. He knocked the wedges out of the clut and shook the tray with the deftness of long practise. As he blew the sand back from the riffles with his breath, Jones yelled with delight. Brennan looked at him with an affectionate grin. "Pard," said he, "little Kitty seems booked for plenty o' dough."

"Thank God!" said Jones devoutly.

Brennan sat down on the edge of the prospect-hole and bit off a chew of tobacco. "Tom," said he, "derned ef I ain't lived to see a Greaser who could tell the truth —but it killed him!"

"Well, anyhow, it's a happy surprise," said Jones. "What's up?" he added, as Brennan grabbed his carbine and jumped into the hole.

"*Jumpl*" yelled Brennan, but as he spoke three shots rang out, and Jones pitched heavily into the hole beside him.

Brennan wiped the blood from a grazed cheek and, as he did so, muttered, "I don't know who ye air, gents, but I'll try and see your ante afore this game's out! It's all in the draw, anyhow."

When Brennan realized that no rush was coming, he examined Jones's wounds. He found two, one in the head, where a shot had glanced off the skull, and another—far more serious—in the back, that had penetrated his right lung.

Brennan was consumed with anger. "Poor boy!" he muttered. Then in a minute, he said, "Poor Kitty!" He tore off his own shirt and bandaged Jones's wounds as best he might. As he worked he frequently paused to listen, but could hear no sound.

The attacking party was evidently playing a waiting game and was chary of risk. Brennan's surprise was complete; he could not, for the life of him, imagine who their assailants might be. No Indians ever ventured so far into the desert, and the only Indians of that section of Arizona were the Papagoes, who had ever been the white man's friends. Smugglers would not wilfully murder inoffensive miners, and no one else ever braved the desert. Could it be possible that a party had trailed them from the railroad? But who could know of the gold-find? He had told only Jones, and Jones was discretion itself. In vain he puzzled his head—he had to give it up.

After an hour he put his hat on the shovel-blade and lifted it cautiously above the edge; presently he drew it back down in disgust. "Old-timers," he muttered.

For hours he sat with his cocked carbine in hand, ready and desperate, yet no rush came, nor could he hear a sound except the stertorous breathing of the wounded man. He ground his teeth in impotent rage, yet dared not show a hand above the hole, for exposure meant instant death. Fortunately, he had a canteen full of water, and at intervals he forced a little down Jones's throat. The hot sun was now blistering his own shirtless back, but he bore it like the stoic that he was.

After what seemed an age, twilight fell. Rubbing his cramped legs to restore circulation, he made ready to move. Quick as a flash he was out of the hole and running for life to the rocks close by. Shots spat venomously after him, but luck was with him and he reached cover safely. A second later, three men rose from the nearest clump of *canuteo* brush and ran for the bank of the dry-wash. Brennan's carbine cracked, and one of them fell on his face.

"Take that, you murderin' dogs!" he yelled exultantly.

In a moment he shifted his position and ran for a near-by ridge, but his move drew no more shots, as it was now too dark to see the sights on a gun.

Pausing at the ridge, Brennan put his ear to the ground and listened. At first he heard nothing; then his keen ear caught the faint crunch of gravel. They were retreating toward the camp. An inspiration

seized him—he would be there to receive them! He slipped off his shoes and ran rapidly in his stocking-feet across the ridge. Nearing the camp, he dropped behind a boulder and waited.

After a few minutes he heard footsteps coming cautiously down the dark canyon toward him. A great wave of satisfaction passed through him as he softly cocked his carbine. Two dim forms passed within thirty feet, and the sharp crack of his carbine was answered by the death-cry of number two. The other cried out in terror that his life might be spared.

"Drop yer gun and throw up yer hands!" commanded Brennan.

With terror-stricken haste the third man did as he was bidden. Brennan walked over to him. "Holy rattlesnakes!" he cried in amaze, "Ther Greaser priest!"

"*Si, señor, es verdad que yo*——" began the cowed priest.

"Shut up!" said Brennan, as he smote the priest heavily in the face.

The fallen man begged abjectly, "Don' keel, señor!"

"Don' keel!" mocked Brennan savagely. "You low-down, ornery, renegade yallerbelly! You're a —— of a priest. If the pore boy dies you tried to murder up thar, I'll kill you like the polecat that you are!"

Brennan held his cocked pistol on the priest with one hand and searched him with the other. Taking the weapons of the dead man, together with those of the priest, he broke them between two boulders.

"Padre," he then said, "I'm agoin' to give yer a chance fer yer life. If you will help me with my wounded pard and I git him back to the railroad alive, you kin go free. If he dies, you git sage-brush law—savvy? Now walk ahead, and no tricks!"

Jones was still unconscious when they got him down to camp. Bidding the priest build up a bright fire, Brennan bathed Jones's wounds and rebandaged them as best he could. Then he asked the priest how he had known of Ortiz's gold-find.

"De ol' woman dat nurse Ortiz not ver' deaf, lak you tink," he said. "She see de gol' and hear some—but not 'nough. So we wait and come by de burro track you mek' in de san'."

"What made you try to murder us?"

"You mek' —— fool wid me when Ortiz die," replied the priest. "Anyhow, Mexicano hate Americano 'cause he tek 'way lan' and young women too, plenty time."

That night, Brennan hog-tied the priest. He could take no further chances on their safety, which would certainly be at this evil wretch's mercy as they slept, unless this precaution were taken.

The next day Jones became conscious. As soon as Brennan saw this, he bent over him and said, "Tom, don't try to talk, fer you are shot through the lung, and talkin' will start a hemorrhage. Yer cain't git well out here, so I'm goin' ter try ter git you back to Tucson.

"I'm goin' ter make a swing-litter between two o' the ponies o' the dead Greasers. Ye'll need all yer sand, ol' pard, but remember Kitty, and that ye're goin' ter live fer her sake." Jones nodded and Brennan turned away to conceal his tears.

"Padre," said Brennan, "bring me all the blankets and git me four strong flower-stalks o' maguey cactus; then fill all the water-cans and git yer three ponies an' our jacks ready."

By night everything was ready and the start was made. Jones was slung between two ponies in his litter. When ready to start, Jones signified a desire to talk. Brennan said, "Cut it short, Tom, an' don't git ther lung ter bleedin'!"

"Shorty," said Jones weakly, "Kitty's address is in my note-book."

"Ole pard," said Brennan huskily, "she gits half the mine and all the help o' Jack Brennan as long as he lives!"

Jones nodded, and a contented gleam came into his eyes.

The improvised litter worked even better than Brennan had hoped. The desert was fairly level, so, while there was some swinging of the litter, there was little or no jolting. Brennan kept a wary eye on the priest, who was leading the way.

On the second night Jones again lost consciousness and had to be tied in the litter. Brennan, distressed beyond words, was forced to keep on, in the faint hope of finally saving him. At the crossing of a dry-wash he left Jones with the priest for a moment, while he sought for an easy slope to cross, for the stumble of a pony would prove fatal to poor Jones. Instantly the priest availed himself of the opportunity, and managed to secure Jones's gun from one of the packs. When Brennan returned, he had the loaded pistol securely hidden under his shirt.

Just at daybreak, on the fourth day, the telegraph-poles on the line of the Southern Pacific hove in sight on the far horizon. Six—five—four—three miles, but it seemed to the exhausted Brennan as if the cavalcade were crawling backward. His face was haggard and his eyes bloodshot from the ceaseless vigil and terrible strain. Twice he nodded in the saddle, and each time the priest's hand stole into his shirt-bosom, only to be quickly withdrawn as Brennan braced himself anew.

Nothing but Brennan's indomitable will kept him going, for he had not dared to sleep on the trip, as he had been unable to tie up the Mexican as he had done before, lest his cramped legs refuse to carry him. He had compelled the Mexican to walk, as two of the ponies were used to transport Jones, and he himself rode that of the priest.

The railroad was finally reached and camp made under a mesquite bush. Brennan at once set the priest out on the track, with orders to keep a keen lookout for the first eastbound train. He then set about attending Jones's wounds for the last time. Jones was barely alive, and Brennan had faint hope of saving him for Kitty. In spite of himself, he began to nod. From his position on the track, the priest kept a lynx eye on the camp.

After an hour, what he hoped for really happened, and he saw that Brennan slept. Drawing the pistol from under his shirt, he crawled stealthily upon the sleeping man. Ten yards! No, five were surer. As he again crawled nearer his unconscious prey a squat sage-brush obstructed his aim and, as he parted its branches for a sure shot, a huge rattlesnake coiled at its root struck his fangs viciously into his face.

The priest uttered a yell of horror. Brennan jumped to his feet and stared vacantly at the track. A groan drew his eyes to the right, and there, five yards from him, was his man, grasping his bitten face in a daze of horror. The pistol, the snake and the man told the story plainer than words. Drawing his gun, Brennan shot the priest through the head; then he stood looking at the snake, coiled and angry.

"Jedge," said Brennan to the snake, "I ain't agoin' to hurt yer; you've done me and Kitty a turn I won't never fergit."

Taking the dead man by the heels, he dragged him out into the flat and left him behind a clump of *cholla* cactus. "You —— hound," said he, "you got your sage-brush law after all!"

An hour later, the engineer of the eastbound passenger saw a man waving a red blanket on the track. Stopping his train, he asked what was up. "Got a dyin' man fer Tucson," said Brennan shortly. "Git down and help!"

Six months later the Kitty Mine was in full blast. Little inquiry was ever made for the three dead Mexicans. People don't always notify the public when they make a change of base in Arizona, and, besides, folks out there concern themselves little about the affairs of others. Brennan had imposed absolute silence on Jones. He kept his own counsel, and the desert was equally silent. Friends of Brennan noted in after years that he never killed a rattlesnake nor allowed one killed in his presence. When pressed for the reason of his strange conduct, he said, "I like 'em, —— 'em."

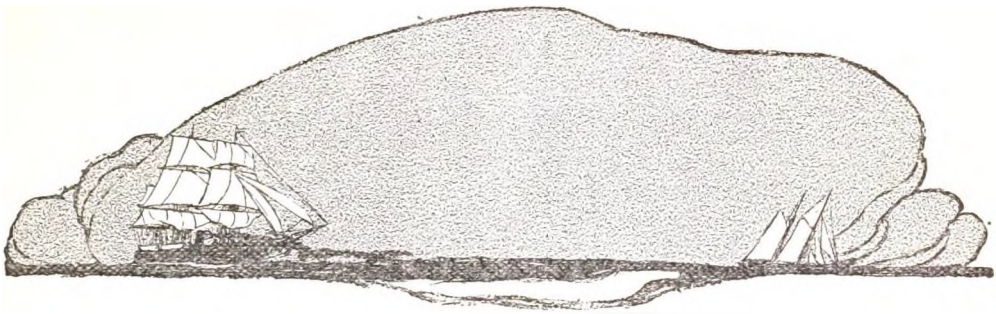
Jones came back from Boston with a sweet-faced bride. On the night of his arrival in Tucson he went uptown to look for Brennan. He found him in Charley Brown's place, drunk and happy. Everybody seemed drunk and happy, for they were celebrating the arrival of the fourth huge bar of gold bullion from the Kitty Mine.

What good was money anyhow, if it wouldn't buy whisky? Jones slipped away unnoticed by the boys and went back along the old familiar streets, leaving the sound of high revelry behind him. Shorty was hardly in shape to present to a lady.

When the moon rose that night it smiled down indulgently on a couple who sat beneath the orange-trees around Jones's old law-office. All the world was forgotten, and his arm was around her waist, while her head lay contentedly on his breast.

Two hundred miles away, down on the Gila Desert, a monster rattlesnake came suddenly upon the white gleam of human bones that lay unburied beneath the moon. For an instant he prepared to strike—then memory told him that here he had already avenged the wrongs of his race. He wondered where the fool was who had refused to shoot him.

The fool was in Tucson, sleeping.



Looking for Trouble

Being Some Real Stories from the Life of a Master Adventurer

by Captain George B. Boynton

EDITOR'S NOTE.—Captain George B. Boynton is the man who has actually lived such adventures as are usually to be found only in the pages of thrilling fiction. Blockade-runner, filibuster, revolutionist, sea-rover, counselor of South American dictators, supplying arms to a Spanish pretender, ranging the China seas for glory and profit, romancing with a pirate queen, friend of warring republics, soldier and sailor of fortune the world over, and now settled in quiet city life to smile and dream over half a century of such memories—this is George B. Boynton, Master Adventurer. His exploits have been fictionized into a score of the best-sellers of recent years. His career has been the theme of articles by writers seeking to portray the truest type of modern adventurer. Now, for the first time, Captain Boynton's own story, told by himself, is offered in print. This is no work of imagination, but a literal account of an amazing life, the truth of which throughout is attested alike by its internal evidences and by the affidavits of the author. More than one foreign Power takes pains to know constantly his exact whereabouts, even in his elder years of retirement, and the personality and name of Boynton, Buccaneer, are known all over the world from the chancelleries of the Great Powers to the furtive headquarters of the Juntas. For several months to come ADVENTURE will continue to publish adventures from his career, each complete in itself.

CHAPTER I

SOLDIER AND BLOCKADE-RUNNER

THROUGHOUT my life I have sought adventure over the face of the world and its waters as other men have hunted and fought for gold or struggled for fame. Whether through the outcropping of a strain of buccaneer blood held in subjection by generations of placid propriety or as a result of some freak of prenatal suggestion, the love of adventure was born in me, deep-planted and long-rooted. Excitement is as essential to my existence as air and food. Through it my life has been prolonged in activity and my soul has been perpetuated in youth; when I can no longer enjoy its electrification, death, I hope, will come quickly.

I have served, all told, under eighteen flags, and to each I gave the best that was in me. In following my natural bent, it perhaps will be considered by some people that I have gone outside of written laws. To such my answer is that I have always been true to my own conscience and to my country. In the transportation of arms with which to further fights for freedom or fortune I have flown many flags I had no strictly legal right to fly, over ships that were not what they pretended to be nor what their papers indicated them to be, but never have I taken refuge behind the Stars and Stripes. Nor have I ever called on an American minister or consular officer to get me out of the successive scrapes with governments into which my warring wanderings have carried me.

Red-blooded love of adventure, free from any wanton spirit and with the prospect of financial reward always subordinated, has been the driving force in all my encounters with good men and bad, with the latter class much in the majority. Therefore I have only scorn for sympathy and con-

tempt for criticism, nor am I troubled with uncanny visions by night or haunting recollections by day.

The name by which I am known is one of the contradictions of my life. Save only for my father, who sympathized with my adventurous disposition at the same time that he tried to curb it, I was at war with my family almost from the time I could talk. When I left home to become an adventurer around the globe I buried my real name, and I do not propose to uncover it, here or hereafter.

In the course of my activities I have used many names in many lands, but that of Boynton, which had been in the family for years, stuck to me until I finally adopted it, prefixing a George and a B., which really stands for Boynton.

I was born May 1, 1842, on Fifth Avenue, New York, not a long way north of Washington Square. My father was a distinguished surgeon and owned a large estate on Lake Champlain, where most of my youthful Summers were spent.

As an evidence of the inclining twig, I remember, with still some feeling of pride, that during one of my last Summers on Lake Champlain I organized fifteen boys of the neighborhood into an expedition against the Indians of the Far West. We were equipped with blankets stolen from our beds, three flasks of powder and nearly one hundred pounds of lead, which was to be molded into bullets for the extermination of the redskins of the world. As commander-in-chief I carried the only pistol in the party, but we expected to seize additional arms on the way to the battlefields. I had scouts ahead of us and on both flanks, and by avoiding the roads and the bank of the lake we managed to evade capture until the third day, although the whole countryside was searching for us in rather hysterical fashion.

After a somewhat scattered series of escapades, which increased the ire of the family and intensified my dislike of their prosaic protestations, my father solemnly declared his intention of sending me to the United States Naval Academy. I was delighted. The machinery to procure my appointment had been set in motion and I was ready to take the examination when the opening gun of the Civil War was fired at Fort Sumter, April 12, 1861.

I was immediately seized with a wild desire to be in the fight. My father would not consent to it, on account of my age, but promised that if I would wait a year, he would try to get me a commission. My sympathies were with the South, but it was more convenient to take the other side, and at that moment I was not particular about principles. The family were duly horrified one evening when I went home and told them I had enlisted. The next day my father bought my discharge and hustled me out to Woodstock, Ill., where I was placed in charge of an uncle.

He prevented my joining an infantry regiment, but I got away with a cavalry regiment some months later and was made one of its officers. We went to Cairo, Ill., and from there by transport to Pittsburg Landing, where we arrived just in time to take part in the battle fought on April 6 and 7, 1862.

My regiment was pitted against the famous Black Horse Cavalry of Mississippi, and we came together at the gallop. I was riding a demon of a black horse and, with the bit in his teeth, he charged into the line two or three lengths ahead of the rest. A Confederate officer came at me with his saber raised. I ducked my head behind my horse's neck and shot him between the eyes, but, just as my pistol cracked, his sword cut through my horse's head to the brain, and the point of it laid open my right cheek from the ear almost to the chin. The horse fell on my leg and held me there, unconscious. In the evening I was picked up and sent to the general hospital, where I stayed for three weeks

When I was discharged from the hospital I was sent into the Tennessee Mountains in charge of a detachment to intercept contraband which was being sent into the South from Cincinnati.

We had been there about ten days when, early in the morning, one of the patrols brought in a fine-looking young man, who had been arrested as a spy. There was a refinement about the prisoner that aroused my suspicions, and during the day I satisfied myself that he was a woman. While she would not acknowledge her identity, I had reason to believe, and always have been sure in my own mind, that she was none other than Belle Boyd, the famous Confederate spy. I was born with a weakness for women which then was strong within me, and, besides, my heart was with her cause; there-

fore it is without apology that I say I arranged things so that she escaped the next night through a window in the shed in which she was confined.

Soon after my return to headquarters I contracted a bad case of malaria and was sent home, which meant back to Woodstock, where I had eloped with a banker's daughter just before going to the front. I was disgusted with the war and I expressed myself so freely and was so outspoken in my sympathy for the South, that I made myself unpopular in a very short time.

At any rate the people set their hearts on hanging me for being "a —— copperhead," and they might have done it if old man Wellburn, the proprietor of the hotel at which my wife and I were staying, had not helped me to stand off a mob that came after me. I met them at the door with a revolver in each hand, and Wellburn was right behind me with quite an arsenal.

"If I am a copperhead," I told them, "I am a fighting copperhead, while you are neither one. If you want a fight, why don't you go to the front and get it, instead of staying home and making trouble for a better man than you are, who has fought and bled for the cause you are shouting about? If you prefer a fight here, come on and get it. I've got twelve shots here, and there will be just thirteen of us in hell or heaven if you try to make good your threat!"

Old Wellburn was known as a fighter and the sight of his weapons added weight to my words, so the crowd concluded to let me have my way about it and dispersed.

That experience intensified my dissatisfaction with the whole business and I sent in my resignation. It was accepted, and when I had thought it all over I considered that I was lucky to have escaped a court-martial.

I had heard that Carlos Manuel de Cespedes was fomenting a revolt in Cuba, which afterward was known as the "Ten Years War," and had conceived the idea of taking a hand in it, but I found that no Junta had been established in this country, nor, so far as I could discover, were there any responsible men in New York who were connected with the revolution.

While I was wondering how I could get into communication with Cespedes my interest was aroused by a newspaper story of the new blockade-runner *Letter B*. The *Letter B*, whose name was a play on words, was a long, low, powerful, schooner-rigged steamship, built by Laird on the Mersey. Though classed as a fifteen-knot ship she could do sixteen or seventeen, which was fast going at that time. There was so much money in blockade-running that the owners could well afford to lose her after she had made three successful trips.

In five minutes I decided to become a blockade-runner and to buy the new and already famous ship, if she was to be had at any price within reason. I bought a letter of credit and took the next ship for Bermuda. On my arrival there I found that the *Letter B* had been expected in for several days from her second trip and that there was considerable anxiety about her. I also learned that her owner was building a second ship on the same lines and for the same trade. A fresh cargo of munitions of war was awaiting the *Letter B*, and a ship was ready to take to England the cotton she would bring.

I got acquainted with the agent for the blockade-runner, and offered to buy her and take the chance that she might never come in. He wanted me to wait until the arrival of her owner, Joseph Berry, who was expected daily from England.

After waiting several days I said to him one morning: "It looks as though your ship has been captured or sunk. I'll take a gambler's chance that she hasn't and will give you $50,000 for her and $25,000 for the cargo that is waiting for her; you to take the cargo she brings in. I'll give you three hours to think it over."

It looked as though I was taking a long chance, but I had a "hunch" that she was all right, and I never have had a well-defined "hunch" steer me in anything but a safe course, wherefore I invariably heed them. At the expiration of the time limit there was not a sign of smoke in any direction and the agent accepted my proposition. In half an hour I had a bill of sale for the ship and the warehouse receipts for the cargo of war-supplies.

At sunset that day a ship came in from England with her former owner. He criticized his agent sharply at first, but when two more days passed with no sign of the anxiously-looked-for ship Mr. Berry concluded that he had all the best of the bargain and complimented his agent on his shrewdness.

On the third day the *Letter B* came tear-

ing in, pursued at long range by the U. S. S. *Powhatan*, which proceeded to stand guard over the harbor, keeping well off shore on account of the reefs and shoals that were under her lee.

The *Letter B* discharged a full cargo of cotton and was turned over to me. I went over her carefully while her cargo of arms was going in and found her in excellent condition. She was unloaded in twelve hours, and all of her cargo was safely stowed in another forty-eight hours. I took command of her, with John B. Williams, her old captain, as sailing master, and determined to put to sea at once.

I knew the *Powhatan* would not be looking for us so soon, and planned to catch her off her guard. There was then no man-of-war entrance to the harbor and it was necessary to enter and leave by daylight. With the sun just high enough to let us get clear of the reefs before dark, and with the *Powhatan* well off shore and at the farthest end of the course she was lazily patrolling, we put to sea.

The *Powhatan* saw us sooner than I had expected, and started, but she was not quick enough. The moment she swung around I increased our speed to a point which the pilot loudly swore would pile us up on the rocks. But it didn't, and when we cleared the passage we were all of four miles in the lead. As I had figured, the *Powhatan* did not suppose we would come out for at least a week and was cruising slowly about with fires banked, so it took her some time to get up a full head of steam. She fired three or four shots at us, but they fell far short.

At sunrise we had the ocean to ourselves.

I started in at once to master practical navigation, the theory of which I knew, and to familiarize myself with the handling of a ship. I stood at the wheel for hours at a time and almost wore out the instruments taking reckonings by the sun and the stars. Navigation came to me naturally, for I loved it, and in three days I would have been willing to undertake a cruise around the world with a Chinese crew.

We arrived off Charleston late in the afternoon and steamed up close inshore until we could make out the smoke of the blockading fleet, which was standing well out, in a semi-circle. Then we dropped back a bit and anchored. All of the conditions shaped themselves to favor us. It was a murky night with a hard blow, which came up late in the afternoon, and when we got under way at midnight a good bit of a sea was running.

With the engines held down to only about half speed, but ready to do their best in a twinkling, we headed for the harbor, standing as close inshore as we dared go. We passed so close to the blockading-ship stationed at the lower end of the crescent that she could not have depressed her guns enough to hit us even if we had been discovered in time. But she did not see us until we had passed her. Then she let go at us with her bow guns and, while they did no damage, we were at such close quarters that their flash gave the other ships a glimpse of us as we darted away.

They immediately opened on us, but after the first minute or two it was a case of haphazard shooting with all of them. The first shells exploded close around us, and some of the fragments came aboard, but no one was injured. When I saw where they were firing I threw my ship farther over toward Sullivan's Island, where she could go on account of her light draft, and sailed quietly along into the harbor at reduced speed. At daylight we went up to the dock and were warmly welcomed.

Before the second night was half over we had everything out of her and a full cargo of cotton aboard, and we steamed out at once. I knew the blockaders would not expect us for at least four days, and we surprised them just as we had surprised the *Powhatan* at Bermuda. It was a thick night, and we sailed right through the fleet at half speed, but prepared to break and run for it at the crack of a gun. Not a shot was fired or an extra light shown.

As soon as we were clear of the line we put on full speed, and three days later we were safe at Turk's Island, the most southerly and easterly of the Bahama Islands, off the coast of Florida, which I had selected as a base of operations. Though these islands ought long ago to have come under the Stars and Stripes, as they eventually must, they are still owned by England, and in those days they were a haven and a clearing-house for the outsiders who were actively aiding the Confederacy—for a very substantial consideration.

Most of the blockade-runners, including the *Banshee, Siren, Robert E. Lee, Lady Stirling* and other famous ships, were operating out of Nassau, which had the advan-

tage of closer proximity to the chief Southern ports, being within 600 miles of Charleston and Wilmington, while Turk's Island was 900 miles away, but I never have believed in following the crowd. It is my rule to do things alone and in my own way, as must be the practise of every man who expects to succeed in any dangerous business. The popularity of Nassau caused it to be closely watched by the Federal cruisers that patrolled the Gulf Stream, while the less important islands to the south and east were practically unguarded.

Though precarious for the men who made them so, those were plenteous days for the Bahamas, compared with which the rich tourist toll since levied on the then hated Yankees is but small change. The fortunes yielded by blockade-running seemed made by magic, so quick was the process. Cotton that was bought in Charleston or Wilmington for ten cents a pound sold for ten times as much in the Bahamas, and there were enormous profits in the return cargoes of military supplies. The captains and crews shared in the proceeds, and the health of the Confederacy was drunk continuously and often riotously.

By the time I projected myself temporarily into this golden atmosphere of abnormal activity, running the blockade had become more of a business and less of a romance than it was in the reckless early days of the war.

Before leaving Bermuda I had ordered a cargo of munitions of war sent to Turk's Island. We had to wait nearly a month for this shipment to arrive, but the time was well spent in overhauling the engines and putting the *Letter B* in perfect condition.

My second trip to Charleston furnished a degree of excitement that exalted my soul. While we were held up at Turk's Island the blockading fleet had been strengthened and supplemented by several small and fast boats which cruised around outside of the line. Without knowing this I had decided—it must have been in response to a "hunch"—to make a dash straight through the line and into the harbor. And it was fortunate that we followed this plan, for they were expecting us to come up from the south, hugging the shore as we had done before, and if we had taken that course they certainly would have sunk us or forced us aground.

We were proceeding cautiously, but did not think we were close to the danger-zone, when suddenly one of the patrol ships picked us up and opened fire. Her guns were no better than pea-shooters, but they gave the signal to the fleet, and instantly lights popped up all along the line ahead.

In the flashing lights ahead I saw all of the excitement I had been longing for, and with an exultant yell to the helmsman to "Tell the engineer to give her ——!" I pushed him aside and seized the wheel. I fondled the spokes lovingly and leaned over them in a tumult of joy. It was the great moment of which I had dreamed from boyhood.

I had anticipated that when it came I would be considerably excited and forgetful of all of my carefully-thought-out plans for meeting an emergency, but to my surprise I found that I was as cool as though we had been riding at anchor in New York Bay. The opening gun cleared my mind of all its anxieties and intensified its action. I remember that I took time to analyze my feelings to make sure that I was calm and collected and not stunned and stolid, and that I was silent from choice and not through anything of fear.

As though spurred by a human impulse the little ship sprang forward as she felt the full force of her engines, and never did she make such a race as she did that night. In the sea that was running and at the speed we were going we would ordinarily have had two men at the wheel, but I found it so easy and so delightful to handle the ship alone that I declined the assistance of Captain Williams, who stood behind me.

Though I am not tall, being not much over five feet and eight inches, nature was kind in giving me a well-set-up frame and a powerful constitution, devoid of nerves but with muscles of steel, and with a reserve supply of strength that made me marvel at its source. Through all of my active life I kept myself in as perfect condition as a trained athlete, despite occasional dissipations ashore, and I never got into a close corner without feeling myself possessed of the strength of half a dozen ordinary men.

The widest opening in the already closing line was, luckily, directly in front of us and I headed for it. The sparks from our smokestack gave the blockaders our course as plainly as though it had been noonday, and they closed in from both sides to head us off.

hot and shell screamed and sang all around ıe undaunted *Letter B.*

First the mainmast and then the foremast ame down with a crash, littering the decks ·ith their gear. A shell carried death into ıe forecastle. One shot tore away the two ›rward stanchions of the pilot-house, and nother one smashed through the roof, but either Captain Williams nor I was injured. .ll of our boats and most of our upper ·orks were literally shot to pieces.

From first to last we must have been nder that terrific fire for half an hour, but : seemed not more than a few minutes, and : really was with something of regret that found the shots were falling astern. Vhen we got up to the dock we found that ve of our men had been killed and a dozen ıore or less seriously injured. The ship ad not been damaged at all, so far as speed nd seaworthiness in ordinary weather were oncerned, though she looked a wreck.

The blockaders expected we would be ıid up for a month. Consequently when ve steamed out on the fourth night, after naking only temporary repairs, they were ıot looking for us and we got through their ine without much trouble.

We refitted at Turk's Island, where we ıid up for three weeks.

I made two more trips to Charleston with›ut any very exciting experiences, though ve were fired on both times, and then sold he ship to an enterprising Englishman at Turk's Island. I had made a comfortable ortune with her and sold her for more than paid for her, but I have made it a rule ıever to overplay my luck. I am under the mpression that the ship and her new owner vere captured on her next trip to Charleston, ›ut am not sure as to that.

CHAPTER II

FILIBUSTERING IN THE WEST INDIES

HAVING succeeded as a blockade-runner, I was ambitious to become a ilibuster, which kindred vocation I thought ›ffered even greater opportunities for ad·enture, and immediately after the sale of he *Letter B*, in the latter part of 1864, I eturned to New York, in the hope that the Cespedes revolution in Cuba would have ›een sprung and a Junta established with vhich I could work. I found that the revolt vas still hatching and that no New York agent had been appointed, so, for want of something better to do, I bought from Benjamin Wood, editor of the New York *News*, the old Franklin Avenue distillery in Brooklyn.

This venture resulted in an open and final rupture with my family. I left home in a rage and swore that I would never again set foot in it or set eyes on any member of the family, and except for a visit to my father just before he died, not long afterward, I have kept my vow.

I had been in the distillery business only a few months, during which time the property had shown a large profit, when, while attending a performance at the old Grand Opera House, I met "Jim" Fisk, with whom I had become acquainted in my boyhood days, when he was running a gaudy pedler's wagon out of Boston. He was once laid up for a week by a prank which I played on him in George Steele's store at Ferrisburg, Vt., but after that we became good friends.

Fisk, big and loudly dressed and displaying the airs which later helped to earn for him the sobriquet of "Jim Jubilee Junior," entered the theater in company with Jay Gould, his new friend and future partner in the looting of the Erie and the great Gold Conspiracy, to say nothing of many minor maraudings into misappropriated millions.

Fisk's roving gaze fell on me and he nodded and smiled. A moment later he excused himself and came over to talk to me, while Gould followed him with his snapping eyes and drove them through me with a searching inquiry which seemed to satisfy him that I was simply an old acquaintance and harbored no predatory plot. Their intimacy was then in its infancy, and Gould appeared to be half suspicious of every man Fisk talked with.

Fisk asked what I was doing that I looked so prosperous. I told him briefly and he asked me to call on him the next day.

I did not go to see him, but the following day he called on me at the St. Nicholas Hotel. After we had exchanged confidences regarding our careers he said he wanted to buy a half interest in the distillery and asked me to put a price on it. I told him I did not want a partner. He insisted and said he had influence at Washington—which he afterward proved—and that it would be valuable to us.

"We will make a good team," he said. "Here,"—and he scribbled off a check for

$100,000 and tossed it over to me—"now we are partners."

"Not much!" I said, as I tossed it back to him. "I am making too much money for you to get in at that price, even if I wanted you as a partner."

"All right, then," he replied as he wrote out another check, for $150,000, and handed it to me; "take that; I am in half with you now."

Before I could enter another objection he stalked out of the room and I let it go at that, for I had a scheme in mind and figured that his influence, if it was as powerful as he claimed, would be useful.

Then followed a year or more of prosperity, flavored with complications with the Government, and we finally quit the business with a profit of about $350,000.

Fisk and I continued in partnership and in the Summer of 1866 we bought the fast and stanch little steamer *Edgar Stuart*, which had been a blockade-runner. We bought a cargo of arms and ammunition and were just putting it on board when the first Cuban Junta came to New York and opened offices on New Street. They sent for me and wanted to buy our cargo and pay for it in bonds of the Cuban Republic, at a big discount. I refused, as we insisted on gold or its equivalent, which has always been my rule in dealing in contraband. They finally arranged that we should be paid part in cash, on the delivery of the arms, and the balance in fine Havana cigars.

The Spaniards were not so watchful then as later and the arms were delivered without much trouble at Cape Maysi, at the extreme eastern end of Cuba. On our return the cigars we had received in part payment, in waterproof cases and attached to floats, were thrown overboard in the lower bay, to be picked up by waiting small boats and sold to a tobacco merchant who had a store in the old Stevens House.

The Junta then engaged us to deliver several cargoes of arms to the rebels. I was always in command of these expeditions, with a sailing master in charge of the ship, while Fisk stayed at home and attended to the Washington end of the business. When we sailed without clearance papers, as we sometimes were compelled to do to avoid detention and arrest, for we were constantly under suspicion, Fisk exerted his influence with such good effect that we never were prosecuted.

One night I received a hurry call from the Junta. The *Stuart* was then partly loaded with a fresh supply of arms and was waiting for the rest of the shipment, which was coming from Bridgeport, Conn. The Cubans had been tipped off from Washington that she was to be seized the next day on suspicion of filibustering, which could easily have been proved, and they asked me to take her out that night and call at Baltimore for the rest of the cargo, which would be shipped there direct from Bridgeport.

I went to the ship without returning to my hotel and we got under way soon after midnight, though with a short crew. At daylight I hove to and repainted and rechristened the ship and presented her with a new set of papers, which made it appear that she belonged to Wm. Shannon of Barbados and was taking on supplies, including some arms, of course, for West Indian planters. At Baltimore we hustled the rest of the cargo on board and were just preparing to sail, when the ship was seized by the United States Marshal.

"Why, Captain, your new coat of paint isn't dry yet!" said the Marshal. "That ship was the *Edgar Stuart* when you left New York, all right enough."

I protested that I was sailing under the British flag, but he only smiled, and, naturally, I did not appeal to the British consul for protection. There were fraternal reasons why the Marshal and I could talk confidentially and, though he had no right to do it, he told me that he expected to have a warrant for my arrest in the morning. I determined to get away and take my ship with me.

The Marshal left three watchmen on the ship to guarantee her continued presence. Ed. Coffee, the steward, was a man who knew every angle of his business. Soon after it was dark he served the watchers with a lunch and followed it with a bottle of wine which had been carefully prepared, though no one could tell it had been tampered with. In ten minutes they were sound asleep, and in twice that time we were out in the stream and headed south.

We delivered the cargo about fifty miles west of Cape Maysi and then went to Halifax, Nova Scotia, until Fisk wired that he had "squared" things with the authorities and it was safe for me to return.

Our expeditions with the *Stuart* had been so successful that the Spanish Government,

through its minister at Washington, had arranged with the Delamater Iron Works, on the Hudson, for the purchase of several small gunboats to operate against filibusters. Fisk had learned the terms of the Spanish minister's contract and the date specified for the delivery of the gunboats, but we did not know of a secret understanding by which they were to be delivered several weeks in advance of that time. The result was that on my next, and last, trip to Cuba I ran full tilt into one of the new boats.

We raised Cape Maysi late in the afternoon and were close inshore and not far from the lighthouse when a little steamer came racing up on our starboard bow. I saw that she was flying the Spanish flag, but I paid no attention to her, as she was nothing like the ordinary Spanish type of gunboat, for which I was on the lookout; but I opened my eyes when she fired a blank shot across our bows. I promptly ran up the British flag and kept on my course, whereupon she sent a solid shot just ahead of us. Then I hove to, and a lieutenant and boat's crew came aboard.

While the lieutenant was being rowed to the *Stuart* I had a lot of black powder stored under the break of the poop, just below my cabin, and laid a fuse to it. I did this primarily for the purpose of running a strong bluff on the Spaniards, but I had made up my mind that if it came to the worst I would blow up my ship and take a long chance on getting ashore in the small boats. I figured that the gunboat would stop to pick up those of its crew who were sent skyward by the explosion and that this would allow time for some of us, at least, to escape, which was much better than to sit still and have all hands captured and executed.

When the lieutenant came aboard he called for my papers and I gave him the usual forged set, which indicated British registry and concealed the nature of the cargo. He was not satisfied and ordered me to open the hatches, which I refused to do. He procured some tools and was having his men open them, when I gave the signal to lower the boats and man them. The Spaniards looked on in wonder, but interposed no objection. Then I ostentatiously lighted the fuse in my cabin and, as I was getting into my boat, I said to the lieutenant:

"I wish you luck in going over my cargo. You'll be in hell in just about three minutes!"

Without asking a question, the young officer bundled his men and himself into his boat and I lost as little time in hustling my men back on to the *Stuart* and pulling out the fuse. Had he not flown into a state of panic, which is characteristic of the Latin races, the lieutenant could have pulled out the sputtering fuse, just as I did, and removed the danger, but it seemed that such an idea never occurred to him. It was simply American nerve against Spanish blood, and of course I won.

The gunboat was half a mile to windward and a choppy sea was running, so the lieutenant had his hands full managing his boat and had no time to try to make any signals. I ordered full speed ahead and ran across the gunboat's bows, dipping our ensign as we passed. The commander of the gunboat, thinking everything was all right, returned our salute and dropped down to pick up the lieutenant. When he got to the small boat and discovered the trick, he sent a shot after us and gave chase, but it was no use. I swung around in a wide circle, picked up a little inlet near Gonaives Bay, in which the rebels were waiting, had my cargo unloaded and was headed back for New York before daylight.

While the *Stuart* was laid up for repairs at one time, Captain Williams and I took the famous *Virginius* out on her first trip, with a cargo of arms from the Junta. The Junta wanted me to keep her, but I refused on account of her size. She was larger than the *Stuart*, but no faster, and had quarters for a considerable number of men outside of her crew, which the *Stuart* had not, and I foresaw that they would want to use her in transporting men. Transporting troops is a very different business from carrying arms, and my experience has convinced me that the two can not safely be combined on one ship. The hand of every nation is raised against the filibuster, for you are engaged in an illegal act, however much it may stand for the advancement of humanity and the spread of liberty.

Just as I had expected, the *Virginius*, after many narrow escapes, was finally captured by the Spaniards on October 31, 1873, near Santiago. General Cespedes, the life of the revolution, and three of his best

fighting chiefs, Generals Ryan, Varona and Del Sal, who happened to be on board, were summarily executed. This was done, it was claimed, under prior sentences, but as a matter of fact there was not so much as a mockery of a trial at any time.

All the others on board were tried for piracy and promptly convicted, of course. Within a week after the seizure of the ship Captain Joseph Fry, her American commander, thirty-six of his crew and fifteen "passengers" were lined up and shot to death, with an excess of brutality. The rest, who were to have been similarly disposed of, were saved, not through intervention from Washington, whence it should have come, but by the timely arrival of a British warship, whose commander refused to permit any further butchery.

England peremptorily compelled the Spanish Government to pay a substantial indemnity for the British subjects who had been thus lawlessly executed, while the United States Government waited twenty-five years before taking vengeance on Spain for the murder of Captain Fry and his companions.

Along about 1868, after it had run half its length, the Ten Years War began to bog down. There was nothing else doing in this part of the world, so I decided to go to Europe, being attracted by the prospect of war between France and Germany.

CHAPTER III

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF SPAIN

DURING the Cuban filibustering days I gained more notoriety than I desired, and as I did not wish to be known as a trouble-maker on the other side, where the laws against the carrying of contraband were being rigidly enforced on account of the recent *Alabama* affair, I lost my identity while crossing the Atlantic. When I reached London in the latter part of 1868 I was George MacFarlane, and in order that I might have an address and ostensible occupation I established the commercial house of George MacFarlane & Co., at 10 Corn Hill. My partner, who really was only a clerk, was a young Englishman named Cunningham, for whom I had been able to do a good turn while living in Chicago. I opened an account in the London & Westminster bank with an initial deposit of close to £75,000, which gave me a financial standing.

In order to build up a reputation for eminent business respectability as a cover for illicit but much more exciting operations, and at the same time to throw me naturally in contact with shipping concerns, I bought several small vessels and began shipping general cargoes to and from the Continent, either for my own account or for others.

Fate was kind to me in throwing in my way the little steamer *Leckwith*, which I bought at a bargain. She had been built as a yacht for a nobleman, but did not suit him. She registered five hundred and twenty tons, could do seventeen knots when she was pushed, and was small enough to go anywhere, fast enough to beat anything that was likely to chase her, and big enough for my purposes. Until the day I buried her, years afterward, as the only means of destroying damning evidence, she served me faithfully and well, and I doubt whether any ship, before or since, has made so much money for her owner.

Don Carlos, the Spanish Pretender, was just then, in 1869, preparing to make his last fight for the long-coveted crown of Spain. His chief agent had bought all of the arms and ammunition he could pay for from Kynoch & Co., of Birmingham, and had contracted with Nickell & Son for their delivery on the northern coast of Spain. They had lost one cargo through the watchfulness of a Spanish warship, and had nearly come to grief with another.

The Pretender's agent then proposed that Don Carlos pay for the arms when they were delivered, instead of at the factory, as before. Old man Nickell was considering this proposition when I met him, and he told me about it, after we had come to know and understand each other a bit, and it was agreed that Nickell should buy the arms while I would furnish the ship and deliver them.

It was stipulated that the first consignment should be delivered to Don Carlos himself at his headquarters near Bilbao, and before accepting the cargo I went there on an iron-ore steamer to reconnoiter. I found that the Pretender's retreat in the mountains back from Bilbao was in the very heart of that section of Spain which was most loyal to him, so there was nothing to fear, once we succeeded in getting up the river. Even the city of Bilbao was largely composed of Carlist supporters, but the

forts which commanded the river there and at Portugalete at the mouth of the river were manned by unfriendly troops. Also, there were so many warships patrolling the northern coast that it practically amounted to a blockade.

Only a small and light-draft ship could get up the river, and I did not care to try it with the *Leckwith*, so I chartered a smaller steamer which greatly resembled the *Santa Marta*, a Spanish coastwise ship. To avoid suspicion, the rifles and cartridges were shipped to Antwerp and I picked them up there.

As soon as we were out of sight of land I repainted my ship and made some slight changes until she looked almost exactly like the *Santa Marta*. That name was then painted on her bows and the Spanish flag hoisted over her to avoid any trouble with forts or warships. Of course, if we had happened to meet the real *Santa Marta* we would have had to run for it at least, but we met neither her nor the cruisers. We saluted the forts as we passed them, and they responded without taking two looks at us.

We got over the bar at Bilbao with very little to spare under our keel and went on up the river to the appointed place. A band of Gipsies—*Gitanos*—were camped close by, and in ten minutes they were all over the ship. Among them was a singularly beautiful girl to whom I was strangely drawn. She followed me around the ship, which did not annoy me at all, and insisted on telling my fortune. When I consented she told me, among a lot of other things, that I would be paid a large sum of money in the mountains and assassinated.

Her dire prediction did not cause me a moment's anxiety, as I have no faith in human ability to discern what the inhuman fates have prescribed for us, but she was greatly worried by what the cards had told her, and begged me, almost with tears in her eyes, to stay away from the mountains. As I then had no thought of going into the hills I assured her that I would do as she advised, whereat she was much relieved.

No messenger from Don Carlos came down to meet us, as had been agreed upon, and after waiting three or four days I sent one of the Gipsies to his camp to advise him that the cargo awaited his orders—and the payment. He replied that he would send for it and that I should come to his headquarters for the money, as he wished to consult with me about further shipments. He sent along one of his aides to escort me to his camp. Without any thought of danger, I set forth at once. George Brown, my sailing master, who was a gigantic Nova Scotian, and Bill Heather, the second officer, accompanied me.

The Carlist camp was located well up in the mountains, nearly twelve miles away. After a short wait I was ceremoniously ushered into the august presence of the Pretender, and I am compelled to admit that in personal appearance he had a great advantage over any real king I have ever seen. Perhaps forty years old, he was in the full glory of physical manhood; six feet tall, powerfully built and unmistakably a Spaniard. He had a full beard and mustache as black as his hair, large dark eyes, a Grecian nose and a broad, high forehead which suggested a higher degree of intellectuality than he possessed.

But his cold face was cruel and unscrupulous and I felt—which I afterward found was the fact—that his adherents followed him chiefly from principle and were dominated much more by fear than by personal loyalty. He greeted me with frigid formality in contradiction to the warm welcome I had expected, as due a savior of the Carlist cause, and his first words, spoken in fair English, were a curt statement that he had no money but would pay for my cargo through his London agent within two months.

Chagrined at the manner of my reception, I inquired, with some heat: "How is it possible, your Majesty, that you are not prepared to carry out the agreement made with your agent, who was acting, as he convinced us, with your full authority?"

"If my agent made such a contract as that," he retorted with assumed indignation, "he did it on his own responsibility alone, and I refuse to be bound by it. I have stated my terms. If you do not care to accede to them, you can go to the devil!"

I went about on the other tack. "I beg your Majesty's pardon," I said with much deference, "for momentarily losing my temper. I see now that your Majesty is joking. It could not be otherwise, for the word of a King of Spain is sacred."

The flattery went home, as I supposed, but when he persisted in his assertion that he was in earnest and did not propose

to live up to the contract, I pointed out to him, as discreetly as possible, what the result of such a course would be. "I can only again congratulate you on your art," I said, "for it would be ridiculous for me to believe you speak seriously. Failure to keep the agreement made by your agent would destroy your excellent credit with all dealers in revolutionary supplies, and that, of course, is not to be thought of. On the other hand, by paying for this cargo you will establish your credit more firmly than ever. I know that your Majesty is not only very honest, but very wise."

This argument appeared to convince him and, with a smile as though he had really been only joking, he summoned a venerable Jew, evidently his treasurer, who looked like the original of all pictures of Shylock, and ordered him to pay me £28,000, the amount called for by the manifest. The Jew returned in a few minutes with the exact amount. With the transaction completed, Don Carlos dramatically waved me out.

The officer who had piloted us to the camp suggested that we could find our way back to the ship without any trouble, as the trail was clearly defined, and we started back alone. Before we had gone twenty steps Brown asked whether I had been paid in cash. I pointed to my bulging pockets and told him I undoubtedly had. He then confessed that he thought we were "in for it." Six cavalrymen, he said, had started down the trail not long before I left Don Carlos's tent, and he believed they had been sent out to waylay, rob and probably murder us in the deep canyon into which the ravine from the camp turned.

In a flash I recalled the prediction of the Gipsy girl and the promise I had given her. I laughed at myself for the spasm of something like fear that came into my mind, yet I was undeniably nervous, for Brown was not a man to form foolish fancies or become unduly alarmed about anything. And none of us was armed.

We had turned a corner that put us out of sight of the camp, when I saw a dark face peering at us through the underbrush that matted the trail on both sides. At the first glance the face looked like nothing but one of the troopers we had been talking about, but in an instant I recognized the Gitano girl who had told my fortune and begged me not to go into the mountains. She beckoned to us and, without saying a word, plunged off into deep woods, in which we, unguided, would have been hopelessly lost in ten minutes.

She led us over a hill and across a wide depression and then over another much higher mountain. There was not so much as a suggestion of a path and it was hard going, yet none of us complained. She brought us out to the trail at the point where we had made our first turn into the foothills. From there it was a straight road to the ship with no fear of ambuscade or attack.

The tension was relieved, and the girl, with tears in her eyes that betrayed her real emotions, threw her arms around my neck and reproached me passionately for violating my promise to her and exposing myself to what she said would have been certain death but for her intervention. It was with difficulty that I released myself from her embrace, while Brown and Heather discreetly and rapidly walked on ahead of us. She said she had heard where I had gone when she went to the ship in the morning to see me and, knowing what the plot would be, had intercepted us as we were leaving the camp.

The Gipsies were loyal to the Carlists through fear, so she could get no help from her own people, but she had prevailed on her brother to steal up the trail through the canyon to see what happened there and prove to us that she was right.

An hour after we reached the ship her brother returned and reported to her that six cavalrymen had come down the ravine from the camp and concealed themselves alongside the trail in the canyon just below the turn. After a long wait one of them galloped back toward the camp. He soon returned, after discovering that we had left the trail, and the others went back to camp with him.

To Brown and Heather that seemed convincing proof of what would have happened to us but for the Gipsy girl; my own notion about it was that what had happened had to happen and that I had not been killed simply because my time had not arrived. Therefore I felt nothing of gratitude, but when I came to analyze my real feeling toward the young woman, whose wondrous black eyes seemed to reflect all of the mystery and witchery of those glorious ages that died with the departure of the Moors, I found that the deep impression her physical

charms had made on me had been intensified by her mad affection for me. This made it no easy matter to leave her, but I had no thought of taking her with me, and I had to get Bill Heather to half carry her ashore just before the gang-plank was pulled in.

The rest of the cargo was jerked out with all speed and as soon as the last box was on the bank we got under way. We had not gone a quarter of a mile, when the Gipsies came running after us, shouting and waving at us to come back. The cause of their excitement was soon discovered in the presence of my Gitano girl, who had stolen on board at the last minute and concealed herself until we were under way.

My first impulse was to stop the ship and set her ashore, but she came running up to me and declared, with an imperious air of authority: "I am going with you, so pay no attention to my foolish people!"

"But, you can not do that!" I protested. "I will be accused of having stolen you."

"You can not steal what belongs to you!" was her quick reply.

"But I am going to a strange land where there are none of your people and where your language is a strange tongue. You will be lonely and die."

"'I never will be lonely where you are!" she exclaimed with all the passion of her nomadic soul; "and I will not die unless they kill me here. If you go, I go with you; if I go ashore, you go with me!"

Never before having encountered such affection, I was content to let her have her way. Her tribesmen followed us and called down all manner of curious curses on our heads until they were convinced we had no thought of stopping, when two of them galloped on ahead of us toward Bilbao. They went to the fort, evidently, and told the officer in command that we were aiding Don Carlos, for as soon as we got within hailing distance we were ordered to heave to.

We paid no attention to the command, of course, and as the only effect of a warning gun which followed was to increase our speed they sent half a dozen shots at us. One of them shattered the foretopmast and brought the fore-rigging down by the run; the others went wild. We were fired at from a height and dropping shots seldom hit, though when they do they are generally disastrous. With everything dragging forward, until the gear could be cleared away, we proceeded down the widening river at full speed. Greatly to my surprise we were not even hailed by the fort at the mouth of the river, where I had looked for some serious business, and we continued happily on our way to London.

Soon after our arrival there I established the Gitano girl, to whom I had become deeply attached, in a cottage near Chalk Farm, near the city. I left her amply supplied with money and there were other Gipsies with whom she could fraternize.

It is an evidence of the strange way in which my life has been ordered that I never saw her again. When I returned, at the first opportunity, in about two years, I found nothing but a pile of blackened ruins where the cottage had stood. The Gitano girl's beauty had made her known to the people near by, but they had not seen her for over a year, and the neighboring Gipsies had moved away, no one knew where.

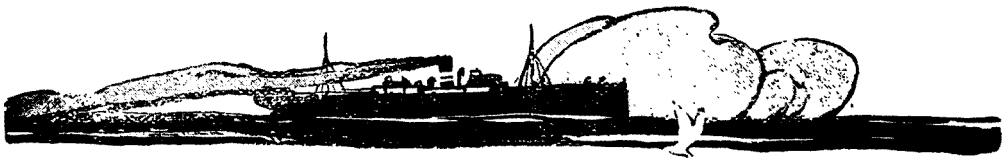
That experience finished me with Don Carlos. Seven or eight years later, when I was selling arms to Montenegro and Turkey, and not long after he had finally been driven out of Spain, I met him at Claridge's Hotel in London, as he came in from attending church at the Greek Chapel. He recognized me and, after pausing for a second, offered me his hand, but I refused it.

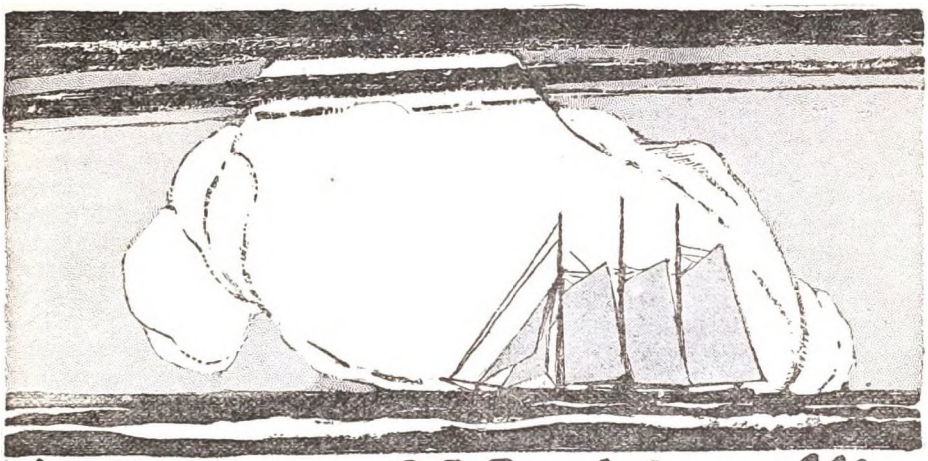
"What do you mean?" he demanded angrily.

"I mean, your Royal Highness," I replied with some sarcasm, "that if I am here to shake hands with you it is through no good will of yours, for you tried to have me assassinated in your mountains!"

He looked at me hard for a moment, shrugged his shoulders and walked on.

Other adventures of Captain Boynton will appear in the next number





A Cargo of Machiavellis

by J·W·Muller

IN THE course of his earnest research into the financial systems of his fellow-men Mr. Hiram Bunker's soul reached broadly toward all the interests and activities of humanity, unfettered by narrow prejudice of race or creed. Nothing was so petty that his magnanimous mind disdained it. In a bespectacled professor hunting for a rare beetle, in the noble striving of a patriot for public office, in the babble of scribblers and dreamers his vision saw great and noble possibilities of money. More than once he dreamed of capitalizing the industries of literature, picture-painting and sculpture-making and putting them on a paying basis by shutting down some of the more productive artists at certain times during the year.

This, however, remained only a dream, owing to the unpractical, not to say unprincipled, temperament of professional persons. In practise Mr. Bunker found that the best money-making possibilities lay in patriots. Gradually he became a specialist in the patriotisms of many regions, from San Francisco to Pekin. Patriots became his best dividend-payers after a time, some of them producing as high as one thousand per cent., despite the deplorable fact that most of them had to be bought over again at frequent intervals.

Every little while some of his patriots were presented with honorary degrees in jail; but the cell-doors never nipped even the coat-tails of Mr. Bunker, for he never allowed his right hand to know what his wrong hand did.

Complications, however, were many. One day Mr. Bunker sat in his office reflecting over one of these. He was studying not so much how to get out of the complication as how to get out of it honorably with more money than he had seen in it before the complication arose. Every cloud had a silver lining for Mr. Bunker, while the rain in it always fell on somebody else whom Mr. Bunker had just deprived of an umbrella.

The problem before Mr. Bunker was that of certain Central American patriots who had begun a cutthroat competition owing to an unexpected accumulation that had found its way into the public treasury in spite of the earnest efforts of the patriots in control. The phenomenon inspired other patriots to do their duty as citizens by taking care of it. They used the simple and always popular method of a revolution.

Mr. Bunker had extracted many excellent financial results out of the revolutions by the sound practise of helping the side that was sure to win. He had many of the interests known as "concessions" at stake—impious persons of anarchic minds called them "incisions." He hoped to increase the depth

of these existing incisions and make a few new ones by wise action in the present crisis.

The patriots in the government had become shamelessly high-priced and the patriots who had begun the revolution were likely to win—two cogent reasons that showed Mr. Bunker that his duty clearly was to serve the sacred cause of human liberty by supplying the revolutionists with arms.

To obtain these was easy. Mr. Bunker owned a company (in which his name did not appear) that bought condemned rifles and other munitions of war. The president of the company was a youthful clerk of Mr. Bunker's whose privilege it was to be an officer in many companies of which he knew nothing, and whose duty it was to sign many hundreds of letters and other documents whose contents he never dreamed of seeing. He was a true treasure to his employer, for he lavished all of his twenty dollars a week on clothes and theaters and had no emotion or interest in business except to regret the space of time between pay-days.

To deliver the arms was equally easy. The revolutionists held a port, inhabited normally by one hundred thousand land crabs and about forty other beings who made the place a town by vegetating in half a dozen palm-thatched huts. It was not a Liverpool or a Naples, but it had a roadstead, and the government party had no warship to prevent a landing.

Mr. Bunker's only difficulty was to ship the arms. His own country had been viewing his operations in many fields with serious disapprobation, and nearly every Department of the Government was showing an almost juvenile enthusiasm about trying to indict him. Although Mr. Bunker was what might be called a chronic defendant he still felt that the particular time was singularly inopportune for being caught in filibustering, especially as the Government under which he practised his beneficences had recognized the government party in the Central American diversion, and some great statesmen in Washington were shaking in their elective shoes lest the other side win.

This was the complication that Mr. Bunker was studying. His face cleared and darkened alternately as schemes came and went It darkened, also, whenever he gazed on the memorandum on which he had scribbled:

5,000 rifles at $10=$50,000.

It was true that the rifles had cost only $2 each, but Mr. Bunker had attained his wealth by estimating the value of anything, not by what it cost him, but by what it was going to cost the man who bought it from him. In his far-seeing mind he had already charged the Central American government-to-be with $50,000. This had only one drawback. It imbued Mr. Bunker, in spite of himself, with the mournful feeling that he was giving away an enormous sum of money.

Other than that, the reflections brought no fruit. He could not discover any way to make somebody else take the risk of shipping the cargo. So he took down his telephone receiver and sent forth three brief messages.

The messages brought three persons—one an enormously elongated Yankee gentleman with a free and easy way that stopped short only of slapping Mr. Bunker on his majestic back; and the other two, undersized dark gentlemen with extremely black hair and beards, extremely small feet and hands and extremely mysterious manners.

The dark gentlemen were the leaders of the revolutionary junta. They expressed vehement delight with mouths and hands at Mr. Bunker's impressive announcement that he would help their cause, and they replied to his insistence on secrecy by raising their right hands simultaneously and swearing a vastly complicated and sacred oath.

When their gymnastic remarks ceased at last, their benefactor waved his hand at the tall man and introduced him as Captain Logan. "He will see to the shipment," said he. "I entrust it all to him."

Mr. Bunker's usual maxim was to lead no man into temptation by trusting him. Sometimes, however, in such crises as the present, he did trust Captain Logan—not through romantic sentiment, but because the Captain had so many private entanglements, incurred during a busy life of shanghazing, smuggling, wrecking and filibustering, that he could never hope to gain anything by turning state's evidence.

"Captain Logan," said Mr. Bunker, "you will find a ship that will carry this—this consignment of machinery, you know, and you will ship these two gentlemen aboard as passengers. They will see that the cargo is delivered to the right parties. Good day."

"All right, Commodore, all right—oh!" responded the genial shanghaier, holding out a friendly hand which Mr. Bunker firmly ignored. "I'll put the stuff aboard as slick as if 'twas butter, and I'll get these two little fellers off in glory."

II

"GOT 'em off in glory!" he reported a few days afterward, sauntering sociably into Mr. Bunker's grim presence. "Picked up a trim little schooner that was hunting freight and willing to take a chance. Good captain and a safe man and a good fast boat. But it'll cost you some money, Commodore. Had to pay the captain $3,500 for the job."

Instantly Mr. Bunker gave tongue like a mastiff lamenting to the moon. Captain Logan listened unmoved. "There ain't a cent in it for me," he interjected when Mr. Bunker stopped for a brief instant to fetch breath. "The shark that owns the schooner made me give him every penny of it," added he unblushingly.

Mr. Bunker emitted a bellowing volley, the meaning of which was strikingly clear, though no individual words were intelligible.

"You'll spring a rivet, Commodore," suggested Captain Logan compassionately. The "commodore's" response was of a violence to justify the fear that he had sprung more than one rivet. Captain Logan listened with open admiration. He was a plain, unassuming man who respected nobody; but he felt human regard for a man who, though handicapped by great wealth like Mr. Bunker, still commanded such human language.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Commodore," said he generously. "I'll stand $500 loss myself, just to save you from an apoplectic fit. Give me $3,000."

Mr. Bunker, far from being overcome, urged Captain Logan to go to a certain resort celebrated not so much for its climate as its society. He tore open a drawer, counted out a bundle of bills and slapped them rudely down before the Captain. The latter counted them serenely. He betrayed no sign of surprise when his count ended at $2,500, but put the packet away in his breast-pocket and rose to go.

"How much did you really pay the captain of the vessel?" asked Mr. Bunker.

"Truly?" inquired Captain Logan. "Well, Commodore, s'help me, the shark made me pay him $2,000."

"Who was the scoundrel?" asked Mr. Bunker indignantly.

"A feller that you know, or know of, I guess," was the reply. "You sold him the *Hiram Bunker*, Commodore, and bought it back again from him."

"Captain Moses!" exclaimed Mr. Hiram Bunker.

Captain Logan nodded. "Said he'd a lot to be grateful to you for. The money he made out of the *Bunker* helped him buy the schooner. I shouldn't wonder but what he'd 'a' carried that stuff cheaper if he'd knowed it was for you, Commodore."

The kindly shanghaier nodded politely and withdrew, leaving behind him a great financier whose rivets were now springing in earnest.

III

"SOMEBODY must be a-talkin' about us," said Mr. William Bowsun about that time, rubbing an ear as he rested his fine porpoisean form against the rail of the schooner *Flying Squid*.

"Hope 'tisn't somebody connected with the Government," answered Captain Moses, nervously scanning the sea astern. "I don't care how soon we get shut of this cargo." He stroked his little beard.

"Me neither," said Mr. Bowsun. "I don't trust them little sunburns what we've got aboard as passengers. Look to me, they do, like Romeo or Juliet or some o' them other conspiracies of a similar nater. I'm a broad-minded man, and I ain't mean enough to despise people on account of their color. I don't mistrust dark-complected people—not I! But I never trust them, neither."

"They can't help being dark, Bill," ventured Captain Moses pacifically.

"No," assented Bill, "they can't. But they don't need to act like a theayter. Every time I see 'em they look like as if they was just comin' up through a trapdoor. What's to prewent 'em from running us into the hands of that there government down there and lettin' 'em grab us and the *Flying Squid?* The way they whisper and the way they look at us! All I got to say is, don't blame me!"

"They can't help acting that way, Bill,"

uggested Captain Moses. "It's their na-
ure." He looked toward the stern where
he passengers were sitting in dark, secret
ommunion. "You might keep an eye on
em Bill, though," he added. "No harm
i making sure. We can't take risks."

Mr. Bowsun's eyes assumed the fixed
tare of one pondering with great muscular
trength. "Aye," said he at last, "I'll do
:. But, Cap'n," and he laid a small con-
inent of hairy hand solemnly on his su-
erior's arm, "don't let that there Henery
mell as there's anything in the wind. If
hat there youth knowed anything about
argo or errand, it would set that brain o'
is to do somethin' foolish that he gets out
f his books. Did you see the pile o' new
ooks about seafarin' and pirates and
uch that he brought aboard this voyage?
Iorrible, I call it. So don't let him know
othin' about nothin,' and then—and
hen," concluded Mr. Bowsun brightly,
then he won't know nothin'."

The Señors José Sanchez and Manuel
lanco de Betancourt were nice little men,
ut they were men of mystery, heart and
oul. After the first day at sea Mr. Bow-
un had succeeded in arousing all their fine
ent for danger. They responded to his
ature advances with folded arms and
urled brows, till the Mate longed passion-
tely to pick them up between his forefinger
nd thumb and throw them overboard.
ut his duty to keep an eye on them for-
ade his indulgence of personal fancies. He
ooked at them with what he fondly intend-
d to be a friendly and ingenuous smile.

The two little revolutionists looked at him
nd shrank. Had they been a shade less
ark they would have turned pale. They
ead in Mr. Bowsun's facial contortion the
udden involuntary betrayal of malignant
enace.

Señors Sanchez and Betancourt were con-
pirators for a living, but they loved it as an
rt. Their choice of a dinner was a matter
f conspiracy; they conspired about the time
f day, and plotted as to the state of the
eather. Therefore, when Mr. Bowsun
urned away, after his unfortunate attempt
t a smile, the Señor José Sanchez, yielding
uite unconsciously to long habit, pulled
he brim of his soft hat deep over his brows,
hrugged a shoulder to bring his coat collar
ear his ear like a cloak, folded his arms and
azed in his most desperate and mysterious
anner after the Mate. The Señor Man-
uel Blanco de Betancourt did exactly the same thing.

Mr. Bowsun did not see them; but Captain Moses did. It made him receptive when Mr. Bowsun said impressively, "Mark my words, Cap'n Moses, they're up to something. I mistrusted them before and I do it now. And my adwice is that me and you—we'll be friendly with'em and not let on as we see through 'em and watch 'em like a cat!"

Coincidentally Señor Sanchez was saying to Señor Betancourt in Spanish: "There is something wrong!" And Señor de Betancourt was replying to Señor Sanchez: "Let us watch! We shall be polite to this pig of a Mate and his very little Captain, not? And watch him like a cat!"

At dinner that evening they beamed on Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun with expansive, almost brotherly, friendliness. The sudden, extraordinary change from their previous hauteur and aloofness had its due effect on the commander of the *Flying Squid*. Captain Julius Moses had a talent, amounting almost to genius, for looking ahead to possible and impossible contingencies of the most unpleasant nature. He was so painfully conscious of this inborn proclivity that, in mere self-defense, he had cultivated an artificial Captain Moses, a man who decided quickly and undertook anything on the spot, as a man afraid of gunpowder forces himself to fire off a gun with his eyes shut.

The only difficulty was that the artificial Captain Moses generally lasted only long enough to launch the real Captain Moses into an enterprise, and then forsook him utterly. As a result, Captain Julius Moses spent much of his time in marveling at his own recklessness and planning safe ways out of impending trouble.

On deck after dinner, while the *Flying Squid* gambolled steadily southward, shouldering into the long swells of the Gulf Stream or tumbling over them into indigo valleys of sea, he viewed the voyage with his most gloomily prophetic eye and did not contradict Mr. Bowsun when that consistent but depressive mariner repeated his previous remarks about the gentlemen who were then sitting aft, whispering in their best revolutionary style.

Quite insensibly the three-masted schooner *Flying Squid* became a ship of deep duplic-

ity and sleepless intrigue. Captain Moses smiled on his guests till he was ashamed to look at himself in the mirror when he shaved. Mr. Bowsun became such a master of the art of dissimulation that in the night-watches, when he had leisure for impartial reflection, he shook his head at himself and murmured, not without admiration: "Bill, I didn't know as it was in ye, you old villain!"

IV

THE two factions were so busy watching and deluding each other that they had neither time nor attention to bestow on a third faction that was watching both. The third faction was a faction of one person, named Henry Moses, Steward of the *Flying Squid* according to the ship's books, Cabin-boy according to Mr. Bowsun, and guide, philosopher and friend to his uncle, the Captain, according to his own estimate. Henry pitied his uncle for depending with stubborn blindness on Mr. Bowsun, a gentleman whom Henry regarded with constant regret as a person both illiterate and socially impossible.

His recognition of the structural weaknesses of the vessel's executive staff made him pessimistic and sardonic beyond his years. With each voyage he felt responsibility more deeply; and it gave him the expression of one suffering in noble silence—an expression that had the strange effect of arousing Mr. Bowsun's most evil passions.

Although Henry, as usual, had not been taken into the confidence of Captain Moses or Mr. Bowsun as to the nature of the cargo, his attitude toward voyage and passengers was one of spontaneous distrust. Henry's mind, cultivated and broadened by a highly specialized course in piratical literature, was liberal. He did not use the narrow method of first finding an especial reason before suspecting anybody. He suspected first and found the reasons afterward—a simple way that has been elevated into a philosophy by deeper minds who state the principle more elaborately.

Two such people as Señor José Sanchez and Señor Manuel Blanco de Betancourt did not let such a person as Henry wait long for proofs of a suspicious nature. They had not been aboard an hour before his watchful eye discovered them standing in a dark corner of the deck-house, whispering into each other's ears and casting glances at Captain Moses which Henry's trained observation immediately perceived to be of the nature described as baleful in the best books. From that moment they had a tireless watcher on their trail; although it was true that Señor Sanchez had merely been saying to Señor de Betancourt that it was high time for dinner.

There was nothing for it but to watch and wait. Henry did it so thoroughly that Bill Bowsun was moved to remark: "Henery, you know as I'm a patient man what overlooks a lot. But I can't overlook it when you don't do anything so's it can be overlooked." He twisted Henry's ear into a curious spiral that spoke eloquently for its elasticity. "So you go and get to work, or, at least," and he twisted the ear a little more, "get as near to work as you can. Or, first thing you know, I'll have to punish you. What are you making them horrible noises for?—What?—Your ear?" The Mate looked at his fingers and seemed gently surprised when he saw Henry's ear between them. He released it lingeringly and advised Henry with considerable concern: "You ought to take a lot of exercise, Henery, to stren'then you up. I never see a young man as was so sensitive as you be."

Henry ran below, rubbing his ear with great tenderness. To assuage his pain, he dipped into Mr. Bowsun's cabin and dropped the Mate's pet pipe out of the port-hole. Emerging on tiptoe, he caught a glimpse of the two passengers stealing into their cabin. He forgot his injuries and became once more the guardian angel of the ship. Creeping stealthily, in faithful imitation of the artist's conception of the hero in that great work "The Fiend of the Caribbean," he made his way to the keyhole and peeped. He spied Señor Sanchez and Señor de Betancourt each oiling a huge revolver.

Henry backed away. His powerful mind was steaming full speed ahead. He glanced up at the deck through the skylight and saw his uncle and Mr. Bowsun smoking in placid companionship. "Fools!" he muttered, rubbing his ear. "It'd serve 'em right to let 'em walk the plank!"

For a moment his better feelings were overcome by a not unpleasing vision of the bulky form of Bill Bowsun stepping disgustedly from the end of a tilted plank; but his moral principles prevailed, especially

when he considered that Mr. Bowsun would not be the only performer on the old-established piratical board-walk. He considered briefly and dismissed contemptuously the expediency of warning them.

"What's the use?" he decided. "They don't know nothin' except steerin' and scrubbin' deck."

In that moment Henry Moses felt to the full all the majestic but awful loneliness of an isolated intelligence. Subconsciously he labored at unworthy tasks to appease the vulgar-minded Mate; but his real brain labored with problems of life and death.

So deeply did the isolated intelligence labor that Henry became careworn in a few hours as if he had lived a life-time of trouble. A multitude of plans for circumventing pirates had flashed into his alert mind, many of them brilliant ones well recommended by his favorite authors. But on analysis each one failed to meet one of two important conditions peculiar to the case. One of these conditions was the insuperable stupidity of Captain Julius Moses and Mr. William Bowsun. The other was Henry's insuperable objection to endangering the skin of any living being named Henry Moses. This latter condition forced him to discard some of the best plans absolutely.

V

AT LAST, however, there came to him an idea that pleased him. He would make friends with the two conspirators, and, when the opportunity offered, propose to join them. Without troubling to plan trivial intermediate details, Henry's imagination leaped to the time when, having learned the pirates' secret, he would disclose all to his uncle and the Mate. His somewhat cold and fish-like eyes grew almost moist as he saw himself laying a hand forgivingly on Bill Bowsun's broad back and saying to that ashamed and overpowered man: "Never mind, Bill, never mind. Next time you'll be willing to listen to reason."

In the flush of his pride, Henry thoughtlessly went on deck with a face of such charity toward Mr. Bowsun that it was more than the Mate's flesh and blood could bear. Without a word he enveloped Henry's neck with one boa-constrictor-like hand, grappled the seat of his trousers with the other and poured him down the companionway again.

Hideous as the indignity was, it illustrated the proverb about a foul wind. Henry was propelled downward with such force that he arrived on hands and knees before the Señors, who were sitting in a corner; and no art, however perfect, would have enabled him to seem so fervid as he was when he exclaimed:

"I'll stick a knife in him some night!"

To be sure, though the fury in Henry's voice was thoroughly genuine, the words were purely academic—a merely scholastic quotation from "The Fiend of the Caribbean."

But Señor José Sanchez and Señor Manuel Blanco de Betancourt naturally could not know that. They looked meaningly at each other. Their black eyes gleamed with professional enthusiasm. They murmured words of sympathy.

Henry's own professional enthusiasm asserted itself instantly. He thrust away the memory of his wrongs and entered gracefully and skilfully into his part. "Yes, I'll knife him!" said he, nodding his head vindictively.

"Is it, then, that they do to you the much evil?" asked Señor Sanchez sorrowfully.

Henry nodded without a word.

"Poor one!" said Señor de Betancourt. "But *el capitan*, it is then to surprise that he permits his nephew to be treated, how?"

"Uncle!" exclaimed Henry, inspired. "He ain't my uncle! They only say so! They shanghaied me!"

"Shanghaied?" repeated Señor Sanchez, puzzled. Señor de Betacourt whispered to him in Spanish. "*Oh, sí!*" he said, turning to Henry with comprehension in his face. "But it is that to me this does not seem the possible. *El Capitan* Moses is a good gentleman, *un caballero*, honest, eh, not so?"

Henry stared in vast astonishment at the Señor. "Honest!" repeated he. "Oh, my!"

The Central Americans rolled their black eyes and waved their hands in eloquent expression of surprise and polite incredulity.

"It is not a possible!" repeated Señor Sanchez.

Henry shook his head sadly, and began what he intended should be a simple story of a poor boy's wrongs. The genius of invention seized him and carried him away. It launched him, helpless, on a tide of narrative that portrayed his uncle and the Mate

as men of violence on land and sea. Swept along by the passion of authorship, he succeeded in checking himself only as he was about to describe them as pirates, and he turned the story hastily into one that described their specialty as that of scuttling ships for insurance.

"Oh!" he concluded in fine peroration, "I'd do anything to get away from them! I'd even turn pirate!" He gazed searchingly and knowingly at the two little gentlemen.

"Pirate!" repeated Señor Sanchez, smiling. "Ah, my brave young, but that is a business dangerous—and wicked." He smiled again, indulgently, and looked at Señor Manuel Blanco de Betancourt, who smiled in return.

"I'm not afraid!" said Henry, making an attempt that he fondly considered successful to knit his eyebrows sternly.

Señor Sanchez and Señor de Betancourt smiled broadly. Henry could not resist the opportunity, though his literary knowledge warned him that he was pushing matters much faster than even the quickest hero in the hastiest of his favorite novels.

"I'll join you!" he whispered. "Take me in!"

"Join us!" repeated Señor Sanchez, instantly on his guard. His smile fled. Señor de Betancourt frowned blackly.

"What do you mean, young sir?" exclaimed both like a chorus.

"It is that we are only voyagers, travelers, going to home," said Señor Sanchez, recovering himself. "And we have taken the ride on this little boat with sails for the health of us, for the voyage of sea longer as the steamer! *Qué quiere?*"

Henry looked at them. Slowly, shrewdly he closed one eye in a long, confidential wink. "Oh, rubber!" he drawled. "I know! I s'pose that's why you're carrying them guns, hey?"

The Central Americans sprang up in consternation so real that Henry felt a rich glow of pride. They chattered to each other in Spanish, and the more and faster they spoke, the more excited and alarmed they looked. Señor Sanchez brought his face suddenly close to Henry's and hissed: "What you know about guns? Who has told you?"

Henry winked again and nodded mysteriously. "Oh, I know, I do! And if you want to do what you came here to do, you'd better take me in, that's all!"

Again the two gentlemen exchanged conversation of extraordinary violence, and again they turned to Henry and demanded, with eyes full of anger: "And if we do not what you call it take you in, what then?"

The question stumped Henry. He could not invent an answer on the moment to "What then?" With quick decision he winked once more and answered: "That would be telling!" He backed away and escaped to the deck.

VI

FATE threw him directly into the hospitable arms of Mr. Bowsun, who joyously invented so much work for him forward that he had no further opportunity for conspiring with the passengers. Those gentlemen, however, did not need Henry's interesting society to prevent time from hanging heavily on their hands. Behind the locked and bolted door of their cabin they sat with their gigantic revolvers close at hand, and poured torrents, cascades, whirlpools of conversation at each other, none the less riotous because it was whispered.

Just then they were monopolizing all the conspiracy aboard the ship. Even Henry was so busy cleaning out the paint-locker that he abandoned his anxiety about the pirates under the more immediate danger of becoming a rainbow by bringing down an avalanche of red, green, blue and yellow buckets on himself. Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun had forgotten the little dark gentlemen because they, also, had something real to consider.

The *Flying Squid* was a-leak, and the whole North Atlantic Ocean was trying, despite the mathematical impossibility of the job, to come into the ship. Mr. Bowsun, exceedingly hot, ill-tempered and wet, returned to deck from his inspection and reported that the damage could be repaired in five or six hours. "But," said he, "not in this tumbling sea. We've got to shift a lot of the heavy cases and we must get into steady water, or they'll tumble atop of us."

"All right, Bill," responded Captain Moses. "We'll head right in for New Providence, and get into Southwest Bay about twenty miles down from Nassau. We can anchor there like in a mill-pond, and there won't anybody bother us. It's as lonely as any place in these Bahamas."

The course of the *Flying Squid* changed slightly eastward. Her motion changed from its slow, heavy roll to a lively pitching as she headed into the great blue rollers of the Gulf Stream instead of taking them abeam. The change brought the passengers on deck. They were no Vikings, and every unusual motion filled them with great desire for fresh air and a great longing for firm land.

They were not skilled enough to note the change of course, but they noted the unusual stir among the sailors that always marks a crew when anything varies the monotony of a voyage. They noted, too, that Captain and Mate held whispered conversation, which ceased abruptly as they approached.

They glanced at each other, and each one's eyes said: "Danger! Prepare!" But as they had excellent imaginations that could conjure up an extraordinarily rich variety of dangers, they could not select any particular one, and, therefore, could not prepare very well except to be immensely watchful and immensely determined.

Not the least circumstance escaped their keen black eyes. They glanced furtively through the skylight when Captain Moses and his Mate went below for a moment, and they saw the Captain point out something on a chart. Toward dusk they saw that the sailors were clearing ropes and other raffle out of the hold and stowing it forward on deck. Then something most alarming happened. The crew cast off the lashings of one of the ship's boats and freed it from its tarpaulin cover.

At the dinner-table Señor Sanchez inquired politely and with elaborate carelessness of Mr. Bowsun: "There is no things wrong with the ship, no?"

Instead of replying Mr. Bowsun looked at Captain Moses. It was only the nautical deference of a mate to his captain, but Señor Sanchez and Señor Betancourt were in no condition for truly calm, serene judgment.

Captain Moses was a proud man. He belonged to the type of navigators who would resent an inquiry about the ship even if the vessel were already beneath the waves and the passenger were asking his question from the vantage-point of a life-preserver.

But Captain Julius Moses was a small man, and painfully conscious of it always. He saw the black eyes on him, his hand went vaguely to his little beard, he wiped his mouth with his napkin and mumbled a few unintelligible words through the improvised gag. Then he escaped ingloriously to the deck.

Mr. Bowsun lost no time in following. The passengers exchanged glances, hurried to the cabin, snatched the revolvers and concealed the heavy artillery with great trouble under their coats. Then they, too, ventured cautiously on deck.

The night was dark, with only a little glimmer of starlight showing wet spray gleaming coldly, as the *Flying Squid*, pitching into a head sea and a head wind, threw water high from her wave-hammered bows. Overhead was the mutter of wind-beaten canvas. The wind was cold, despite the latitude. Señor Sanchez and Señor Betancourt belonged to that great class of tropic-dwellers who fear the night-wind and prudently muffle mouths and throats in yards of wraps as soon as the sun sets. They lingered awhile, and then, unable to see anything on the dim decks, moved toward the companionway again to retire below.

Their feet were on the upper steps when their eyes caught the outlines of a chest that was being opened by some sailors near the bow. They paused. The starlight gleamed on shining steel that was being handed out to the men by Mr. Bowsun.

The next moment the broad form of the Mate came toward them. They retired hastily and slipped into their cabin, where they stretched themselves on their berths, fully dressed, with all their valuables and arms about them, prepared for the worst.

It was a wearisome, not to say dull task to wait, even for the worst, especially when one had not the faintest idea of what that worst will be like. The cabin was close and the *Flying Squid's* motion made their heads swim. The two revolutionists fell asleep, despite their anxiety.

It was midnight by Señor Betancourt's watch when he was awakened by something vaguely queer. He shook Señor Sanchez into consciousness and hissed:

"Listen!"

The schooner was strangely steady. All the sea-noises of beating waves and creaking rigging were gone. Through the strange quiet they heard a muffled, steady hammer-

ing, as if oceanic creatures were hacking at the vessel's keel.

Thoroughly alarmed, they crept furtively on deck. The starlight showed them a deserted vessel, save for the shadowy bulk of a man standing in the bows, apparently on watch. The after part of the *Flying Squid*, where they stood, was vacant of life. The wheel, unattended, moved idly with short, spasmodic jerks. No sails towered into the night. The canvas lay in folds along the booms and the masts tapered bare and slim into the empty darkness.

Their ears perceived that the muffled hammering came from some deep place in the ship, forward. As they stared and listened, their eyes, becoming accustomed to the night, showed them that great piles of long cases, which they recognized as the rifles, had been lifted from the open hold and piled on deck. They stole forward as far as they dared. The hammering became plainer, and even their untrained ears recognized that the sounds were produced by blows against the planks of the ship.

"*Diablo!*"

They said it at the same moment. Even their conversational temperaments did not require the clumsy medium of words. They remembered Henry's dark remarks about the ship-scuttling tendencies of his superiors, and they realized at once what was happening.

Señor Sanchez squeezed Señor de Betancourt's arm convulsively and pointed over the rail. The ship's boat was riding there, quietly moored to the vessel. At the same moment Senor de Betancourt pointed to a dim, low, long-stretching blackness two or three miles off. They knew it for land! They were saved!

VII

AN HOUR afterward, Mr. Bowsun emerged from the hold with his sailors of the night watch who had helped him conquer the leak. Lustily they bellowed down the forecastle to rouse the watch below, with the righteous indignation of good men who toil while others slumber. Having set the sleepy men to work restoring the cargo, Mr. Bowsun descended to awaken Captain Moses.

When the commander came on deck the last of the cargo was clattering into the hold. The hatches went into place, and Mr. Bowsun roared to swing the boat aboard.

Mr. Bowsun was not an eloquent man. He was surprised at himself when the crew reported the boat gone and he realized what abilities had been dormant within him. From long-forgotten nooks of memory came long-forgotten words that he had heard here and there in years of wandering among men who had deep feelings to express in haste. They were words that voiced all the noble human emotions—words of grief, anger and contempt. They were mostly nouns. There was no grammatical intricacy about them. But the sailors appeared to understand Mr. Bowsun's meaning. Though they were not sensitive men, it was evident that Mr. Bowsun's simple art had succeeded in reaching their most sacred feelings.

"Chafed off!" wailed Mr. Bowsun when at last his wings of splendid imagery could beat no more and let him softly down to an earth of inadequate English. "Chafed off! A lubber's knot made by one of you ladies' tailors what calls itself A. B., that's what! And if I knowed what one o' you slush-headed scrubs done it, I'd chuck him over and make him swim after that there boat, even if he had to swim till he was turned into salt pork!" he concluded, turning to Captain Moses. "Even Henery wouldn't 'a' made such a knot as that must 'a' been—and if any man can say worse'n that, I'd like him to say it!"

"Well, Bill," said Captain Moses soothingly, "it's gone, and we'd better be moving. Make sail."

"Girls," said Mr. Bowsun, turning humbly to the crew, "put on your kid gloves and lay along them ropes, if so be as the delicate calves'-foot jelly as you're made of can stand the strain."

The helpless crew went at the rigging with the earnest wish that the ropes were first mates. The conceit made them work so viciously that the *Flying Squid* was under sail again in record-breaking time.

Nobody missed the passengers till Henry reported in the morning that their cabin was unlocked and empty.

"Where are they?" demanded Mr. Bowsun. "They ain't been on deck this morning."

Henry did not deign to reply. He knew that Mr. Bowsun would only use coarse language if he were warned that the dark gentlemen were hiding somewhere, armed

to the teeth, awaiting the proper moment for capturing the ship.

Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun, being hopelessly limited in reasoning powers, ordered a hasty search and then jumped to the conclusion that the passengers had disappeared with the boat. They ordered the ship about, and the *Flying Squid* made a course once more for Southwest Bay, while everybody from forecastle to wheel exercised his mind in ingenious speculations. Henry was the only exception. He prowled about until he had searched every available place. Then the spell of seeking was on him so potently that he began to peer under tables and chairs, coils of rope and even, by a triumph of imagination, under the sideboard.

"If he had one, I'd say that his mind was turned," said the Mate, looking at him with almost respectful wonder. "Are ye lookin' for me to give ye some work to do, Henery?" he inquired tenderly. "Because if you be, there's polish, and there's you, and there's brass-work, and you jest put them three things together."

The schooner was hove to off Southwest Bay while a boat's crew searched the coral coast. They returned soon, towing the lost boat. which they had found hauled up on the beach.

"Well!" said Mr. Bowsun to Captain Moses, after reflection so elaborate that the *Flying Squid* was beating out to sea again before he spoke. "Well! I always said as you couldn't trust 'em. Now what d'ye suppose their game is?"

Impelled by that weird power that makes the human species most discursive when ignorance is most complete, he entered such a maze of speculation that in fifteen minutes he was speaking in a daze, a helpless prey to two dim ideas: one that he couldn't stop talking, and the other that he had mislaid his brain somewhere and couldn't remember where.

Captain Moses listened, bewildered but hopeful. Despite many disappointments, he had held faithfully to the opinion that there was a great deal in Bill Bowsun, and all it needed to do was to come out.

But nothing intelligible came out of Bill, and Captain Moses felt it best to recall him to concrete business.

"One thing's sure, Bill," said he. "They-'ve gone; and without 'em we can't deliver the cargo, for we don't know what signals were to be made nor who to deliver the stuff to nor anything else. We got to run back to New York and get orders from Captain Logan. And that ain't a nice job, neither. If the customs should board us, we'll land in jail. We'll have to get in at dusk, anchor in the Lower Bay and send word to town quiet."

VIII

ABOUT the time that the *Flying Squid* began to beat out of the Bahama seas, two small dark gentlemen, sorely torn by thorns, were limping into the gaudy little town of Nassau after many painful hours among the palmetto scrub and bayonet plants of the island of New Providence. And the next day, while the *Flying Squid* was working up the Gulf Stream, a steamer passed her bound for New York and on that steamer was a letter written by the two dark gentlemen to Mr. Hiram Bunker.

Mr. Bunker had a keen, quick mind, as his enemies discovered continually and at great expense, but the letter was calculated to baffle the keenest wit that ever resided in a human skull.

There were many reasons for this. The letter-writers were men of mystery and they had a most mysterious tale to unfold. They built on an airy foundation laid for them by the literary mind of Henry Moses. It was vitally necessary for them to make their own great sagacity and courage stand out at all costs. And finally, they wrote with the subtlety of cautious men who know that a letter should be couched in terms that would make it unintelligible should it fall into an enemy's hands.

The result was so ornate that, after many hours of concentrated thought, during which Mr. Hiram Bunker read and reread the letter with constantly increasing rage but decreasing understanding, he could arrive only at the one decided thought—that something had happened which made it vitally important for him to wash his hands of the whole affair, and at once.

He sent for Captain Logan. Mr. Bunker did not consider it necessary to tell that gentleman anything about the letter. Indeed, he concealed so much that when Captain Logan retired he was as much mystified by Mr. Bunker as Mr. Bunker had been by the letter from Señor José Sanchez and Señor

Manuel Blanco de Betancourt. He saw one thing clearly, however—that, whatever had happened to the consignment of arms, it meant trouble, and that honest men with reminiscent careers would better be conservative about any connection with it.

"Old Bunker," reflected the indignant shanghaier, "means to dump it on me. Which I guess not!"

During the week that followed, Captain Logan scanned the papers sharply for any scandal about shipping arms to rebels; but all that he found were a few dispatches reporting revolutionary victories, and finally one announcing that they had taken the capital and that the new dictator's first act had been to cancel certain concessions given by his predecessor to that well-known capitalist, Hiram Bunker, on the ground of fraud.

Captain Logan smiled with unaffected pleasure. "I guess they don't believe he shipped any arms at all to help 'em out," murmured he. "Ain't that rich! But, oh my! Won't them fellers in Washington be sore now that the guv'n'ment's been licked! I bet they wouldn't do a thing to me if they knew what I had a hand in!"

A few days later he received a visitor who introduced himself as Mr. Henry Moses, and who brought a letter from the *Flying Squid*, at anchor in the Lower Harbor.

Dear Sir: Were unable to deliver consignment that you know about, for reasons best stated by word of mouth. Bearer will accompany you to vessel and you are kindly requested to come aboard at once, as we can not remain in harbor under present circumstances.

The letter was signed "Captain J. M."; and under the signature was written:

I will not be responsible for consequences!

The words were underscored, and they conveyed a sinister menace to Captain Logan. He could not know that they were written by Captain Moses under the sudden influence of the timid and prophetic Julius Moses who foresaw unknown catastrophes to come.

"What's all this mean?" asked Captain Logan, beaming affectionately on Henry.

Henry, under the burden of his own weighty secrets, stared glassily. Then he winked.

"Come off!" said he. "We're not givin' our schemes away."

He relapsed into haughty reserve. Captain Logan turned away without a word and scrawled with a pen that sputtered like his own temper:

Dear Sir: I know nothing about consignment which you mention, never had anything to do with same and am ready to swear to same in court and don't care a —— what you do with same and you may sink it or do anything else you blame like with same as I refuse to have any connection with same and remain yours truly,

Peter Logan

"Well!" said Mr. Bowsun when Henry returned aboard the *Flying Squid* with the answer. He gazed fixedly into the sky as if he had lost something that might be expected to fall from heaven any minute. He was not a man of imagination like Señor Sanchez or Señor de Betancourt; but just then he had a really poetic vision of the *Flying Squid* cruising through the ages, from latitude to latitude, from sea to sea, with a cargo that had no owner and prevented her from making port anywhere on the globe.

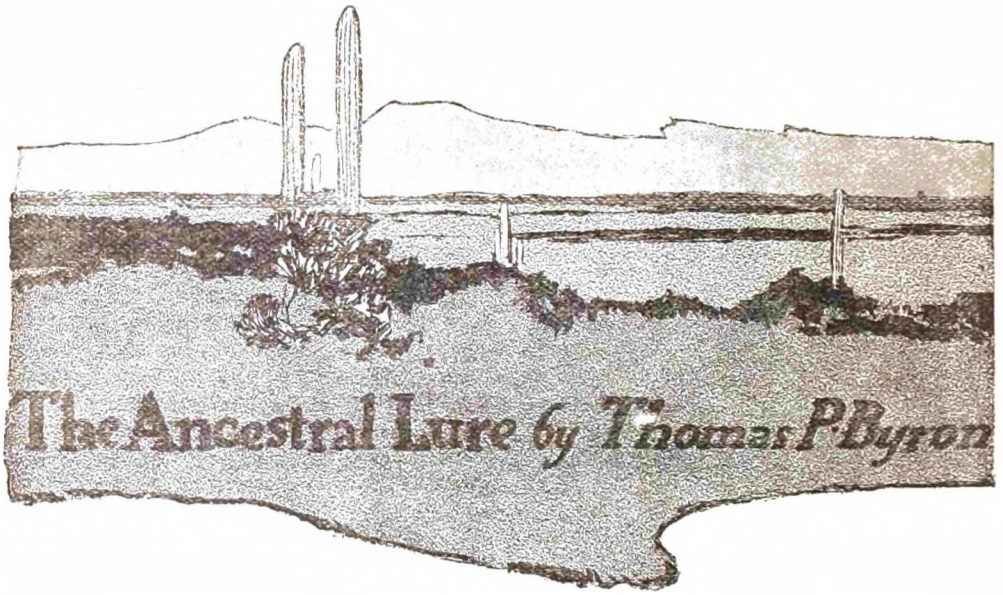
He was recalled to prose by Captain Moses, who ordered him to make sail. "Let's get off soundings, Bill," said he, nervously. And the *Flying Squid*, a floating outcast, melted away into the Summer dusk of the Atlantic Ocean.

Many months afterward Captain Logan met Mr. William Bowsun on the waterfront of New York. The Captain had been engaged in many matters and had quite overcome any apprehensions he ever had felt about the arms. The lapse of time had left only curiosity in his mind, and he asked questions.

"There ain't much to tell," said Mr. Bowsun, with scant politeness. "When we found as them goods didn't have no owner, and, you see, we have your letter for that, why, we thunk it over a bit and then we run on down to Hayti where they was havin' a bit of a disturbance just then, and we found a market. We sold them goods for $1.50 gold per—per speciment. So we're what ye might call, in a way o' speakin', pretty well paid for the v'yage."

For one cruel, almost intolerable instant Captain Logan nearly choked with passionate sorrow over the prize that had slipped from his heedless fingers. But then there came to him the thought of Mr. Hiram Bunker.

"Oh!" thought he with ecstatic bliss, "he must know this right away!"



I HAD excellent reason to hate Senator Brotherton. It was his lawyers who juggled with the courts until they decided that the Cruz Claim consisted only of Fonte-Frida, the Wild Band Pools and the bleak desert that led out to the Mountains of the Moon. That decision tore from me five-sixths of my patrimony, and it was Brotherton's hirelings that stole my cattle, fenced in my water-holes, built a dirty city of smelters and saloons and hard work and frequent bloodshed on the brow of one of my sierras, and tore such quantities of precious metal from the bowels of my mountains that he, Brotherton, became first a copper-king, then a railroad-king, and then a stand-pat Senator. And over on the Río Mangos, which had aforetime been the richest of all our grazing-grounds, his *chaparejoed* slaves chased and roped and branded a herd of one hundred thousand cattle. So he was a cattle-king also.

And I, although I was only six years old at the time, was king of a land—as the Mexicans said, of "Calor y Color," which may be translated as hell and gorgeousness.

My name is José María de la Cruz Pike, and I wish to say now that I am rightfully proud of my ancestry, coming as I do from the oldest family in Arizona and the most redoubtable in Missouri.

Don't laugh! One of the Cruz family came up through the desert with Coronado, chasing rainbows and mirages and hunting for the Seven Cities of Cibola before they ever planted the flax that went to make the sails of the *Mayflower*. And it was not a great while after that that my great ancestor Don José María de la Cruz stole a viceroy's niece and crossed the Sierra Madre and came up into the desert where he built a stout, square, loopholed house of mud about a miraculous spring that bubbled up in the midst of its starkest stretch, and named it Fonte-Frida, for he was a bit of a poet.

There he lived and there all the Cruz family have lived, building one house over the crumbling walls of another, down to my time.

From some degenerate descendant of the Catholic Kings another of my ancestors obtained a grant of as much land as he could see from the *mirador* of Fonte-Frida, and it was a gorgeous possession, for our family have good eyes and one can see far in Arizona. Our family originally came from Cadiz, where every house has a *mirador*, and that was the name they gave to the place where they kept a sharp lookout for the forebears of Cochise and Gerónimo who used to raise aboriginal Hades in those days and places.

As for the Pike family, it is useless to speak of them. Every one knows the Pikes

of Missouri, and every one knows their merits. My father was the last of the real Pikes, and they *do* say that in his day—which was an ebullient one—he owned the most hectic six-shooter between the Big Muddy and the Colorado.

He left Missouri some years after the Civil War and married Anita de la Cruz, who was my mother and the heiress of Fonte-Frida.

For a while Dad shot up all invaders and held the Cruz possessions inviolate. Then a hungry horde poured into the country and pastured their cattle on *our* plains and gophered into *our* mountainsides after *our* gold and silver and copper. This naturally led to litigation, and when the thing was threshed out the courts admitted the validity of our land-grant, but ruled that my ancestor had taken his look on a rainy day when he couldn't see very far. Our argument that our ancestor was not such a fool and that it never rains at Fonte-Frida was dismissed. Dad died, presumably of chagrin.

His was a spirit that could not brook defeat. If the enemy had only come out in the open and argued the question like gentlemen—with six-shooters—he would have walked through them as hilariously as I myself used to jump through the Blue interference and slam Dick Brotherton back for five yards' loss.

I have not yet mentioned that I am *the* Joe Pike. Yes, I am the celebrated "Demon End," and it is my red head that the boys compare on the football field to the white plume of Henry of Navarre. When I trod the halls of learning we used to put it all over the Blue, and Dick Brotherton in particular, who was their star back.

But I must tell about our ancestral lure.

It, the lure, is the Mountains of the Moon, which are a precipitous jumble of lava and basalt lying in the naked desert some twenty leagues to the east of Fonte-Frida. When Don José the First found the spring of Fonte-Frida and saw the moon on his first night there rise slowly out of their serrated jaws, fire them with gold and flash a silver trail straight across the desert to him, he named them the Mountains of the Moon.

He and his wife used to love to sit and watch them from the *mirador*, and when she died he used to sit and watch them alone day and night.

At last he went mad. Perhaps he had become drunk on the silence and sunshine and loneliness that overwhelmed Fonte-Frida. At any rate, he disappeared one day and they knew he had gone to the desert.

A month later it gave him back. He staggered in—a wasted specter who raved of a valley he had found behind impassable cliffs. He babbled of green grass and palm-trees and a crystalline pool beside which he had found his dead wife waiting for him, and of a spirit who had led him across the desert. And then he died.

That is the story, and since then the desert has taken its toll of every generation of the Cruz family. It seems to be in the blood.

I used to watch the Mountains of the Moon and dream about them long before I ever heard the legend, for it is there that the wonderful valley is supposed to exist.

I made my first attempt to go there when I was six—the day after they buried my mother. She survived Dad only six months. I started afoot that time and naturally didn't get very far.

Then when I was ten I heard the legend of old Don José and tried it again. I had a good start and rode a good pony, but Hilario Higueros, who happened to be at Fonte-Frida, saddled a fast *caballo* and, loping out into the desert, struck my trail and overtook me by riding like mad. I was lost in a cactus maze and was half dead from heat and thirst. I was light-headed, too, and begged Hilario to let me go on, saying that there was a treasure in the Mountains of the Moon and that a beautiful lady was leading me to it. I don't remember *that*, but I do remember Hilario's crossing himself and muttering, as he rode back with me in his arms:

"This *chiquito*, he is for the desert's maw also—like Don José *el primero!*"

After that Mr. Blake, who was Dad's cousin and taught me my lessons—he had been a schoolmaster before he got tuberculosis and came to live with us—talked to me and told me that the Mountains of the Moon were a barren mass of rocks and that I would die of thirst if I tried to go there. He showed me an old Spanish book of astronomy where it said: "*En la luna no hay agua*" (In the moon there is no water), and said that applied to the Mountains of the Moon as well.

But I knew better in those days. In an English book I had read:

"Over the Mountains of the Moon,
Down the valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,"
The shade replied,
"If you seek for El Dorado."

I was firmly convinced that the golden-tiled city lay behind the Mountains of the Moon, and I hid the book, burying it deep in the sand, lest some one else should read it and discover the wonderful secret before I was old enough to do as I pleased and go after it myself.

The lust of the Conquistadores was in my veins, and I think that is the reason why I became a mining engineer.

Mr. Blake died when I was twelve, and I was sent to New York to live with my father's sister and her husband. They were childless and poor, but they sent me to college and educated me. That was where I again ran afoul of the Brothertons—where I used to get a morsel of revenge by grinding Dick into the mud. But the football field was the only place where I ever did get the best of the Brothertons.

When I got my degree I went to mining with furious energy. But, confound it! every time I got a job that I loved, and put myself into the work of developing it, Brotherton, Sr., bought it or grabbed it! I love a mine. I don't think there is anything in the world so fine as to go down into the bowels of the earth and take out her treasures for the good of humanity. It wasn't the money—it was the work that I loved.

But Brotherton pursued me malignantly. He was a regular Old Man of the Sea on my shoulders; he hounded me all over the Rocky Mountains and up into Alaska. I worked like a slave only to see the fruits of my brawn and brain slide into his maw just as iron filings get to a magnet. He bought mines and kidnapped them and won them in poker-games, and it kept me jumping to get a job in one he didn't own.

And I heard him quoted as saying that young Joe Pike knew more about copper propositions than any man in the country and that he would back my judgment any time for the limit. What do you think of that! It made me long for that hectic six-shooter of my Dad's, and the halcyon days when you could shake its contents into obnoxious parties. Just think of it! He had first despoiled me of my ancestral possessions, and now he was harrying me up and down my native land, gobbling up the fruits of my industry and intellect and giving me a condescending, approving little pat for being such a nice little boy and such a convenience to him!

And then, to cap the climax, I had to go and fall in love with his daughter! If my reasons for hating Brotherton were excellent, they were more so for loving Ethel.

She was—well, she was dazzling, and, like most dazzling things, she blinded you—until you looked at her through the far perspectives of time and distance. I can't describe her looks, for she held her head so high each time she met me that I never saw much except her chin and upturned nose.

But she worried me for a long time so that I was in a desperate way. It seemed to me tremendously romantic, too, to be madly in love with the scornful daughter of the man who despoiled me.

But the culmination of it all came when Brotherton captured the Golden Giant—took it for the merest pittance from its owners, who were friends of mine and for whom I had worked like a dog for a year and a half to make it a paying proposition. And Ethel cut me dead at a party a week later.

I left America—fairly driven from my native land by the Brothertons, and felt that I was a blighted being. Puppy-love is awfully funny, but it is a desperate malady for the puppy.

When I resigned, Brotherton sent an emissary to offer me a fabulous price—for a mining engineer—to run the Giant and some other mines, but I requested the emissary to tell Brotherton to go sizzle perpetually; that I was going to a country he didn't own, and to ask him if he wasn't satisfied with all my lands and the fruits of my labors up to date without holding me in eternal servitude.

The emissary grinned and said he would deliver the message unexpurgated. But I would wager he lost his nerve when he looked into the Senator's cold gray eye.

II

I HAD various ventures after that. I mined in South Africa and in Chile. I inspected enough coal and iron in Manchuria to run the world for a hundred years, and reported on the same to a Russian Grand Duke. And I sunk a tin mine in the island of Bawean.

I had been an exile for a good eight years on the May day that I had finished installing some new machinery in the Río Tinto mines and had run from there up to Seville. I called on some people I knew, and feeling a bit homesick, strolled over to the Alcázar, which was quite deserted.

There is a curious maze of shrubbery in the Alcázar garden and in the center of it is the place where María de Padilla, or somebody else, used to bathe. It is rather complicated, and in the days when it was built no one but the king knew its turnings. Nowadays a guide will show you through it.

I turned into the maze and wandered along, and in the narrowest part of it a girl ran around the corner straight into my arms. She gasped and I laughed and then she stepped back and looked at me.

She blushed like a desert sunrise and laughed and extended her hand, and then it was my turn to gasp.

"Why, it's Mr. Pike!" she exclaimed. "You don't remember me, Mr. Pike, but I remember you."

I stared in amazement. It was Ethel Brotherton! No! It could not be Ethel, for this girl's nose was not in the air and she was smiling at me—at *me!* And if it was Ethel she must have found the Fountain of Youth.

She stopped smiling and looked at me rather pensively. "I'm Anita Brotherton," she said.

Then I started to talk.

We walked out of the maze and sat down under the great magnolias, and I performed all sorts of verbal feats. I am something of a conversationalist when my heart is in my work, and my brain was in a whirl that afternoon, for this little girl was all that Ethel had seemed to me to be—once when I was young and unsophisticated. She was just as dazzling, but she was pure gold, while Ethel was mica.

While I was talking and she was listening, along came Senator Brotherton and Dick and Ethel and her husband.

"I met Mr. Pike in the maze," cried Anita breathlessly, "and he has told me a thousand things! He knows a cactus-maze in Arizona that covers twenty square miles, and that double cocoa-nut trees come from the Seychelles and——"

They all laughed and shook hands with me. The Senator gave me an iron grip and an iron look that seemed to take in Anita at the same time.

Anita had a way with her that put Ethel, who was bored and aristocratic, completely in the shade, and I could see with half an eye that she was the Senator's favorite.

Ethel's husband was a French count—vintage of Napoleon First—who paid little attention to me who was only an American and whose ancestors were only stealing the nieces of viceroys and wearing their sombreros in the presence of kings a few centuries before his relinquished their jobs of scouring down horses in inn-stables.

But Dick and the Senator were cordial—too cordial. They almost drove me insane—Dick babbling of aeroplanes, and the Senator driveling of mines, wasting my good time when I might have been talking to Anita! Such bores I never saw.

I took them over that afternoon to see my Sevillian friends and they were quite delighted. It was the first time they had ever seen the interior of an Andalusian home. My friends were an old couple named Cruz, descended from another branch of my mother's family, and Anita was a revelation to them. We sat out in the patio, which was full of orange and lemon trees in bloom, with a plashing fountain in the center. The pave was strewn with bright-colored rugs, the sun was dazzling bright, and Anita was the brightest and gayest of all. She sat at the piano in the corner of the patio and sang American songs—one after the other, until old Señora de la Cruz could only stare at her with wet eyes and say to me:

"*Dios mío, Don José, qué linda muchacha!*

I never had felt so gay myself, and when I brought Anita some *pan dulce* that you could crumple up into nothing, and chocolate so thick she feared to drink it, I managed to whisper to her that I loved her—for I had known it ever since I had looked at her in the maze. And she looked at me with a scorn that made my heart leap with hope.

The Brothertons stayed in Seville three days. I was their shadow, and the Senator and I got as thick as two thieves. The first day he invited me to go on a cruise with them. Their yacht was waiting at Gibraltar and they were bound up the Mediterranean. Afterward Dick invited me, too—and Ethel. I think the Senator made her. But Anita only laughed and said she didn't

know whether she wanted my company or not.

It was copper that brought the Senator and me together. He said he wanted to talk over some matters with me on the cruise and to make me a proposition.

I accepted provisionally and would have gone had not Anita and I quarreled. It was the day we had gone to Córdoba. It was at the time of the *feria*, and as an Andalusian *pièce de résistance* I took them to the bull-fight. It was really a magnificent *corrida*. The espadas were the great Fuentes, who was about to retire, and the no less great Bombita, and they were to kill ten bulls.

Anita insisted on leaving when the first horse was gored. I never saw any one so prejudiced in all my life. She condemned the thing immediately and tore up the copy of *La Lidia* that I had bought her.

The rest of the crowd stayed and I started to take her to the hotel. She abused me all the way and became so heated that I persuaded her to stop before a café in the Calle de Conde de Gondomar to take an ice. It was very warm walking and the whole street was deserted, and it was cool and pleasant there under the awnings that were spread clear across the street. Then I was foolish enough to express regret for missing the bull-fight and Anita flared up again.

She said that no one but a barbarian would like a bull-fight and that I had shown myself to be one that afternoon. Furthermore, she would thank me to be more respectful. I had known her only four days, and already I had told her forty-one times that I loved her. She had kept count. Furthermore, I called her by her first name, which was an unpardonable familiarity; and telling her forever that I was crazy about her bored her to death. Besides, it was insulting.

That made me wince and I retorted that she seemed to like being insulted and bored, and that I had as good a right to call her Anita as she had to call me Joe, which was staggering, but presently she recovered and informed me that she was entitled to call *me* by *my* first name, since she had known me for ten years—ever since I had smashed Dick's ribs against a goal-post in a football game—and since then she had seen *me* in dozens of places where I had never condescended to so much as look at *her*.

It is my sad experience that you can never best a Brotherton in an argument. This reasoning of Anita's reminded me of the decision of the courts respecting my ancestor's overlooking the dimensions of the Cruz Claim, but of course I didn't mention that, but answered that she was only a child and that grown people weren't supposed to stand on dignity with kids. I used the word "kids," which is sometimes very insulting.

At this Anita burst into tears, and I weakened, and insulted her for the second time and craved pardon abjectly, but she told me that I was a barbarian and came of a race of barbarians, that she hated and despised me, Spain, bull-fights, and every one else that would torture and tease a girl so.

And while she was crying and I was feeling like a dog and begging her to forgive me, along came all the others and good heavens! but it was embarrassing, even for me, who am not easily embarrassed—Anita sitting at a table in front of a café, crying into an ice. To be sure there wasn't a soul there, for I honestly believe every other person in Córdoba was at the bull-fight.

We walked to the hotel, Anita and I profoundly humiliated, and every one else a bit frosty except the Senator.

That night I sent Anita a note and laid myself at her feet, but I received no answer.

They left for Gib the next day and, of course, I did not accompany them. The Senator gripped my hand hard when I said good-by to them and told me I had better change my mind and come, but I could only shake my head. The rest were frosty, except Dick, who kept snickering, and Anita was a glacier—a beautiful little glacier.

I followed them to Gib on the next train, but kept out of their way, which was easy, as they were staying at the Reina María Cristina in Algeciras, and I sailed on the next steamer for the States. I felt pretty bad, for this was no puppy-love, but the genuine article that makes a man join the Foreign Legion or apply for a job as consul to the island of Mauritius.

Then I went back to Fonte-Frida and used to sit on the *mirador* and stare at the Mountains of the Moon as my great ancestor had done.

III

I THOUGHT perhaps I'd go mad after a while, the same as old Don José did. But I didn't. There was too much hilarity in the Pike part of me for that. All I did

was to feel resentful toward the Brothertons, who had taken my lands and cattle and treasure, the work of my brain and body, and my heart to boot. And then I would dream of kneeling at Anita's feet and telling her to take all—everything, only to let me be her slave and kiss the tips of her fingers in return.

After a while I read in the Thunder City *Trumpet*—Thunder City was the town they had built on the brow of my sierra—that the Senator, Dick and Anita were staying at the big ranch-house thay had built on the Río Mangos, and then somehow I got to staring to the West as much as I did at the Mountains of the Moon. The Mangos lay to the West.

In the patio of Fonte-Frida there grew orange and lemon trees, the same as in the one in Seville where Anita had sung, only in ours there were plenty of date-palms besides—the oldest date-palms in Arizona, and I used to sit there sometimes and shut my eyes and listen to the tinkle of the fountain and the cooing of the mourning doves, and I could hear the songs that she had sung in Seville and see the flash of her yellow hair.

Then I would stalk out to the corral, saddle a horse and lope out into the silence for leagues and leagues, peering fiercely before me until, through the gauze of distance and blinding sunshine, the shimmering plains were blurred by a faint, soft tinge of waving green—the *álamos* that fringed the Río Mangos where I knew Anita was.

I would put my hand to my eyes and stare for a moment and then turn my wearied horse and ride sedately back to Fonte-Frida and gaze at the Mountains of the Moon again. I was awfully ridiculous, but then I was in love.

Then I began to dream of the Mountains of the Moon again as I used to when I was a boy. Sometimes I thought that I fought my way thither through legions of enemies who roared at me that they had my lands and heart and would have my life's labor as well, and that I almost gained them by a frightful carnage. Sometimes I plodded there afoot over sands that blistered my feet. Sometimes I chased them on a fleet horse with the wind roaring in my ears, while they fled before me like a mirage until I had pursued them around the world—over oceans and all—half a dozen times. I always thought that that was going some for one dream.

One day old Hilario Higueros came up behind me as I stood on the *mirador* and touched me on the shoulder, pointing to their faint blue loom rising out of the Protean mirages of marvelous landscapes that trembled at their feet to sawtooth a turquoise sky.

"Why do you watch?" he asked.

"Hilario," I demanded, "is there water in the Sierra de la Luna?"

"*Quién sabe?* Few have passed that way, and none have taken the trouble to climb the cliffs. Why? Do you think of the old *caballero?*"

I nodded.

"*Caramba!*" said Hilario. "There may well be water there. He went mad when his wife died, did the worthy Don José. And he was out in the desert a month. He found water somewhere. Perhaps it was in the Sierra de la Luna."

"We'll go out there to-morrow and explore a bit," I said shortly.

"Good!" he assented. "You try to go once when you were a *niño.* I stop you. The idea still remains and now you go and take me with you. Well, I will go. We will ride the two *alazánes* [ponies] and we will take two pack-mules and carry much water. We will start at sundown and get there before noon of the next day. There is much cactus and chaparral, but old Hilario knows the trail through. Maybe we find gold. *Quién sabe?*"

It was settled, and that night I dreamed that old Don José came to my bedside and awakened me and led me to the *mirador* and pointed to the Mountains of the Moon and spoke to me impressively, telling me to be a sport and go to it, or words to that effect, for there I would find a treasure dropped from the stars and worth more than all the land and cattle and mines in the world.

IV

HOW Hilario ever found his way through the maze that led there I can not understand, but he did, and, as he predicted, we got there before noon and rested in the shadow of a great rock. Away up the back trail Fonte-Frida was hidden in a glare of sunshine where swam the ever-changing mirages of gleaming lakes and delectable forests that usually floated around the base

of the Mountains of the Moon, which a malign spell had transformed into a jumble of serrated peaks and ragged cliffs.

We had been scanning them from afar through binoculars and had encamped at the foot of a wash that seemed accessible. It was mighty steep and strewn with precariously poised boulders that slipped from under you and went crashing down below if you stepped on them. It was like climbing up a shoot-the-chute affair with giants bowling at you with big stone bowls. Hilario stayed below and watched me while I climbed it.

It was ticklish work. And rattlesnakes? They were so thick that once I flung a stone at one, missed him and smashed the head of another.

But inside of two hours I had got up some six hundred feet and trotted along a mesa toward a rift I could see a half-mile or so away. This led me for miles through a deep gloomy box-canyon that twisted and turned and finally opened into a valley.

I fairly gasped when I saw it.

There was green grass there, and pine-trees, and yucca-palms with their tall white flowers nodding in a breath of air. It was shut in on all sides by red cliffs on the sides of which were the ghostly remains of cliff-dwellings, and up at the end, where the jut of the hills pinched it close, I could see the sparkling gleam of water.

Sear and dry was the desert, frowning and bare its rock-ribbed breast, but here in its heart lay hidden this living jewel—this emerald Eden; and I had found it as had my ancestor centuries before.

Up where the pressing cliffs almost met it was choked with a wilderness of willows. I could see that it opened again farther up, and I plunged through and came upon another valley more delectable still.

At my feet lay a still and limpid pool. Its clear unruffled surface threw back in delicate and rigorous precision the cliffs, the blue sky, each tremulous shudder of branch or leaf of the bordering willows.

And from its center the face of a girl stared up at me!

I looked up quickly. On the opposite bank stood Anita!

She was not frightened nor did she seem surprised, but came to me as I splashed madly through the pool, and crept into my arms.

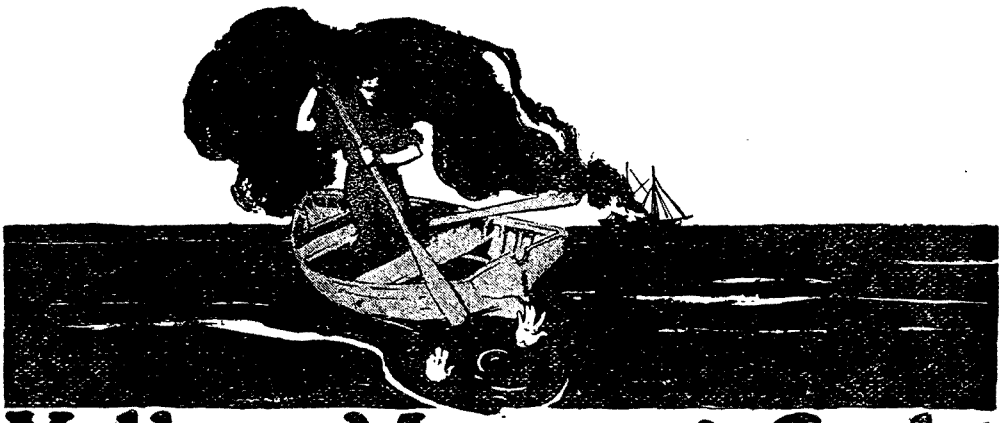
"Joe!" she whispered with a little sob. "You won't leave me again, will you? I knew you would come! I knew you would come!"

It took me some time to convince her, and then we talked of other important matters, and it was only when Dick, malapropos as usual, came up and was delighted to see me and wanted to know if I had anything to eat, that I found out they had been flying that morning in his aeroplane, that the steering-gear had become jammed so that they could neither descend nor return, and that chance or the spirit that led old Don José across the desert had caused them to skim peacefully down into the wonderful valley when the gasoline-tank was empty.

And that is how I took from the Brothertons a treasure greater than—I mean to say that is how I entered into a state of eternal servitude to the Brotherton family. For when I am not serving Anita I am slaving over the Senator's mines. They never let me fly with Dick either, for while Dick can be spared from the Copper Combine, *I* can not.

Dick took a pack-train load of gasoline out to the valley and managed to fix his steering-gear and get the aeroplane back to the Mangos.

As for Anita, I regret to say she still abuses me and my ancestors, and says she never will allow me to witness another bull-fight as long as I live. But then sometimes we sit on the *mirador* of Fonte-Frida and watch the white trail that leads across to the Mountains of the Moon.



Yellow Men and Gold

By Gouverneur Morris
Author of "The Voice in the Rice"

SYNOPSIS: James Parrish, who has achieved an unsatisfying literary success, finds in the gully next his cottage in San Mateo, California, a man, Roy Cunningham, dying from stab-wounds, who entrusts him with papers giving the location of a sunken Spanish treasure-ship near the Straits of Magellan. Carrol, a neighbor, with three friends, ostensibly preparing for a trading cruise, drug Parrish, steal his papers and throw him into the hold of the *Shantung*, a trading schooner owned and manned by a company consisting of twelve Chinamen and one white woman, Mrs. Bessie, who treat him kindly. He remembers the location of the lost treasure, saves the life of Lichee, Bessie's son, and the grateful Shantung Company undertake the venture. In Lima, Peru, they pick up Carmen, wife of the murdered Cunningham. Carrol, the murderer, had tortured her in a vain effort to learn about the treasure. In the Straits of Magellan they pass a small sloop with one man in it. The Chinamen discover that a volcanic upheaval has lifted the treasure-ship on to an island, and, in exploring, find Jerry Top, a half-simple castaway, who knows the exact spot.

CHAPTER XV

SOME OF US GO TREASURE-HUNTING

WE HAD to wait not ten minutes at the landing-place for the return of Wong and Ah Fing. These at first were very big with news, but collapsed like balloons on learning that we, too, knew that the *Calliope* was somewhere along the fiord; but we laughed with a common impulse to think of Carrol and his gang so absurdly employed in diving. Jerry Top laughed too, very heartily, but he could not have explained why.

It was evident that Carrol had not guessed at the change of topography which the region had so recently undergone; and Chang himself must have been longer in finding it out if he had not had Carmen and her clear memory aboard the *Shantung* to spur his ingenuity. We congratulated ourselves heartily upon the situation; and it was odds but that we could lift the bulk of the treasure, and get away with it, while Carrol continued to explore the bottom of the fiord. He might, I told myself, so employ himself for the rest of time, for all I cared. And the general wish was to leave him severely alone, rascal and murderer though he was.

Carmen, however, wished in the frank Spanish manner to be less subtly revenged, and made no bones about saying so. And she took no part in our premature rejoicings, but looked on us coldly as on people who had cheated her, treating no one to a smile but Jerry Top.

He, indeed, was deserving of smiles; for no sooner had he set foot upon the schooner than he became the incarnation of childish joy let loose. We had great ado to catch him and clothe him decently; he ran hither and thither like a mongoose, poking his nose into the cabin, in the forecastle, flashing brownly aloft, sliding with furious speed down the jib-stay; giggling, leaping and

cracking his heels together, and snapping his fingers; and firing off broadside after broadside of his ridiculous and profane English.

And when we waked him the next morning at dawn, and told him that he must act as guide to the place where he had found the golden twig, he flew into a childish passion of reluctance at the idea of quitting the ship.

As we presumed on many loads of treasure in the course of the next few days, it seemed best to move the *Shantung* until she lay opposite the little beach where Chang and I had landed; but as there was not a breath of wind we were obliged to take to the boats and tow her. And a slow and dismal process it was, but all things have an end, and at last she was snugly anchored in the new berth, perhaps a hundred fathoms from the landing-place.

We cut a pack of cards to see who should go treasure-hunting and who should stay at home and keep ship. Of the latter were Bessie and Carmen, willy-nilly; and after the first round of cutting it appeared that Jili, much to his disappointment, must also remain. Another round disposed of Wong; and still another of Ah Fing. Chinamen are proverbially great gamblers; and the excitement displayed upon the present occasion was no exception to the rule. You might have thought that the treasure itself was to belong to those who went ashore, instead of the more arduous task of hunting for it. Yet, had we but known it, we were playing for higher stakes than gold and gems, and, with the exception of Jerry Top and myself, those who stayed aboard the *Shantung* were, for a time, the lucky ones.

The shore party, led *ex officio* by Chang, consisted of Jerry Top (once more allowed the privilege of nakedness), Wu Lo, San Lo, Hoang, Man Lo, myself; and at the last moment that little beggar, Lichee, slipped into the boat and resisted ejection so firmly and plaintively that Chang, usually firm and decided, could not make up his mind to disappoint him. The cords of discipline were relaxed, and Chang explained sheepishly that he would, if necessary, carry the child upon his shoulders; the ways of children were mysterious; it might be that Lichee would be the grain thrown into the scale of chance that would bring us luck. He ordered Wu Lo and Hoang to give way, and presently we had landed and hauled out the boat on the beach.

With the exception of Jerry Top, who carried two spades and was very sulky at finding himself once more ashore, each man toted a Winchester and an empty bread-sack; and Hoang, a wonderfully powerful fellow, had in addition a pickax and a package containing food. By a common impulse we turned before commencing the ascent of the fissure and waved to our friends aboard the *Shantung;* and Bessie flung us a frank shower of kisses (I believe I was included) and, snatching up a megaphone, called in her large, humorous voice,

"Don't come back, Jim, without my tiara."

Then we turned and began to ascend. It was an easy climb for grown men, but very trying, I expect, to the short, dimpled legs of Lichee. And it was delicious to observe the determination of the child not to abuse his privileges by making a nuisance of himself. He fell repeatedly, but treated such mischances with the quiet contempt which they deserved. and made up for them by redoubled efforts. He must have been on the point of bursting when at last we reached the plateau and the going made less savage assaults upon the heart and lungs.

CHAPTER XVI

THE AMBUSH

JERRY TOP was for making by the shortest line for the truncated cone that Chang and I had decided to be the old-time islet. But Chang, the ultimate destination being once indicated, himself assumed the part of guide, choosing a route which, if at times anything but direct, kept our heads below the general level and our feet upon substances that left no mark. It would not do, he said, for Carrol or one of his men to come by chance upon a broad trail and follow it to where the treasure lay. There must be no trace of our comings or goings, else the business upon which we were engaged must be discovered. Not to hurry breathlessly forward rent the heart; but no one except the irrepressible Top thought for one moment of going against Chang.

Once we heard a shot from far off to the left in the general direction of the *Calliope*, and we could see the thin smoke of a fire towering to the sky; and once a flock of crows flew suddenly upward from a distant hollow, cawing angrily as if they had been disturbed in the midst of a feast; but of

other disquieting signs we had none. Nor had we need of any exterior excitement, for that furnished by the quest on which we were engaged, and every man's inward anticipations, sufficed. I may liken my feelings to those of a nervous bridegroom on his way to the church, sure that he is late, and believing every watch a liar.

About nine o'clock we were in the shadow of the cone, and twenty minutes later we were looking down into a kind of bowl, the bottom choked with sand and little beech-trees. The bowl had the exact bearing to the cone that the submarine berth of the *Espiritu Santo* had had to the rocky islet off which she went down, and it was with a kind of galvanic spasm of excitement and (I think) dread that I leaped into the place and plunged my hand into the sand as if each grain of it must prove a gold coin.

A sharp exclamation from Hoang brought me to my feet. He had found, not a bar of gold, but a black and rotted fragment of timber. It went rapidly from hand to hand, and we ejaculated and exclaimed and swore that it was a part of a ship. But if we had expected (and I, for one, had) to find all manner of precious things laid out as on a shelf in Tiffany's we were doomed to disappointment. If the treasure was anywhere in that bowl of rock, it was beneath the accumulation of sand and beech-leaves that choked the place, and we must dig.

But where to begin? Even Chang was at a loss; he looked across the place and around it, and up and down it, and rested his chin upon the heel of his hand, and frowned. Then, quite suddenly, and without any change of expression, as one of these persons gifted with the ability to find four-leaf clovers stoops and picks one surely from a clump where all the others have but three, so Chang stooped and picked from the sand between his feet a raw green emerald as big as a California cherry! He held it between his thumb and forefinger and turned it slowly this way and that for all to see. Then, pointing between his feet, "Chang think dig here," said he, and stepped back.

At Hoang's second powerful thrust, the edge of his spade struck with a kind of chug into something solid. He paused, grinned from ear to ear, and, as an actor sure of his effect, "Him feel like gold," said he, and with a quick, deep scoop he brought up upon the blade of the spade a chunky ingot of the virgin metal.

Then, indeed, the digging became fast and furious, with the two spades, the pick and bare hands; even Jerry Top caught the excitement, and began to dig like a dog, stooping and sending a shower of sand backward between his legs. As luck would have it, we had lighted first of all on the ingots, long since burst from their chest and scattered, and to be found now in twos and threes, and now singly, and often, for long periods of furious digging, not at all.

We dug as men eat who have a train to catch; I have never seen men in such a passion of hurry; nor do I exclude myself. I dug myself to the verge of exhaustion, and kept on digging. I was dimly aware that it had come on to rain; that it was pouring; that I had a great to-do keeping my own private excavation from filling, and could make but precious little progress downward or laterally; and still I dug, bare-handed, with torn nails and bleeding knuckles.

We dug without rest, one and all of us, not excepting Lichee, from half-past nine until one o'clock. Then the pouring rain became a veritable deluge, and upon the sharp and thrice-repeated command of Chang we stopped reluctantly.

The gold was parceled out and loaded into the strong bread-bags; even Lichee was given an ingot, and, leaving the spades and the pick, we began to climb out of the bowl. I remember laughing, aching as I was with fatigue, to think how easy it had been to reach the place, poor; how arduous it was to leave it, rich.

Owing to the inclemency of the weather, we began the return journey with less caution; assured that none would be abroad to spy upon us and that the rain would soon obliterate all tracks. Chang in the lead moved very swiftly, and it was only by the most strenuous and courageous exertion that for a time I kept his pace. Then I began to lag behind, and Lichee, glad of an excuse to ease his fat little pins, lagged with me. What with the digging and the excitement and the gold I carried and the rifle, I was near dead, and soon came to the conclusion that I must lighten my burden or incontinently collapse. As the rifle seemed of no particular use, I laid it aside, together with my cartridge-belt, in the cleft of a great split rock, whence I should have no difficulty in recovering it the next day, and once more dragged myself onward.

After many ages of time, I saw that

Chang, now far ahead, had reached the upper end of the fissure that marked the termination of the journey; and as the rain had now settled into a light drizzle, I made up my mind that I would sit down, if only for a moment, and rest.

"Lichee," I said, "Melican man no can do; sit down or bust."

So I sank upon a rock with a groan of relief, and Lichee, his lips scornfully curling, stood waiting until I should be ready to go on.

I watched Chang and the others disappear one by one into the fissure; Hoang, the last to go down, turning at the last moment and beckoning impatiently to me to follow. And I had at last risen to do so when I saw a bulky bearded man (and even at that distance I knew him for Carrol, despite the beard) rise from behind a rock, step to the brink of the fissure, and lean cautiously forward until he could look down into it. Then, freeing one hand from the rifle that he carried, he made a gesture of beckoning, and seven more men emerged from their hiding-place and joined him.

A moment they stood, looking down upon the heads of Chang and the others, surmising, perhaps, the contents of those obviously ponderous bread-bags. Then—and the thing was so sudden that I had not even the time to shout a warning—the eight, as one man, put their rifles to their shoulders, depressed the muzzles to the perpendicular, and fired a broken, murderous volley. One harsh, sharp cry as of a man in his mortal agony came from the fatal depths of the fissure, and no more.

And I, seized by an accursed, unmanly, damned panic, slipped from my load of gold, caught Lichee by the hand, and fled away inland, with a power and burst of speed that were almost demoniac.

CHAPTER XVII

A REPRISAL

THE flight, begun in a very mania of fear, was without goal or logic. But as I ran, sometimes jerking Lichee completely off his feet, the tragedy, whose inside workings I had been a witness to, hung before me like a painting. I saw those poor Chinamen, who had been my friends and comrades, huddled shockingly in unprovoked death, face down, face up, among the rocks. I saw the murderers descend warily to put the finishing touches upon the crime; to put the knife into that body which still contained, perhaps, the breath of life; and to rob the dead men of their gold.

I do not know at what point in my flight grief got the better of fear; at what point grief yielded to shame. I know that I ran slower and slower, muttering and talking to myself, and that gradually a passion of anger rose strongly from some unknown hollow of my nature, as a full river, and flooded me. Then, as suddenly as I had begun flight, I broke it off, stopped short, and faced about. My impulse to go back was almost as strong as that which had brought me where I stood.

But the folly of so doing beat me to a standstill with swift, sharp strokes. I had the courage to go back, plenty of it, and to sell my life as dearly as possible—but to what end? I was unarmed, and a long way from where I had left my rifle and cartridge-belt. If I went back it must be to strike some terrible blow. Armed and from above I might massacre the enemy as they had massacred us; but even now they must have finished their work in the fissure, and were probably climbing out with the gold. There was no longer time to take them at that particular disadvantage.

How else could I strike them? What would be their next step? Why, back to their own schooner, of course, to put the gold aboard! There were eight of them, but the gold was heavy. Neither would they feel any need to hurry. Even if they knew that I had been of the shore party, they would not disturb themselves with the thought of anything that I might do. It was that—the contempt in which I believed myself to be held—that finally goaded me into an action; which, in the event of there being no more than eight all told in Carrol's party, would be as easy of accomplishment as rolling off a log.

Roughly, my plan was to get to the *Calliope* before Carrol and his men; and if, as I expected, she proved to be unguarded, to board her in one of Carrol's boats, set her on fire, and return in the same boat to the *Shantung*. That stroke, I thought, would put the enemy at the mercy of those of us who survived. But I could not risk Lichee in any such desperate business, and for a few moments more I hesitated. Then, knowing the child's natural qualities of patience and obedience, I appealed to them.

"Lichee," I said, "you sit here, no matter how long. Maybe Melican man come back; maybe Jili come; maybe Bessie. You give word Melican man not move till some one come?"

Lichee seated himself stolidly, but with a wondering look in his eyes.

"All light," he said.

I bent over on the impulse and kissed his forehead.

"God keep you, little Lichee," I said, "and grow you into a fine man!"

Then I turned and hurried off upon my errand. I knew about where the *Calliope* must be anchored, and made for that point as fast as the precaution of keeping below the sky-line would permit. I kept a pretty good lookout for Carrol's party, halting from time to time and poking my head over some easily accessible elevation, but saw nothing of them or theirs; and, after some twenty minutes of going, I came to the beginning of a long sweeping downward slope, and saw at the foot of it the waters of the fiord, and the *Calliope* at anchor.

Two of her boats were drawn up on the shore, and a third floated under the stern, but there was no sign of a guard, nor of Carrol returning. There might, of course, be some one below decks on the schooner herself; but that, as well as the open nature of the slope down which I must descend, were chances that had to be taken. And as the deed might hang on the turn of a moment, I flung further discretion to the winds and raced down the long incline.

The larger of the two boats had been drawn beyond high-water mark and lay bottom up, as if under repair. There were plenty of sizable stones strewn about, and with the help of these I had in a few minutes reduced her to kindling wood. Sure, now, that no one was aboard the *Calliope*, else the smashing of the one boat must have been heard, I managed, thanks to the strength lent by anger and excitement, to launch the other, put a couple of great stones aboard and, after an awkward interval of rowing, to lay her alongside the *Calliope*.

I opened her three hatches to give my fire a proper draft, and went below to find inflammable materials. Her hold supplied them: a barrel of tar, and a great heap of straw jackets off wine bottles. I broached the tar-barrel until I had a great black, sticky pool of the stuff; to this I laid a thick train, or fuse, of the straw jackets, and then, at the very moment of accomplishment, was balked by the discovery that I had no match.

All amuck with a sudden cold sweat, I tore on deck and aft to the cabin. Here was a narrow table covered with oilcloth and set for eight; a dish of maggoty biscuits; a platter with traces of gravy upon it; a half dozen red bottles of wine with the drawn corks replaced in their necks; yellow and filthy butts of cigarettes; and in the seat of a camp-stool (I have often wondered how it came there) a half-emptied box of safety matches.

I came out of the cabin, and after one good look at the shore, which revealed no sign of life, once more descended to the hold, and set fire to my straw fuse; tended the stuff until it was burning fiercely toward the spilled tar; and then bethought me of retreat. So quick was the fire that smoke accompanied me to the deck. Landward all was as before, and, having leaped into the boat in which I had come and headed her round under the doomed *Calliope's* stern and split the other boat by means of the stones which I had brought, I pushed off, seated myself at the oars, and began to row down the fiord in the direction of the *Shantung*.

By now the black smoke was pouring from all three of the *Calliope's* hatches, and I could hear a loud roaring, like that of far-off surf. Then the depths of those black smoke clouds began to glow, and were presently shot with tongues of furious red flame. Somehow the conflagration that I had caused made me feel very small and insignificant; the mountains beyond, with their vast, white, peaceful mantles of snow; the wide black quiet of the fiord; the immensity and the awful gravity of nature in those regions.

I steered by the burning schooner without troubling to turn my head; and, owing more to the tide which was setting out than to my own exertions, made a satisfactory progress. I was thinking, I remember well, that the burning of the schooner was now a glorious thing to see; that I, an atom, had struck a formidable blow; that Carrol and his fellow murderers must soon put in an appearance. I wondered if they would follow my retreat and pot me at long range from the island cliffs.

Then the progress of my boat stopped

suddenly with a kind of soft, jerky jar, and a voice through which there ran the most hideous and shocking calm of repressed fury and cruelty pierced into my brain like a knife:

"*Good* evening, Jim!"

CHAPTER XVIII

I RETURN TO THE "SHANTUNG"

WHY it had not occurred to me that Carrol might possibly elect to run the *Shantung's* fire and return to the *Calliope* by water in the very boat which had been waiting to ferry us and the treasure to the *Shantung*, I shall never know. I had counted absolutely on his returning by land; and, what with the burning schooner to rivet my attention, and an occasional examination of the shore, had not once turned my head to see where I was going. And now, blithering idiot that I was, I had rowed straight into my enemies' boat! Indeed, Craven, crouching in her bows, had but to reach out his hand, take my boat by the gunnel and make her captive. And this it was that made the effect of that soft, giving jar that I had felt.

In that moment of horror it is impossible that I should have noticed how overladen was the enemies' boat with men and treasure, and how it was only by the nicest trimming that she was kept from taking in water over one gunnel or the other. But it was to this fact that I owed the deliberation and care which Craven was obliged to exercise to secure first my boat and then me.

The furious faces of the men in the deep-laden boat, crimson with the reflection from the burning *Calliope*, were like the faces of so many devils in a pantomime. For a moment I was paralyzed, as if I had been hit across the spine, and sat looking over my shoulder into the wicked, red faces and the ready, waiting hands toward which Craven was stealthily drawing me. Then, as a rat tormented and frightened beyond endurance turns upon a dog, I leaped to my feet, snatched an oar from the oarlock, and struck a shocking blow at Craven's face.

Unprepared as he was for a show of fight, he lurched heavily to one side and escaped the brunt of the blow, but in so doing destroyed the nice balance by which his boat was kept afloat, and the water rushed strongly over her starboard gunnel. Two men rose to their feet and leaped frantically in opposite directions; and, where a moment ago there had been a boat filled with cruel resource and purpose, there was now but black, ice-cold water, and panic-stricken men swimming desperately for their lives.

A fat hand with a diamond ring on the little finger (and I recognized it for Carrol's) seized the gunnel of my boat; I smashed it furiously with the oar; it disappeared. Then I began to paddle desperately, first on one side, then on the other, to free myself from any further menace of that kind. But there was no need; my enemies, half paralyzed by the cold and their heavy clothes, were making for the shore, with one exception. That was Craven. The blow that had missed his face had fallen heavily upon his forearm; he must have been an indifferent swimmer at best, and it was evident that without help he must drown.

Despairing of reaching the shore, he turned and swam toward me, with the most pitiful cries and entreaties. But I backed warily away from him.

"For God's sake, help me, Parrish!" he said.

"No," said I, "not for billions! If you are drowning, I'm glad of it—the sooner, the better. The world will be quit of a dirty coward——"

"Parrish," he said, "don't let me—" Water entered his open mouth; he strove to spit it out, became confused, and sank. A moment later his head emerged once more, the eyes rolling horribly. I could not stand the sight.

"Hold on tight!" I said; "I'm coming."

But that attempt at mercy came near to being my last; for, whether the man was crazed by peril or malevolent to the last, he seized the gunnel of my boat in both hands, and struggled, it seemed to me, less to climb in than to overturn her.

"Look out! You'll upset her!" I cried.

He only redoubled his efforts to do so. I rammed the oar frantically into his face, and saw him no more.

Had I been left with the heart to do so, I might have paddled after the enemy, and (as a cruiser with a fleet of merchantmen) dealt with them one by one. That I ought to have done so I do not for one moment doubt; I thought of doing so, and I could not. I paddled a stroke or two toward the nearest swimmer, and the oar became

heavy in my hand like the trunk of a tree; I swayed dizzily. Then suddenly that man who was third in the race, without a cry or any sudden convulsion, quietly sank.

I sat down, all dazed and sick, and, while my boat drifted slowly down the fiord, watched as in a trance the leading swimmer, which was Carrol, reach the shore and draw himself slowly out of water. Thanks to his thick deposit of adipose and his strength of a brute, he had not only distanced his companions by twenty yards, but had taken his rifle safe out of the catastrophe.

Perceiving this I came to my senses, seized the oars once more, and rowed for dear life. There was a point of rock, high and rounded, beyond which I would be in safety; but it was evident that before reaching it I must stand the hazard of half a dozen shots.

Carrol must have been either an indifferent marksman, or so breathed by exertion that he could not hold his rifle steady, for the first bullet flew wide; and rather than risk a second I jumped deliberately overboard, on the opposite side of the boat from Carrol, and, clinging to her with one hand, kicking with my feet, and borne by the tide, was soon in safety. Scrambling back into the boat (a gruelling bit of work) I once more manned the oars, and half an hour later (it was falling very dark), exhausted and cold almost to the point of insanity, heard Bessie's voice hailing me from the *Shantung*, and a few minutes later was alongside.

"Where's Lichee?" she said sharply.

"I had to leave him, Bessie," I said, "but he's in a safe place. And he promised to wait till some one came for him. You've got to give me food and a drink, and then I'm ready."

"Thank God, the kid's safe!" said she, and burst into tears.

There was an atmosphere of deep gloom. My story of burning the *Calliope* was received with a certain grim satisfaction; but it was easy to see that it was the intention to exact a far more terrible vengeance than that for the massacre in the fissure.

Jerry Top was the only survivor; the sight of the *Shantung* had preserved him. For so eager was he to be once more comfortably aboard and in the full enjoyment of ship life that, the very moment before the fatal volley had been fired, he had broken into a run, thus, by a strange fatality, dodging whatever bullet had been intended for him. Panic-stricken, he had dropped his load of treasure, redoubled his pace, leaped into the water and, amphibious by nature and only emerging now and then for breath, had made his escape.

But Chang, Hoang, Wu-Lo, San-Lo, Man-Lo—those old friends and tried comrades, would not speak to us any more. Their bodies had been brought off; and Bessie drew me into the cabin where they had been laid—side by side as befitted brothers, and under one covering.

I shall never forget the sight of those five yellow faces, very grave in death, but peaceful and mystic. I stood with Bessie for some time looking at them, and talking quietly about them; recalling acts of kindness and thoughtfulness; praising Chang's sea-genius to his dead face; and Hoang's bountiful strength and good nature, to his.

"Now," said Bessie, "you must go after the boy, Jim."

The hot tears were pouring down her cheeks, and down mine, too. I patted her clumsily on the shoulder and we went out of the cabin.

"One thing I don't understand, Bessie," I said, "—why you let Carrol get away in the boat right under your noses."

"Why," she cried, "it was so sudden, Jim! We were eating dinner, and wondering when you'd all be coming back; and nobody's rifle was handy or loaded. We weren't expecting anything. And then we heard the shots and ran on deck and couldn't make out what had happened. And we stood round like a lot of dummies, jabbering and guessing. Then they came with a rush, and were in the boat and getting away before you could say Jack Robinson; and Jerry Top was half way out to us before we could get our guns and begin to shoot. And they shot back; and I guess there wasn't much damage done one side or the other. Then they got round a corner—pretty quick too, and that was the end of that—hello! what was that?"

We stood listening with bated breath.

"Ship—a—hoy!" The sound came faintly from somewhere high up, or so it seemed.

"Some one's hailing us from the cliff," Bessie said. We joined the others who were gathered amidships, their faces turned toward the sound. Presently the hail was repeated.

"That's Carrol," I said. Jili exclaimed savagely.

"Are you d-e-e-eaf?" came the voice.

Bessie called, "Hello there!" at the top of her voice and then, through the megaphone that I handed her, "What do *you* want?"

And the voice came back with a kind of sustained, intoned effect:

"Got a little stra-anger here!"

"My God!" I cried, "Lichee——"

Jili turned sharply upon me, but I could not see his face for the darkness.

"He's in good ha-ands," came the voice again; "don't worry."

"Shall I send a boat ashore for him?" Bessie called, and her voice shook.

This brought laughter out of the night, and then:

"Think it over till mo-orning."

"Lichee!" Bessie cried.

It seemed to some of us that we heard one piping note of the child's voice that was cut short as by a hand clapped upon his mouth.

"We'll ta-alk in the mo-orning!" came the voice. I snatched the megaphone from Bessie's nervous hand.

"Carrol," I cried, "you'll not hurt the child!"

The answer came, very drawn out and quieter:

"Not till we've ha-ad our ta-alk."

And though I called to him again and again, he wasted no more words upon us that night.

Nor did sleep waste her favors upon us; the rain came down in torrents, and there was much far-off thundering. Carmen, Jerry Top and I kept dismal company in the galley, now renewing the fire, now talking a little, now nodding and dozing. In the cabin Bessie kept watch upon the dead, while in the forecastle the Chinamen burned joss-sticks and prayed to the god of little children all through the night.

CHAPTER XIX

AN EXCHANGE

THERE was never a more gray and sodden daybreak; even the lively red of Jerry Top's skin, like the coals in the galley fire, had an ashen look. The piercing dampness and the unprecedented exertions, exposure and immersion of the day before had tied my muscles into rheumatic knots. I had caught a heavy cold, and my nose, from being constantly blown, was now sore to the touch. Of us three, Carmen appeared to have come through that troubled night best; she sat erect upon a camp-stool, staring straight before her, her hands folded in her lap, her great black stag-eyes steady, brilliant and unwinking. I rose very painfully and, one of my knees cracking like a pistol-shot, she turned her eyes and smiled.

"Carmen," I said, "once and for all I'm on your side now. I want to see that man Carrol die—very slowly."

She nodded and, raising her eyebrows: "Tea?" she said.

The word brought Jerry Top to life, so to speak. He bounded to his feet and had the kettle filled in no time; and I fed the fire with fresh coal and a few teaspoonfuls of kerosene. Presently the fragrant smell of tea filled the galley and, escaping thence, like a rumor, reached Bessie in the cabin and the Chinamen in the forecastle.

Bessie was the first to join us, white and heavy-eyed, but, as always, energetic and efficient. And she spoke cheerfully and tried to make us believe she was hungry, when, poor anxious mother, she could not even choke down a cup of tea. Then came Jili and the others, haggard from the night of prayer and half asphyxiated by the fumes of the joss-sticks. They had no word of greeting for any one; but now and then one or other of them rolled upon me a baleful and malevolent eye, as if I alone had been to blame for our misfortunes. And I tell you it was mighty hard to bear after the long weeks of friendship and good fellow-ship.

I had come to think that they liked me—for myself; but it was plain enough now that I was no more to them than a shaving of wood. If Lichee's mother forgave me for leaving the boy alone on the island, why not these men, no one of whom was related to him? The burning of the *Calliope* and the drowning of two of our enemies did not seem to count a whit in my favor; and what with that, the suffocating cold in my head, and my aching bones, I think the dawn discovered on the whole of God's earth no man so wretched as I.

About eight o'clock Carrol hailed us from the landing-place and, waving a white handkerchief at the end of a stick, asked us to send a boat ashore to bring him off to the schooner.

Jili went alone, but, on the chance of some

further treachery, Ah Ting, who was the best shot among us, lay down against the bulwarks and steadily held a cocked rifle sighted on Carrol's bulky person. But Carrol was by way of playing fair for once, and, stepping nimbly aboard the boat which Jili backed ashore to receive him, was soon alongside, much dismantled by a night of exposure, but calm, nonchalant and even-tempered.

As he came aboard he apologized to Bessie for his appearance; and it was only at recognizing Carmen that he showed a sign of uneasiness. He bowed to her; but she looked steadily through him, as it were, and beyond; turned presently on her heel and went back into the galley.

"Jim," said Carrol easily, "who does the talking for this crowd?"

"I guess," said Bessie, "that anything you've got to say will be attended to somehow, so fire away."

"Oh," said Carrol. "Now how about a fire? Couldn't we talk better over a fire?"

"I guess we can talk here," said Bessie.

"Just as you say," said Carrol, and he looked very much disappointed, for he was soaking wet and blue with the cold.

"First," said Bessie, "is the boy alive and unhurt?"

"He's cold and wet, like the rest of us," said Carrol, "but he hasn't been hurt—yet."

"Come to the point, Carrol," I broke in. "We don't stand for threats in this crowd."

"Oh, yes, the point," said he, as if he had forgotten that he had come with any particular intention. "The point is, we've no immediate use for the child; he knows where the treasure is, of course; but as he doesn't understand a word of English—what are you smiling at, Jim?"

"I was smiling," I said quickly, "to think of your trying to talk Chinese."

"Well, smile," said he. "I tried all right—Chinese, English and gesticulation. But the boy's only a baby after all—and a thicker baby I never tried to enlighten. Now," said he, turning directly to Bessie, "we haven't hurt a hair of the child's head, and we propose to give him back to you safe and sound. Our differences, after all, are grown-up differences, and there's no use dragging a baby into them."

"Well," said Bessie, "you return the boy; and what must we do?"

"You," said Carrol, "must give us a grown man in exchange."

"Would a woman do?" said Bessie quickly.

"*You* bet!" said Carrol, his eyes shining.

"Then that's settled," said Bessie. "I go."

"Very well," said Carrol, "it's a bargain."

Bessie turned and made a step toward the boat, but Jili slipped in front of her, ordered her back with a savage gesture and poured out a sudden shrill torrent of Chinese.

"Right O," said Bessie, and she turned to Carrol. "Jili says," said she, "that you wouldn't keep your word if I did go. And I think he's right. How about it?"

Carrol shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got to trust somebody," he said.

"Yes, Carrol," said I, "but I don't believe the Lord God Himself could give any reason why that somebody should be you."

"Perhaps you're right," he said cheerfully, "and, that being the case, why, I'll have to trust *you*. Give me your word, Jim, that if I bring the boy aboard you'll turn the woman over to me, and let us depart in peace, as the saying is." But Jili interrupted again, and with much finality.

"Bessie not go anyhow," he said, and drew back as if that was the end of that.

"Well, then," said Carrol, "who will?"

"What will happen," Bessie asked, "if no one goes?"

"Why," said Carrol, "as far as I'm concerned, nothing. But there's Todd to be reckoned with, and one or two others that aren't as fond of little half-breed children as I am. They're quite a little put out by the way things have gone, and if they can't trade the boy for somebody more useful, why, they're bound to have their fun with the boy. I dare say they'd be willing, and even apt, to carry their fun somewhere where you could hear it going on——"

Jili cut him short.

"Fetch boy—Jili go."

"Why *you*?" said Bessie.

There came a strange, tender look into the black, sloe eyes, and a blush, I will swear, into the yellow cheeks.

"Jili," said he quietly, "die for lilly boy, all same glad!"

"Can't you cut some of this palaver out?" said Carrol brutally. "I'm half perished. I don't care who goes; decide for yourselves. Only it's got to be some one who knows where the treasure is."

"Then," said I, and I am afraid my voice faltered, "Jili won't do. It's up to me."

"Come now," said Carrol, "decide something quick!"

"What's the use of your knowing where the stuff is? You can't get away with it."

"Oh," said Carrol easily, "we'll take Jim here as a hostage, keep him safe, and in return we'll just ask you to give us and the treasure a lift to the nearest port. You all like Jim, don't you?"

"You bet we *do!*" cried Bessie, in her big-hearted voice—I think to warm my heart and give me courage. "And I'll tell you this," said she, "Mister Carrol, if you hurt a hair of his head—that is, if he does go with you—somehow or other I'll hunt you down and get you in my power and give you the finest working idea of hell that any man ever had this side of there! And you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

All her color came back for the moment and her eyes flashed splendidly.

"Then Jim goes," said Carrol.

"I suppose so," said I, in a miserable, small voice.

"And you give me your word that when I bring the boy off safe and sound you'll go with me?"

There was a moment of silence.

"Jim," said Bessie, "if you don't feel free to do it, don't."

"Free?" said I. "I admit the thought of it makes me sick—" I turned quickly to Carrol, lest my half-hearted resolution fail me completely.

"I give you my word," I said hastily.

A hand clapped me strongly on the shoulder. I turned and saw Jili's face illuminated as from within.

"Jili not forget," said he, "not never!" He turned and motioned Carrol into the boat.

"When shall we expect you back, Carrol?" I asked.

"In about an hour," said he, and went over the side.

"Now then, Jim," said Bessie, "you go into the forecastle with the boys and they'll rub your stiff joints and freshen you up. And, mind you, you don't run any danger with Carrol. Your life's pretty near as useful to them as it is to you."

"But, Bessie," I said," they'll want me to show them where the treasure is, and I'm in duty bound not to tell them; and then they'll try to make me. It's that that gives me the shakes to think of; if I thought they'd just knock me on the head and be done with it, all right; but I've got to try to stand up to them like a white man and a gentleman, and I'm not very good at—at pain, Bessie."

"You long-legged child!" said she, and her voice, which she strove to make jovial and bold, was very tremulous and moved, "why shouldn't you tell them where the treasure is? At least have the sense and kindness to save us the trouble of sifting it all out of the sand!"

"You think it's no harm to tell them?" I cried eagerly.

"It's the only thing to do," said she positively.

The anticipation of immediate torture being done away with raised my spirits like wine; and an hour of rubbing, with whisky, kneading and pommeling, enabled me to greet the safe return of Lichee with real joy.

Not one word had the child spoken to his captors during the whole of his captivity, but, his shrewd intellect masked by a blank and stupid expression, he had, it appears, after his first fright and surprise, even laughed at them up his sleeve. Wet, bedraggled, chilled to the bone, but calm and unperturbed, he came over the side and ran with little, solemn steps to Bessie, buried his face against her dress and then, and then only, his pent-up feelings found their natural expression in a burst of weeping, of which he was afterward terribly ashamed.

In answer to Carrol's impatient, "Are you coming, Jim, or not?" I slid over the side into the bow of the boat. Jili shoved off and headed her slowly for the shore.

Then Lichee, his face all teary still, but wreathed in smiles, ran to the bulwarks.

"Hey, man!" he called.

Carrol turned his face and looked sourly at the boy.

"Me 'peak English," cried Lichee, "all same Melican man!" And he stuck out his red tongue at Carrol and jumped up and down with uncontrollable satisfaction.

CHAPTER XX

GUIDING THE ENEMY

"WELL," said Carrol, "that's one or two or several on me!"

And several times during the short row he came out with a tickled chuckle. But I

was too wretched and afraid to see any humor in anything; and, furthermore, the whole of my faculties were concentrated in an effort to understand what Jili was saying to me between strokes. He spoke in Chinese, very slowly, using very simple words, and I gathered at last that he was tempting me to break faith with Carrol.

The matter, according to Jili, was of simple accomplishment: we must, on reaching shallow water, rise suddenly against Carrol, kill him (Jili would attend to that with his knife), and retreat, covered by the *Shantung's* rifles. But when I answered that I had given my word and would not break it, I was rewarded by the ringing note of admiration that came into his voice; and he praised me over his shoulder and said that I was honest as a Chinaman.

Then he gave me a piece of advice: If I found myself in imminent danger, I must throw false pride to the winds and scream at the top of my lungs; and when I seemed most deserted and alone, I must believe that help was somewhere near at hand. Also, if I had a chance to run for it, I should find the boat waiting near the landing. All that mere man could do for me, in short, Jili proposed to do. Rather than lose me, he said, he would return to China and desecrate the graves of his ancestors. And at parting he shook hands with me, but not with the cold, limp handshake that is characteristic of Chinamen; he gripped my fingers so that I felt his friendship run like an electric message up my arm and into my faint heart.

"Well, Jim," said Carrol, "let's be moving. The boys are waiting up top and they'll be glad to see you—you're almost the only thing so far that has come our way. Todd's still with us—you remember Todd—a bright little feller?"

"I remember him very well," I said.

But the steep incline of the fissure made conversation difficult, and here and there traces of blood not entirely dissolved by the rain acted on my hearing like plugs of cotton. It was a positive relief to exchange the dark suggestion of the place for the cold, windy heights and the suddenly-met members of Carrol's party. They were waiting for us near the fissure's upper end; and Todd, stepping quickly from them with a natural and hearty, "How are you, Parrish?" offered me his hand. And so strong is the habit of certain practised conventions, I took it, bloody murderer's though it was.

I was in a shocking, quaking state of uneasiness, to be there alone among the enemy, cut off from my friends and with no earnest that I should live to tell the tale, else I must have been positively amused at the droll, bedraggled figure cut by that conscienceless gang. Their dry clothes had mingled their smoke with that of the *Calliope;* the clothes they had on were still wringing wet from the night of rain, and grotesquely shrunken.

Nor could these miserable adventurers have counted one white nose among them. Coughing, snuffling, hawking and spitting, wiping their sore and fiery noses on their soaked handkerchiefs or wet, rasping coat-sleeves, greed alone kept them yet a while on their feet; and their rough beards, the accumulation of dirt in the corners of their eyes, their split, disgusting finger-nails were in astonishing contrast to the clean-shaven, sprucely groomed Chinamen I had left behind.

I noted, too, and with lively satisfaction, that but two rifles had survived the upset in the fiord; and these looked, for all the world, as if red rust had gone into their original assemblage instead of gun-metal. How I wished that my friends might suddenly appear, fall upon that dejected and almost defenseless group and deliver me!

"Well," said Carrol, as if divining my thoughts, "we're richer than we look; and, Jim, it's up to you to prove it."

"In what way?" I asked.

"Now," said he, "I always found you reasonable, and I hope for your own good you'll be reasonable now."

In spite of the man's wretched physical state, he chose to talk in bantering circles round and about the point.

"Now," he said, "that you and Todd and I are together again—poor Craven was so glad to get a glimpse of you the other day after all these months, but the joy was of a kind that didn't last—now, as I say, that we're together again, I hope from the bottom of my soul that nothing disagreeable is going to happen——"

"Ah, cut it out!" exclaimed one of the men, and went directly into a paroxysm of sneezing.

"Blake," said Carrol, and he thumped the fellow on the back, "see what comes of interrupting!"

"I'm sure," said Todd quietly, "that Parrish isn't going to put us to any trouble."

"Parrish," said Carrol, "is too well acquainted with the rudiments of the English language not to know how easily a man may be taught to speak it. How about it, Jim?"

"I think, Carrol," said I, "that you want me to show you where the treasure is and that you are threatening to hurt me if I won't. Is that it?"

"Bright boy!" exclaimed Carrol.

"Well," said I, "I'm quite ready to show you where we got the gold that you took from us and subsequently lost. If there's any more where that came from, why, I suppose you can get it out as well as another."

"By the way," said Todd, "was that mule gang that we interrupted yesterday the first from the mines?"

Carrol reached into his pocket and presently brought out the famous document that he had stolen from me in San Francisco.

"Now, Jim," said he, "go over this and pick off the items that are already aboard the Chinese ship—so's to give us an idea of what's left to look for."

"It's all to look for," I said, "so far as I know. What you lost in the fiord was all that we had lifted." And I made to return the paper.

"Keep it," said he, and with a kind of snorting laugh, "I can trust you with it—now that you're sober. And now lead off and show us where the stuff is."

I thrust the paper into my pocket, turned without a word and walked straight for the truncated cone in the midst of the island. Where it was possible, Carrol and Todd kept abreast of me; and the rest tailed along behind. Last of all came Blake, whose cold was so heavy as to suggest incipient pneumonia. Carrol carried one of the rifles; a sour, oldish man, whose name I afterward learned was Kelsey, shouldered the other, grumbling with its weight, now stopping to endure a paroxysm of coughing, and now swearing in a hoarse, whining voice that was in ludicrous contrast to the filthy words.

Two things occupied my mind: to ascertain, if possible, and mark down the exact place where I had left my Winchester and my cartridge-belt; and the other matter was the weather. As a farmer during a stubborn drought, I prayed fervently for rain. A little more exposure, I thought, and some of these sweet creatures would not live to tell about it.

But the gray of the sky was growing thinner constantly, and brighter; and north, toward Magellan, the snow-capped mountains glared here and there with sudden and shifting visitations of the sun. The wind, too, had a brisk, dry quality, and in my joints I felt that it was going to clear. As for the rifle, now I thought I had the place, now not. But recognizing of a sudden the hollow where I had left Lichee, I was able almost at once to lay my eye on the top of the split rock between whose halves I had laid the thing; and you may be sure that I looked backward from time to time to mark it indelibly on my mind. The last look I took was from the shadow of the cone, and I saw the extreme tip of my landmark, no bigger than a bead, black, with one sharp point of white, and shining with wet.

If my chance came it would not be upon direction that I should go wrong: For I could now, I told myself joyfully, go as straight to a weapon as that weapon's bullet could be sent back among those who might pursue.

"Carrol," said I—and he looked at me shrewdly, for I was speaking for the first time that day in a natural voice, "I've been wondering how you happened to find Lichee—that's the boy. I left him well hidden, and he promised to stay hidden."

"Then he broke his promise, Jim," said Carrol. "He climbed a rock to have a look around, and Blake saw him, and the bunch of us ran him down. It was no cinch; the little devil ran like all possessed, and finally hid in a place not big enough to hold a rat; and it was pretty dark by then, and he pretty —— near got off. How much farther have we to go?"

"About fifty feet," said I.

"Boys," Carrol turned and called, "hurry up. We're there!"

Even Blake, sick as he was, made shift to break into a stumbling run; and almost as one man we arrived on the rim of the treasure-bowl, and stood looking down.

CHAPTER XXI

A RACE

THE excavations that we had made to get out the bar gold were washed half full of sand, but were still amazing cavities considering with what few implements and in how short a time they had been dug.

Carrol stood for a moment looking down; then jumped, landing with incredible lightness for a man of his bulk, dropped his rifle, snatched up one of the spades that we had left for our own future use and began to dig.

The rim of the bowl was fifteen feet, perhaps, higher than the level of sand and beech bushes within; the sides were steep and smooth, with traces of horizontal grooves as if the hollow had been ground out of the virgin rock; it was, in short, an easy place to enter, and by no means so easy to leave, the smooth slopes offering but few footholds or handholds.

Blake, who was the next to jump, must have twisted an ankle in landing, for he fell all of a heap, then sat up, nursed his one foot with both hands, and cursed frightfully. Kelsey, Todd, and the two others jumped as if from one set of springs, and had no sooner recovered balance than they fell like dogs upon the remaining spade, struggling for its possession, wrangling and cursing one another. I have never seen men so earnest to do a piece of digging; and remarked to myself that an equal and previous zeal for hard work might have kept any one of them from becoming a rascal.

At this juncture Carrol, shouting aloud, dropped his spade and dug some object free with his hands. I could not see what it was. The others, including Blake, who hopped on his sound foot, were about him in an instant like a swarm of wasps. Their hoarse and thick voices became clear with the tonic of wild excitement, and they clapped one another on the back and poured forth torrents of happy abuse.

Then just such a frenzy of digging as had come over the *Shantung* party the day before seized them; Carrol with one spade, Kelsey with the other, a third, whose name, if I had caught it correctly, was Brandreth, with the pick, and Blake, Todd and the other man with their hands.

As for me, I stood forgotten upon the rim of the bowl. So far as the diggers were concerned I did not exist; nor did I (so heartily did I participate in the excitement of the digging) for a minute or two remember myself. I came to with a start. Here was a golden opportunity such as I had been praying for; there would never come a better.

With good luck I might run a mile, or even walk one, before I was missed; with the worst luck in the world I could put a hundred yards between me and pursuit. A bullet might overtake me, but the bullet that ended me would also end their chances of securing a passage on the *Shantung;* therefore they would be in no hurry to shoot, unless carried away by unthinking passion.

I gave one last look at the bent, laboring backs in the bowl, took one cautious step backward, a second, a third; then turned, walked rapidly for twenty feet and, my heart thumping furiously, broke into a run.

The relief to my pent-up feelings afforded by doing something with all my might and main was incredible. So the surgeon's knife relieves the fever and agony of an abscess. My heart beat more quietly; I breathed more easily; and I am prepared to swear that I even saw a certain humor in the situation.

But it was a short-lived glimpse. A furious shout to stop went through me like a bullet; then a flesh and blood bullet, or rather one of lead and lubricator, sang a wicked note in my ear. I looked back. Blake was hobbling after me, a rifle smoking in his hands; the head and shoulders of Todd were emerging from the bowl, accompanied by a humming sound of shouts and curses.

I leaped into a hollow and ran on; but the farther end of the hollow sloped gently back to the general level, and I must expose myself to another shot. Yet none was fired, and I looked back once more—an idiotic maneuver which cost me a heavy fall. Still, I gathered that Todd, having snatched Blake's rifle in passing, was attempting to run me down and take me alive. And even in the brief glimpse that I had of his little lithe form running over the rocks like a mountain goat, I saw that his speed to mine was as that of a race-horse to a donkey.

But I had a long start; so long as he continued to gain he would not shoot; and if I could reach my rifle and cartridges he would live just long enough to repent having chased me. All this in scrambling up from my fall and taking once more to my heels. And I ran on, as fast as I could work my legs, and as straight for that greatly needed rifle as I could steer. The hardest part was to keep from looking back; but the last folly of that kind had taught me a lesson that was not to be forgotten. I would get to my rifle as fast as I could; that was all that concerned me. If I got to it in time, well and good; if not——!

Soon I began to hear the light fall of Todd's feet, and presently he shouted to me

to stop or he would blow my head off. But, judging his distance by the sound, I believed that there was still a chance. It was only a little farther to the split rock, and Todd's nearness encouraged me to renewed exertions—to that laboring spurt that has won many a race at the tape itself.

Yet had the luck been against me I must have been caught. I had been handicapped by one tumble; now the fates evened matters by tripping Todd. I heard the sharp clatter that his rifle made upon the rock, heard the man grunt, and twenty steps later I plunged into a hollow, turned the corner of the split rock and saw my rifle lying before me like a streak of rust.

To snatch a couple of cartridges from the belt and to shove the nose of one into the breech of the magazine was the work of an instant. But there the work came to an untimely end, for the caliber of the cartridge was greater than that of the rifle!

CHAPTER XXII

A RESCUE

THE day before, when we started back with the gold, in the attendant excitement, confusion and downpour of rain, I must have picked up a cartridge-belt belonging to some one else. But, however the mistake had come about, come about it had; and I must pay the forfeit. Yet as Todd came suddenly upon me around the corner of the rock, I had the sense to point the empty weapon at his heart and, like a gentleman of the road, to call upon him to hold up his hands.

The effect upon Todd of finding me armed was grotesque. His jaw dropped, his eyes bulged, and he went very white; then his knees buckled and he sat down all of a heap. To a man of very little courage the sight of the white feather displayed by an adversary is the surest and strongest impulse to daring. And a torrent of taunting phrases rushed to my lips only to fail for want of the breath to deliver them. Indeed, I was so winded that now and then I saw showers of stars where Todd's face ought to have been; and the muzzle of my rifle jerked and circled here and there. A full minute must have passed thus.

Then, "Stand up!" I commanded breathlessly.

Todd hesitated. He was calmer already and the color was flicking back into his cheeks. Then slowly, his eye never leaving mine, he rose to his feet.

"Drop that gun!" I said. But his answer to this was as unexpected as it was alarming. For instead of dropping the rifle he raised it suddenly to his shoulder, cocking it as he did so, and pointed it between my eyes.

"No," he said, "you drop yours!" In my turn now there was hesitation.

"Parrish," said he, "your rifle isn't cocked. That was a sad oversight on your part, my boy. So put it down now and come along. My, though!" he went on, "you had me scared! But when I saw that you'd forgotten to cock the thing—probably didn't know how—I felt better. Whew! Have you many more surprises up your sleeve? First you burn the *Calliope;* then you spill us overboard; then you find a rifle growing on a bush. What a fellow you are! It's a shame you didn't come with us in the first place, 'stead of giving us the slip in 'Frisco and running off with a lot of Chinamen. Why, if you'd stuck to us we'd been half way home now, treasure and all!"

"So I gave you the slip, did I?" said I.

"You *bet!*" said he, and burst out laughing in my face.

"I often wonder," I said, "why you men weren't willing to let me go along with you and share with you; God knows there's enough profit for all, if the invoice is anywhere near correct. Why weren't you willing?

"Oh," said he, "for several reasons. You weren't our kind; we thought you'd be so much dead weight; and—I don't know what all. But we had one—sensible reason—we were afraid of—of catching your trouble."

"*My* trouble!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, your lungs," he said. "We didn't like the notion of getting mixed up with your knife and fork, for instance, or drinking out of a glass that you had used. So it was voted wisest for the welfare of the many to sail without the one."

"I see," said I, and with great indignation and resentment. "And I never had a trace of consumption in my life!"

"Well," said he, "judging from recent events, I believe you. However, if you've got your wind, I've got mine. Let's get a move on. Pass me that rifle, butt first. We need an extra rifle. No; you can carry the cartridges. They're heavy, I know, but in your hands, I believe, quite harmless."

I reached out my hand toward the rifle, and that instant became aware of a figure that had appeared like a ghost from heaven knows where and was creeping upon Todd from behind. It was Jili, and my sudden look of excitement nearly betrayed him —but not quite; for Todd, in the very act of turning alertly, was caught across the throat by a skinny yellow arm that sank into the soft of it like a rope; his cry was strangled ere it could be born; and it was from me that a cry of horror and fear was torn.

In the shock of the surprise Todd's rifle had fallen from his hands, and now, struggle, writhe and twist as he would, his fate was upon him. The strong hold of Jili's left arm never relaxed, and his right hand, holding a knife curved like a hook, now crept around Todd's body, and although Todd seized its wrist with both hands, he could not arrest its progress. Just by Todd's left hip-bone the Chinaman, with a sharp cunning jab, hooked the knife into the living flesh, worked it to the hilt; and then, sawing, jerking and dragging, began to rip his victim open.

Most horrible of all were Todd's efforts to arrest the work of the Chinaman's inexorable hand; for his jerking and tugging against that slim, steel-strong yellow wrist had a look of aiding rather than hindering the ghastly work upon which it was engaged. No sound came from Todd, but a kind of whistling of the breath in his nostrils, and the sounds of his stubborn and reluctant flesh parting with rasp after rasp before the drag and jerk of the knife. Once the point of the knife screaked shrilly upon a bone.

By then I had closed with that awful group of murder, and was doing my best to pry off the Chinaman's hand. As well have grappled with the piston-rod of a locomotive; the work went on to its appointed end. Then Jili released his hold, and Todd, wide open from left hip-bone to right ribs, sank at our feet; quivered, choked, moaned and died.

Jili was breathless, but smiling.

"Jili think Chang laf litty now all same dead," said he. "Jili think open belly good way; not too dam quick; not too dam slow. Jili think time go back. Them mans hurt you? By and by Jili catch um other one; now go back schooner, and grind knife."

He examined with much concern a deep nick in the blade, thrust the bloody thing into its sheath, caught up the rifles, and then, one arm about my waist, for I was near fainting, walked me slowly through hollows and gullies to the head of the fissure, stopping now and then to poke his head above the general level and make sure that we were not pursued. But no one actually seemed to have followed us, although Carrol could be seen half way up the side of the truncated cone, trying apparently to find out what had become of Todd and me.

By the time we reached the boat I had recovered from my faintness; but it was only with the utmost repugnance that I could bring myself to look at Jili, though his deed had saved me, perhaps, from an ultimate fate more cruel than that which had been visited upon the wretched Todd. And now, with the perspective of time, that dreadful act of dissection, awful as it was to witness, seems to have been about the compromise between sudden death and torture that such men as Todd deserve. Surely it was in no way so great a crime as the unprovoked murder of Chang and Hoang and the others had been.

Then, too, it seems that not merely the cruel passion of revenge impelled Jili to the atrocity. Rather—and Bessie explained it so to me—he wished by one terrible example to fill the hearts of our enemies with consternation and cold fear. To have found Todd conventionally dead would have served only to inflame them further against us; but to find him as he was, must—and I agreed with Bessie—serve them as an awful warning.

We had now but five men and one rifle to deal with; five men without shelter; with no food except such sea-birds (and these were plentiful enough) as they could kill; and no means of kindling a fire, for there was no fuel upon the island. Jili was for going ashore and hunting them down like so many sheep, and potting them one by one until we had accounted for the lot. But the rest of us would not hear of it; the enemy had still one rifle, and that was just one too many.

Better go for a short cruise, or merely stay where we were, and let the cold and the rain hunt down the men upon the island and dispose of them one by one.

TO BE CONCLUDED

The Patriotism of Sammy Starzenstripes

by Rob Wagner

BEING one side of a correspondence indulged in by Sam Stevens and Henry Bunker Harris, both of the class of '09, "Ann Arbor," the latter being a reporter on the *Transcript*, New York, U. S. A., and the former being disclosed on board the S. S. *Deutschland*, bound for England and writing under date of November 28, 1909.

MY DEAR BUNK:—I'm scared to death I'll wake up and find it isn't true. When I think of you poor devils slaving away in that nervous, ill-smelling local room I feel for you, but I can't quite reach you. This is Dreamland, and I'm little Nemo sailing off over the bounding main with my beautiful Princess.

Weather gorgeous, and a fuzzy bunch that's most amusing. We are at the Purser's table and seem to have all the cut-ups on the boat with us. This noon we indulged in the hoary custom of guessing one another's occupation. When it came to a big brute across from me he was guessed as an actor, wine agent, mine promoter and politician. He turned out to be a traveling secretary of the Y. M. C. A. There are some pretty good lookers aboard, but Agnes has them beaten to a jell.

It was bully of you fellows to come down to see us off, but you didn't fuss us a bit. Why shouldn't I have taken the same boat? Who has a better right? You didn't notice any tears in her soulful eye, did you? Talked the dream-stuff to her for two hours last night up in the bow. Oh, I don't think I made such a disgusting decision!

I'll write you again if I'm not too busy. Dwight Henry aboard. Did you know he'd booked? Please give three cheers for me.

Yours, SAM.

ON BOARD S. S. DEUTSCHLAND,
Dec. 3, 1909.

MY DEAR BUNK:—I had a slight falling out with Agnes to-day. She got real kittenish and tried to play Dwight Henry against me. Of course, I knew she was just using him as gooseberry, but I thought she needed a little bump, so I bumped her gently. It does 'em good once in a while to make them realize that there may be other cars less crowded. Agnes is the "grandest girl" and has the English dolls aboard looking like a row of lead nickels, but she mustn't get gay with your Uncle Samuel or I'll have to throw her a bone under the table. She peeved a little, but the jolt will discipline her.

We are in sight of land and I am getting restless to be up and at 'em. I have heard that England is about half "toxed" and it is like robbing the babies' bank to get it away from them. Well, old man, William the Konk had nothing on me. Here's where little Sammy qualifies to write an able article on "How to Get Rich." My condolences to the plutes at home.

£. S. and pensively, SAM.

28 MONTAGUE PLACE, RUSSELL SQUARE,
London, W. C.
Dec. 4, 1909.

MY DEAR OLD BUNK:—Well, here I am, preparing to attend the last sad rites of a de-

caying nation, and I am sure I got here none too soon, for the pulse is running low. I am on the staff of *The Observer*, an illustrated publication whose observations are necessarily very mortuary. It is easy to understand how this once proud people got on to the skids and how even the importation of a few live ones from the U. S., Germany and the Colonies will do nothing more than delay the wake. No nation, however lusty, could survive this climate. It is simply indecent. Rain and fog every day. Yellow fogs, green fogs, brown fogs and a nice gooey one called "The Pea-Soup." A thousand years living in the wet has made them half fish. They are cold and clammy and have about the same wit as the oyster.

Transportation is a figure of speech and the eats are scandalous. I have gone against brussels sprouts and boiled potatoes until I am ashamed to look a potato in the eye. And if "Mother" had ever brewed coffee like this I would have been an orphan as soon as I was able to wield an ax. As for desserts—*zowl* Voltaire said that "in England they have two hundred creeds and only one sauce." He exaggerated the number of sauces.

Say, Bunk, you'd cry if you could see the clothes the men wear. They look like steamer rugs, and from the cut of the trousers it is hard to tell whether they are coming or going. And the women! Oh! the wimmin!! Their backs are three feet long and flat, and their shoes will go on either foot. You can see the top and bottom edge of their corsets right through their rain-coats. Their noses are red and their hands are blue and their hair is scrambled into frizzes and buns and then held down tight with a fish-net. Yes, sir, this is the fishy country. The women have profiles just like perch.

For the love of Mike send me a pound of American tobacco and some brown papers. I can't smoke clover. Also mail me a newspaper or two. What I need is a little ginger or a firecracker or something to stir my sluggish wits. This is the saddest place in the world. I am home-sickerenell.

Ever yours, SAM.

P. S.—A note from Agnes saying she was sorry for her end of the smash.

Dec. 20, 1909.

MY DEAR OLD BUNK:—In my last letter I was so busy writing the obituary of J. Bull that I forgot to tell you much about my job. It is a perfect tapioca, or would be if it wasn't for their fool libel laws. You can't call a man a thief here until the court says he is. And you have to obey all sorts of copyright impertinences before you can publish his foolish face.

Editors are just glorified office-boys, for they can't accept anything of importance without a directors' meeting. Naturally most of them have minds like mollusks. My old crab is built like a pink hippopotamus and he wheezes like a trained seal. He is more interested in seeing whether I have spelled "honor" with a "u" than to learn what I have to teach him. He says, though I came to him highly recommended as a news-getter, my English is "most extraordinary." I have learned that to mention one's stomach or legs in public is good for six months' hard labor in Old Baily, and to utter the poor little word "bug" means the Tower and the Red Meat Ax. No, they are "lady-flies" over here. "As snug as an insect in a rug!" Is it not very droll?

Did you know that there is not a telephone in the Bank of England? Can you beat it? No, sir, they use messenger-boys. But now I understand why. *We have* a telephone, and Friday I wanted a zinc cut from the engraver so I splashed up to the telephone and sang most innocently, "Hello, Central; give me Strand, four, eight, three." A sweet voice replied "Pardon?" I repeated, and got the same reply four times, and just as I was about to hand her of the velvet voice a few crisp ones, the commissionnaire dashed in and showed me how to connect. This is it: "Are you theyah—are you theyah—are you theyah? Would you kindly put me through to Swan, the engraver's, please? Their number is Strand four, eight, three. Yes, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am." Then turning to me he said, "She will call you when she has put you through, sir. Yes—sir—thank—you—sir."

After waiting for twenty minutes I sent for a messenger. The commissionnaire laughed. It was a good joke on me. Commissionnaires don't care for telephones, for they employ the messenger-boys.

My associates are no doubt all gentlemen, but they are about as witty as grave-diggers, and *my* talk seems to unhorse them completely. I've tried to shoot a little tabasco into the bunch, but I can't even surprise them. When you have told them something

we would beat a child for not knowing, they will simply stare and say "Why, really!" Their smug complacency would drive you booglie. Down in the bottom of their foggy hearts they have the utmost contempt for all foreigners, even the Colonials. They call them "—— outsiders," When you fellows at college dubbed me "Sammy Starzenstripes" you did a good job, but I never realized I had a fourth dimension to my patriotism until I struck my poor old bald-headed mother-country.

I feel sort of punk about Agnes. Still, she had it coming to her. She's all right in her way, but she mustn't lose her way. Remember me to the bunch.

Olive Oil, old scout. Write soon to

Your little—SAM.

P. S.—I bought me a pair of "good stout English boots" and they look like muffins.

Met a girl named Whitehall last week and if it hadn't been for her lumpy clothes and bum coiffe, she wouldn't have been so worser.

Jan. 6, 1910.

DEAR BUNK:—Well, to-day I nearly ended it. It's good I have a grip on myself or I should certainly have hurried the survival of the fittest. What do you think of the crust of these darn beef-eaters in hanging an *income tax* on me! Yes, me, an American citizen! Sixty big iron dollars! I made an awful roar, but Billy McVeigh came in and told me that when I was in Rome I must eat roman-candles and that he had to give up too. So I'll have to contribute twelve guineas to help keep their old corpse alive.

Mac and I went to Wyndham's last night and saw a good show. The men all wore overcoats and froze, and the women wore scarcely any clothes and claimed to be "quite comfy." But their noses were red, and had they sneezed they would have lost the few clothes they had on.

I'm a bit disappointed in Mac. He seems perfectly happy and contented in England. He says that if I mix with the first and third class passengers I'll like it. He doesn't agree that the men are witless and the women frumps. Poor Mac is becoming Anglicized, I'm afraid. It's pathetic, but when a man begins to lose his buttons, it's all off.

Went to tea yesterday at the Wigmore's and had a rather good time. Met the Whitehall again and flattered her to death by talking politics and the Big Stuff. She'd look up at me like a scared fawn and say "How very, very interesting!" or "Really?" She said her father and brother never discussed such things with her, as she was a "woman," and women are supposed to stick to their knitting and know nothing of politics or business. These dames wouldn't be half bad if the men gave them a show. They really have a lot of intelligence and their voices are wonderfully musical. Miss Whitehall has gorgeous cobalt lamps and a skin you could eat—but when it comes to dress, Agnes has her looking like a cancelled postage-stamp.

She has asked me to call next week. I feel sorry for her—she seems so scared.

No word from Agnes—I guess she is real peevish.

Remember me to Herald Square.

Yours in the fog, SAM.

Jan. 29, 1910.

MY DEAR BUNK:—What would you think if Broadway changed its name every mile? That's what it does over here. It begins as Uxbridge Road, then Notting Hill Road, Bayswater Road, Oxford Street, New Oxford Street, High Holborn (pronounced Hoborn), Holborn Viaduct and Cheapside. Squares are circles and crescents are squares.

Mildred Whitehall lives in one of the three Montague Squares, but hers is a circle. No. 22 is right across the street from 411, so you can see how delightfully easy it is to find your friends. I have been there several times now, so I can steer for it with my hand tied behind me. Mac and I go out a couple of times a week. I dropped in yesterday to tea.

At first I thought five-o'clock tea silly and effeminate, but I find it a very pleasant break in the day. In New York, social life was a date-making battle or pulled off in public. But here all quit work at five and then rendezvous at some one's place to talk it over. I go almost every day to the Swinbournes' and meet a bully lot of people who have interesting things to say. Nobody dines till eight, which gives you three good hours of relaxation and gossip. The theaters begin at nine. You will be surprised when I tell you that in the Summer you come out of the theater at eleven and it is still twilight. But just remember that England is as far north as Labrador. The Winter days are short and the Summer long.

These physical characteristics explain a

lot of things that one wouldn't think about offhand. For instance, their excellence in tennis. A fellow here can work all day in Summer, go home and dine and play tennis till nine o'clock at night; whereas we have got to give up a lot of work if we want to play in championship form.

I have kept the soft pedal on my rough talk with Mildred Whitehall. I was afraid she wouldn't understand or care for it. However, she told me this afternoon she thought my "idioms" were "perfectly ripping." She's a fine piece of work, Bunk. All she needs is some one to show her where to get off. No word from Agnes. I guess she felt worse than I intended.

Well, old man, be good and don't take any wooden money.

Yours, SAM.

March 12, 1910.

DEAR BUNK:—Your joke about changing the chips on my shoulder was not at all pretty; besides, your deductions are all off. I still think this is a pretty bum burg, but naturally when one gets used to a place the irritations grow less.

Thanks for the tobacco. I haven't opened it yet, as I am just in the middle of a tin of English mixture that isn't a bit rotten.

Went to a big dance of the Queen's Westminster Volunteers last week. They correspond to the Seventh Reg. of New York. (I miss my Tuesday nights with the good old Refusileers.) The ball was a wonderful splash. There is something barbarically splendid about the English. They can put on a spectacular ballet that would make anything in France or America look like a road company. The armory was like fairyland, and the men do look handsome bucks in their brilliant uniforms. I've come to the conclusion that we lack color in America.

But dance! Holy Rollers and Jumping Geehossyfats! I climbed trees all evening and had all the bark worn off my shins from the girls trying to beat me to the top. It was all one way for twelve minutes and then reverse just as sincerely for twelve minutes more. They kick up their heels like our grandads did at the huskin'-bees. If it hadn't been for Mildred Whitehall I'd died of the palsy. She can two-step like a high-school girl and waltz like a dream. One of the kind you could "just die" dancing with. She told me Mac had broken her in, which shows what can be done with one of these Grace Darlings if she has a pace-maker. One of the girls got so tongue-tied in her toes that I told her if she'd get on my feet I'd give her a ride. She thought that would be "most exciting."

Went up to the Tower yesterday on a story and I've dug up another and better one than the assignment. It's to steal the Crown Jewels—a perfect cinch! Another exhibition of British asininity. I'll have a couple of yeggs go in with nothing more than a sock-full of wet sand. They have only to bump about three old beef-eaters in medieval panties and bonnets, walk into the jewel-room, pry apart some bars no bigger than a fountain pen, flatten out the inperial crown and walk out with about a million dollars' worth of precious stones. These English crooks must be sound asleep.

Mac has promised to take me to a big house party for the week-end. He says I will see the English at their best. I hope so; their worst is awful punk.

If they are shy on the spuds over here they come in strong on meat. It's the best ever. The boarding-houses have got us skinned to death. The reason is that they cut the joint on the table as you do at home and don't try to imitate hotel service like our beaneries. Funny Agnes doesn't write.

Ever yours, SAM.

P. S.—I am enclosing a story one of the fellows on the paper wrote. You'll be surprised to know that an Englishman has so much humor in him. I've discovered this: Though they may be a bit slow at the comeback, if you hand them a pen they can say some bully things.

Have you heard from Agnes? I'll drop her a postcard just to show her I'm no brute.

March 16, 1910.

MY DEAR BUNK:—Well, well, well! I went to the house-party and certainly had the wonderful time. We were met at the station by all sorts of traps and then driven through ten miles of the most beautiful country you ever saw. Just like a fine big park. The hosts were the Whitehalls, cousins of Mildred's, and they live in the middle of six hundred acres of shooting. It is called Westborne House. Say, you talk about living! These folks have got it all figured out to a Q. E. D.

I was grabbed by Jorkins, and Mac was seized by Burrows. These, I learned, were our "men." They bore us off to our apart-

ments which adjoined. Jorkins was certainly the bear servant. All I had to do was to sit in a chair and behave. He took out all my clothes, arranged my shirts, sent my panties to be pressed and prepared "me tub." He hung around so long while I was undressing that I finally asked him if he was going to hold my hand while I bathed. He was much perturbed, but I squared him off by telling him that I was part Indian, and red men always bathed alone. I assured him he was all to the mustard, but that he must hurry off, as I wished to get to the suds. He was back in less than five minutes and left a lot of stuff on my bed.

When I got out I saw a mardi-gras suit of clothes that might have been "ofay" on a negro minstrel, so I dashed into Mac's room and behold! he had on a suit of the same. He told me he had sent me mine, as he knew I wouldn't have any. They were "house suits" and were cut like dinner clothes, except they were made of wonderfully figured stuff and had red lapels. Well, there was nothing left for me to do but connect with them. I felt like a fried egg on a lace handkerchief!

But there is one thing about the clothes game in England. There are rules for everything, and when you have learned them you need never be embarrassed. It would take seven to eight pages to tell you all we did for three days. Rode to hounds, played billiards and sang songs.

There were a lot of girls there, but the quince of the bunch was Mildred. Mac sort of sicked me on to her. I didn't need much urging. I found myself with her a whole lot more than I needed to be, but she had that "subtle something" that the story-chaps talk about.

She was the most eloquent listener I ever had and she flattered me to death by laughing at all my merry quips. I was surprised at her wit. She came back most delightfully and several times had me running up the street with my hat in my hand, trying to think of the bright come-back.

Sunday night, after the women cashed in, the men had a "quiet little game." It was quiet all right, but "little" doesn't qualify it. I had always thought that poker was an American game, but it isn't,—it's English. They are entitled to it, for that's wherein they excel. An Englishman has got an Egyptian mummy or a Chinaman giggling like a girl when it comes to stolidity. It was scandalous the way they took our coin. But it was worth it all to see how quietly and gentlemanly they did it. There was no money in sight or spoken of. After the game the Steward figured up everything and you squared with him on Monday morning. So nobody knows how anybody else stood. This avoids any personal feeling in the matter.

My tips cost me about $ 20—a sovereign to the Steward, one to Jorkins, half-sovereign to the head stableman and gamekeeper, and silver to the others. It seems a good deal, but they have to divide with the other servants.

Mac told me that Buxton, an American, had tried to stop tipping at his parties and had told the servants that he would pay them the expected tip. He had little cards printed which said: "You will do me a favor by not tipping my servants. They are paid well and do not expect tips." They all left. It seems that they like to speculate and gamble on what they are going to get, and they like to be paid *directly* for services. So you see it is ridiculous for an American to come over here and try to change immemorial customs in a day.

You can bet I dated up with bright-eyes again. If Agnes doesn't care to write, she can climb a tree.

Ever yours, SAM.

P. S.—Nothing in that robbery story of mine. Mac tells me that your old friend Buck O'Mally, 4283 Sing Sing, worked on the job two years and he told Mac that the whole darn place was wired, and if you touched those bars the gate of the Tower was closed and a company of soldiers was ordered out. They are wiser than I thought.

I broke out the American tobacco to-day and, I hate to confess it, but it tasted like sea-weed. These darn Britishers demand the best of everything and they are so stubbornly rich they get it. They comb the whole world for its luxuries. Take tea, for instance. We don't know anything about it. Ours tastes like rain-water.

March 24, 1910.

DEAR BUNK:—I spent a whole day shopping and rubbering with Mildred. She is certainly the Seductive Siren. Mac joshes me a lot and has told me to keep my hand on my watch, as she may be a "trifler." Leave it to your Uncle Sammie. I'm the original kidder.

Went to a big banquet given for Lord Dundonald and sat between a female novelist and a red-head Scot named Mackenzie. Zunck, a big celloist, played during the dinner and when he was through I ventured the trite remark that a cello was about the most soulful instrument yet evolved from cats. Zunck's playing would have pulled tears out of a pirate. Now what do you think that darn Scot replied? "But, mon, have you ever heard the pipes?" Wouldn't that get you?

I wish you would send me a five-pound box of real candy. I want to send an English girl I know some actual "sweets."

Yours in spots, SAM.

March 28, 1910.

DEAR BUNK:—I told Mac that I was going to Brighton over Sunday and sneaked out on rubber shoes to see the girl, by appointment. Darned if Mac didn't turn up himself! He gave me the loud ha, ha! But I don't care. I saw a lot of her, and frankly, old man, she's got me running in short eccentric circles! I thought perhaps that I only amused her, but she seems really interested. Had a real house-to-house talk with her under a big oak tree over in Hyde Park Sunday and she loosened up grandly.

She said she understood that I didn't care for English girls, that I thought them frumps and witless, etc. This gave me a good chance to splash in and tell her a lot of wonderful things. She naïvely admitted that she liked Americans and had always vowed she would marry one! How is that for an opening? I had sense enough not to crowd, but it's beginning to look pretty good.

Paid my income tax to-day. I've come to the conclusion that we'd do well in America to impose a direct tax or two. When you have to jar loose actual money you begin to take an interest in how it is spent. The English wouldn't stand for the vague looseness of our enormous appropriations.

A fellow has to live here some time to really get used to this country. Even the fog I find agreeable. The half-light and grayness is wonderfully restful and the red coats of the soldiers make quite a fine splash of color in the picture. London is like a portfolio of Guérin prints. And the noise is not so ear-splitting as in New York. The whole tone of London is pitched low. No metallic noises of iron running on iron, clanging bells and awful horns.

Even the fire-engines (I've only seen them responding twice) have no bells. The men call out "Hi-yi-yi!" When I think of those little nervous puffs of steam against the blue sky in New York, the fearful dissonance of the noise and the electric tension in the very air I get the willies. My nerves were all shot to pieces before I left and if any one had dropped a pin behind me I'd have jumped through the ceiling. But over here things run slower, quieter and more restfully, yet they seem to achieve big things. There is a solidity to them and their enterprises that inspires respect and confidence.

Mac said this feeling was manifested all through the Boer war. Two years of defeat never ruffled them a bit. Stolidly and splendidly they sat tight, tried to smile and said, "It's bad business, but we must see it through." It's hard to beat people who have this sort of grip on themselves.

A letter at last from Agnes. She seems in good spirits and I guess she felt foolish, but I'm afraid it's a bit too late now. She should have come through long ago. Well, avoirdupois, old man; write soon again.

10-derly, SAM.

April 5, 1910.

DEAR BUNK:—You talk like a sausage. I'm just as good an American as you are and it's not the girl that's done it, though I'll confess she has put me wise to much.

Unless a fellow is a flathead he'll admit excellence when he sees it. The trouble with me was I started with foolish pride of American omnipotence.

We get plenty sore at Englishmen who dash across America and then write foolish muck for their papers, but we laugh our fool heads off when an American comedian hits England for two weeks and then joshes the daylight out of the English.

Taking it altogether I think we've got them beaten, but that does not mean that we haven't anything to learn. And when it comes to little inconsequential things, it's foolish to quibble. I asked Mildred the other day what the red hoods on the lawyers' gowns were for. She said in the olden days they used to drop the fees in it. Then said I, "Why don't they cut them off now?" "For the same reason," said she, "that you still wear buttons on the back of your frock coat, though you need them no longer to hold up your sword-belt." So when we

start out to josh our neighbors it might be well to take stock of our own fool habits.

She was in town again yesterday and we rode all over town on the top of a bus. It is really the only way to see London. The driver's observations are rich, for the lower classes have a fine humor. You'll see more good humor in a cheap English music hall than in some of the high-priced ones. I have noticed that it's the aristocratic and lower classes that have the wit. Had it out with Mildred about Agnes. She was most generous.

Yours to a cinder, SAM.

April 12, 1910.

DEAR BUNK:—I know you'll be surprised when I tell you that I've about made up my mind to sign up here for another year. After all, old man, this is a pretty good old joint. Of course, we've got 'em beaten to a custard in a lot of things, but it's an even break. When it comes to living—well, they have been one thousand years finding out how, and I guess they've got it. Besides which, *two can live cheaper than one* here. Yes, Bunk, old boy, I'm afraid my sentimental cork is pulled. I won't write much now, for I'm likely to drool, but she is the most naïvely simple little quince you ever saw. None of your smart-Aleck, complex women of the world, nor yet the mushy doll. Eyes —gee! I have every reason to believe that she thinks your little Sam is the grandest boy.

I have a feeling that something is about to happen. Will cable you the news.

Happily yours, SAM.

P. S.—Got a beautiful letter from Agnes. Poor old girl! What shall I tell her?

(CABLE)

April 21, 1910.

Henry Bunker Harris,
New York *Transcript*.
STANG

SAM.

April 21, 1910.

MY DEAR BUNK:—I cabled you my shame this morning. What do you think of that dog Mac? He's been engaged to the Whitehall woman all the time, and I've been making a bally ass of myself for two months!

It was a low-down frame-up on the part of them both, to watch me burn my fingers. Mac said lots of fresh Americans had been cured of their prejudices the same way. But I assure you I'm not cured. I could understand an Englishman resorting to such strategy, and I'm afraid that he has become hopelessly British. But think of a woman being a party to such a low-browed conspiracy! Mac is welcome to his cow-eyed squaw.

It's a bad game, going against foreigners. It has made me realize what a chump I was ever to think of giving up Agnes. After all, the American girls, I guess, are the only ones that are genuine. Agnes is returning next week, and I have secured passage on the same ship. Her last letter to me was more than cordial and I shall be the joyous boy when I can get to her again. Lord! won't I be glad to get back to God's country and again be with people with my shaped head! Well, old ruin, don't write me, for I shall be with you soon. We arrive on the *Kroonland* in New York on May 6th. Please destroy all my letters.

Your homesick little schoolmate,
SAM.

April 21, 1910.

MY DEAR AGNES:—Gee! but I was glad to get your letter! It came like a breath of fresh air into this miasmic old swamp. I feel pretty foolish for treating you in such a brutal way, but that darned Henry chump had me peeved the way he broke into our twoing on the way over. It has taken me nearly a year among these red-nosed dames to make me realize that you are the only girl in the world. Lord! how I despise this place and all that in it is! I have booked on the *Kroonland*, so I shall be with you soon. Then for a dream week beside you in a steamer chair! Write at once to

Your devoted old SAM.

May 25, 1910.

MY DEAR BUNK:—I've just about got strength enough to write you a short note, and all I want to say is, ——*women in all languages*. Agnes writes that she's engaged to that shrimp Henry. Holy cat! What a fine smash in the face after all I've been through! Oh, well, I guess Schopenhauer was right. I am through with them all. England gets on my nerves, and as for America, I never want to see it again. Good-by, Bunk. I'm off for the Continent. I shall go to Paris and take the veil. SAM

THE SOMBRERO OF the MARCHING GOD

by

S. TEN EYCK BOURKE

IF A PICTURESQUE man in a broad-brimmed purple sombrero (which, in all the subsequent proceedings, seemed glued to his head) becomes a flying Juggernaut on Fifth Avenue on a crowded Summer afternoon, it is likely to attract attention in that section of New York City.

It all happened in a snap of the fingers. Captain Hazard, late of the Texas Rangers, and young Colver, his city friend, had stopped to admire the passing parade along Society's thoroughfare, just in front of a team of cobs and a landau drawn up at the curb. Colver, not greatly interested with the familiar sight, was watching a little girl, hardly out of short dresses, who sat in the carriage munching chocolates and staring, like many others, with wide blue eyes at the bronzed Ranger Captain in the high-crowned Mexican hat. The Ranger, fresh from the Southwest, was, or appeared to be, entranced with what he saw.

"It's a bully show! A regular merry-go-round of a circus." Hazard said enthusiastically. "Got more color than a slice off a Mexican mesa. I wonder what all those folks do?" he murmured in a tone of awe. "I tell you, son, you don't see anything like this down in the Pan-Handle country!"

Fifth Avenue seldom saw anything just exactly like Captain Jack Hazard and his purple, silver-slashed sombrero. Even the white-gloved traffic squadsman keeping order on the corner took time to send an approving smile at the big, bronzed Westerner; he recognized the type, having been a cowboy himself doubtless, before graduating through wild Western ways into the Mounted Police.

But something particularly exciting had attracted Hazard's attention; he was staring with face gone suddenly blank.

"Who is she, Bob—who is it?" he asked in a breathless whisper of his companion. "The tall, dark girl, the one in that blue automobile. There, she's looking back now!"

"Oh, I thought you meant little Miss Blue-Eyes here," Colver said, grinning. "Why, that young lady—that's her Highness the Princess; Miss Pettard, daughter of Senator Pettard. 'An' she was his only daughter.' And, by jove, daughter looks as if she'd seen a ghost! I believe you know her—I thought you were looking for somebody, you sinner!"

The spectacular happened then and there. Hazard, his eyes narrowed to pin-points, stood staring after the girl in the automobile, whose somber eyes had blazed upon him with the sudden flare of a rifle. Suddenly he jerked away with an angry cry: "Get back, confound you!" One of the team of cobs, attached to the near-by landau, chafing on his high check and fretful with standing and pawing in all the noise and rush of the Avenue, swung his tortured head sideways and nipped viciously at the most conspicuous thing in sight—the sombrero of the Ranger Captain. The snap was capped by the clap of Hazard's open hand on the horse's muzzle.

The two cobs, as though merely waiting for a chance to break out of restraint, snorted and sprang, jerking the reins from the hand of the sleepy coachman on the box.

Quickly as they leaped, with the menacing clamp of teeth on bits that meant business to all that heard it, the Ranger was still quicker. As the horses plunged, Hazard caught the nearest bridle-rein in his right hand, rose from the ground as though vaulting, as the team jerked him from his feet, and, with a touch of his other hand on the horse's mane he was astride of him and, leaning far forward on his precarious "saddle," clasped his brown hand over the horse's nostrils. Half a dozen frantic jumps the team took, right into the stream of vehicles, but miraculously touching none —then stopped dead, for the Westerner had one horse's wind shut off and had the other by the bridle. Young Colver lightly clapped his hands together; the sound was taken up and rippled along the crowded block, accompanied by relieved, hysterical laughter. The girl in the automobile saw, too, but did not smile.

"It was the hat, y' know, Bob—the brute bit it," Hazard said with a shamefaced grin, as he slipped off, petting the horses. "Tell you the truth, I'm kind o' partial to that old sombrero."

"So I notice," Colver said dryly. "Also I see a traffic cop working this way. Come on, you wild man! You'd better scoot before they find out your real character. What under the sun are you up to, anyhow?" the young New Yorker demanded, more than half seriously, as they slipped away. "First you turn that innocent child's head there, like an animated dime novel, then you play ghost with the Princess, and then you try to engineer a runaway! We'd better take you home, where you'll be safe and won't be scaring ladies and strange horses to death. Come on!"

Away from the scene of his exploits, voluntary and involuntary, Captain Hazard permitted himself to be urged onward. Only once he stopped to slap Colver on the shoulder and laugh. But the laugh was palpably forced, and his face, even under its veneer of tan, was white and drawn, though he promptly pooh-poohed the solicitation of his friend.

During the walk up town the Ranger said little—he was very different from the interested, chattering young fellow, fresh from the Western plains and eager as a spirited horse that's just been unbridled, who had strolled out after luncheon to view the sights of the city.

Colver made no comment, but in his rooms, a few hours later, when he opened a note that was lying on the table with others, he handed it with an amused smile to his silent guest.

"Speaking of coincidences. An invitation from that very Miss Pettard, the Princess, you know, in the automobile. Going to have an Indian Bazaar to-night. One of her fads, curious enough."

"Your're going?" the Ranger asked curtly.

"Catch me! Not unless I'm forced. To one of those things!"

"M'm. Miss Pettard is interested in Indian affairs—missions, I suppose?" He was turning over the card, looking for a possible dating.

"Oh, she gets that from the Senator, her father. He is deep in Mexican mines and railroads and such things, I believe. I told you she came from somewhere in the Southwest, didn't I? Where the purple sombreros come from, very likely. By the way, that's not the kind of Joseph's chapeau you fellows wear in the Texas Rangers, is it?"

The Ranger shook his head, fingering the silver band of the sombrero which he had retained in coming in and still carried under his arm.

"This thing? Oh, it's only a sort of loot, you may say. I got it—uh—from the man that wore it last, you know."

Colver pried the cover from a box of cigars and pushed them across the table. "I should think the associations with it would make keeping the thing somewhat painful," he said sarcastically.

"Tell you the truth, I don't know whether I'd hate to lose it worse than keep it," the Ranger said with a troubled laugh. "I can tell better when—say, Bob, son, you haven't told me whether you'd take me to call on Miss Pettard. Will you?"

"I'm likely to, when you just sit there and twirl that baby blond mustache and give me the laugh when I'm trying to smoke you out about a measly second-hand hat. Hello, what's this?"

He had carelessly picked up the sombrero from the table and turned it over, looking into the crown. In the front of the sweatband was a neat round hole perforated

through the leather, as though made by a heavy rifle or pistol bullet.

"So that's where that fellow got it, eh? A .45 bullet, right between the eyes at that! By Jove, I knew the Texas Rangers were accounted pretty tough propositions!" The troubled face of his guest put a stop to Colver's chaffing. "Do you really want to go?" he asked.

"I do and I don't; it's like the hat," the young Ranger said with a forced laugh. "I'm not much of a society man, you know," he explained hastily. "But, yes! Do you know her well enough to take me, without an invitation?"

"After having been refused myself by the lady three times?" Colver said ruefully. "If that's all that is bothering you, come along, and we'll see if we can rig you out in character for the Princess's observation and entertainment."

There was only one thing, as Hazard said, when they were preparing for the call that evening: He would stand for the "open work clothes," but —he glanced at the purple sombrero, which he had brought with him to the dressing-room.

"Oh, tote along the Injun hat," Colver said carelessly. Then, as the Ranger nodded, satisfied: "I don't know why you freeze to that thing the way you do, but I do know one thing, Captain Jack Hazard of the Texas Rangers! You're a bad man from the West, and a professional gun-fighter, but—you're afraid; good-and-plenty afraid, of something, ever since this afternoon!"

"Horribly!" Hazard said, and shuddered.

It was not the rooms packed with pretty women, with a sprinkling of tolerant, smiling society men, that brought the fear to Captain Hazard when he met them in the home of Senator Pettard. Even if considered as an adjunct to the Mexican booths and the laughing girls in Aztec and Indian costumes, the Ranger was hailed as an acquisition. Even Colver confessed that his services as chaperone were not at all needful.

If Captain Hazard was at all inclined to be bashful he did not show it when introduced into the groups of chattering, laughing girls. To the men the Ranger's sinewy brown hand went out to a ready clasp that steadied and put their tolerant judgment of the Westerner squarely on its feet on solid ground. "Bully chap; nothing deep about him," they said, and then wondered why. "He is a perfect dear!" the ladies said, and presently were calling him "Captain Jack."

It was in the presence of their hostess, the beautiful Miss Pettard, that Hazard first showed signs of trepidation.

Colver, who brought them together after the earlier formalities, had commented on the coincidence, as he called it, of the lady's invitation following so closely upon the unmistakable admiration the Ranger had shown for the Princess on the Avenue, and the tall, dark-eyed girl blushed and then paled. Hazard, in his own mind, thought she looked even more beautiful and regal either way, and sighed. The troubled cloud was on his own face again, though it was eager, and excited, too.

The black, almost somber eyes of the Princess were fixed, with a sort of fascination in them, upon the stalwart form of the frontiersman (he had a flitting thought that she avoided his gaze) and upon the purple sombrero, which he persistently carried, crushed under his arm. The hat he had refused to give up to even the most fascinating of the groups outside.

"It is his *gage de bataille*, Grace, that old headpiece," Colver remarked, following the girl's glance. I wouldn't be surprised if there were a dark and gloomy secret stowed away in that hat. Better pump him about it."

Neither Hazard nor the girl spoke, though the former made a quick movement as though to stop the speaker before he went too far. Colver wandered off to the girls and the auction booths.

"It is a curious color—of course I have seen others, of similar shape, in Mexico——the Southwest." This from Miss Pettard, who had become consistently pale. The hand that held her fan shook like a leaf of a silver oak.

"If you would really care to hear about it —It isn't much, but since Bob has brought it up——" Captain Hazard was watching her closely.

She motioned, without speaking, to the conservatory. Hazard, one step in the rear, watched the tall lissome figure in clinging gown of turquoise-blue with filigree work of silver—the royal colors seemed to flaunt him. He set his teeth.

"Clear grit," he muttered. "By George, they named her right—the Princess. Well, it's got to be done!"

"It was in Mexico—in Sonora?" the Princess reminded him.

Hazard sat silent at first, obstinately staring at the green palms, the hibiscus, the roses in bloom, even the sturdy little sage bushes—the conservatory suggested Mexico and the wide mesas, a silver-domed Elysium over great mountain ranges that melted away into the mysterious unknown.

"Yes, it was in Sonora, just over the Rio Grande," he said. "It was west of Corpus Christi, hiking westward along the bed of the river, that I first met Lieutenant Ramon," the Ranger Captain went on, gathering himself in courage and determination as he fell into his stride.

"Ramon came down by boat, alone of course, from New York—from West Point, you know, after he made his getaway."

"His name you say, was——" The girl's voice was low; his Western colloquialisms seemed perfectly familiar to her.

"I didn't say," Hazard said evenly. "I knew him always as Ramon. I was scouting after him on reports, of course, to head him off and take him back—West Point said he was by descent hereditary chief of the Yaqui Indians, and (I knew that myself) consecrated to lead the tribe in their forthcoming revolt against the Republic of Mexico. That revolution, the fight over Sonora, is perennial, you know, Miss Pettard, and whenever the game is ripe, or when there are enough young Indians grown up to put up any kind of a fight for their old homestead, you might say, the chief's got to show up on deck when he's called upon to do so by the high priests.

"Only, the United States Government couldn't see why, just because of that, he had any right to desert from West Point Military Academy, after he'd forced a duel on a fellow officer and failed to get himself expelled that way. That's just what Lieutenant Ramon did, so the Texas Rangers were ordered to spread out and patrol the river and round him up before he got back to Sonora—Mexican territory, y'know—to make trouble."

Hazard paused, as though to collect his thoughts, but he needed no urging from the silent girl at his side to go on.

"Well, I got him—riding along with his face set for the big blue mountains that were over in the eye of the sun; only, the trouble was, he saved my life from a quicksand right after. Of course you understand I didn't mean to let him get away. I wonder," the Ranger said, as if the thought had only just struck him, "if you are at all interested in all this preambling, or if——"

"Go on, please," the girl said, "You were saying he belonged to his country—he was only doing his duty, as you were doing yours."

Captain Hazard looked a trifle surprised, but nodded.

"That, of course. I forgot you know the Southwest, and so of course you would be interested. Well, anyway, after that little episode, when he roped me out of the pull of the quicksand, we had a talk, Ramon and I. I had to turn him over to the United States army, but seeing there wasn't any particular army post mentioned in my orders, I thought it wouldn't make any particular difference if I just took across the State of Texas to El Paso. He had a girl over El Paso way, he told me."

The Ranger obviously strove to lighten the one-sided conversation. But he dared a glance at the white face bent slightly over the purple, silvered sombrero, which lay between them on the settee, and his jaw tightened. Thenceforward he hurried on doggedly without pause.

"You wouldn't blame her, if you ever saw Lieutenant Ramon. Straight as an arrow Ramon was; a blue-blooded Yaqui, only you'd never know he wasn't pure Anglo-Saxon; just like he was carved out of virgin silver from his own mountains an' got a little burnt in the sun. And you know the pure Yaquis pride themselves on their race, 'way over any just ordinary white man from any country on the globe.

"A West Pointer and up to all the latest military science, he was just the chap those confounded Yaquis over in Sonora wanted to lead 'em in their regular scheduled revolution against progress and civilization—the White Man's civilization.

"As they do once every lifetime of the nation, those Yaquis were ready again to rise against Old Mexico good and hard. A new chief was grown up and trained—that's Ramon, y' know—and half a thousand fighting men all willing and ready. The high-priests arranged all about having the chief trained from babyhood according to tribal law and they never gave it away that he's not straight American. I don't think Ramon himself knew, until the last minute, when they called him to come. And if you

know the Yaquis—the Indians that come down from the fine old Aztecs, Miss Pettard, you'd know there wasn't anything else for Ramon to do but just chuck everything else in the world and come. Obey orders.

"I'll say this: There wasn't any disgrace in what Ramon did, not real disgrace, I mean, nor any disguise or taking advantage of anybody."

"Thank God for that, at least!" the voice was so low that Hazard doubted whether he had heard aright.

"Yes, that's it. 'The Marching God.' That's what the Yaquis call their chief—and Ramon looked the part. Only, the Marching God, who comes back once every lifetime to fight for Sonora, stands no show against the White Man's God—civilization. Railroads run over the mule-trails now, and the hereditary mountains of the Indians are mined for gold and silver. The Yaquis fought with their backs against a 'dobe wall, but a handful of fighting men can't stack up against fourteen million people—even when they have a Lieutenant Ramon to lead 'em.

"Ramon knew that, but he was hereditary chief—*cacique*, they call 'em—just as his father and grandfather were before him. Though I have always believed there was a terrible mistake—Ramon looked like an American, a Westerner, you know. And his father was a soldier of fortune. I believe Ramon was as good an American as you or I. But they just didn't give the boy time to think."

The sticks of the fan snapped in the girl's hand. She had started up with a choked cry. But Captain Hazard was engrossed with something through the open doorway, though he still kept on talking as she sank back on the settee.

"Ramon found the young lady waiting for him at El Paso, or rather, across the river at Juarez—I took him there myself and he met her at the old Cathedral. They had been married over a year; I found that out afterward—when he gave me the slip.

"I think the priests engineered it, when they saw me with Ramon, you know. Anyway, it was a mighty desperate game. It just goes to show what it means to be hereditary chief of the Yaquis when the regular, recurring war's on tap.

"They were talking together, Ramon and the young lady, and she was thick-veiled; and looking at the two of them there in that old Cathedral with the sacrificial stones and things and the Indian congregation in *serapes* and red *rezobas*, at first I couldn't understand how a fine American girl like that could leave her own people—though of course I didn't know whether either of them knew that Ramon was the *cacique* when they married. But I understood when I looked at Ramon—her standing by him, I mean. Anyway, in my heart I believe there was some mistake.

"To get back on the trail: The Mexican Commandant and the Captain of the Rurales—Mexican Mounted Police, you know—came in, while they were talking, and the cry went up—'*Huila, Caciquel*' '*Fly, Chief, fly!*'; an' next minute Ramon was gone. I heard carbine shots, but he got off clean. And next time I saw him—Well. ma'am, next time I saw him was after the fight in the mountains."

It was absolutely silent in the conservatory, but from the next rooms came the sobbing sound of a stringed orchestra.

"I had to borrow a horse to go over there, 'cause somehow Sorrel Billy, my own horse, got lost that night at the Cathedral. I don't know whether I was glad or sorry. Anyway, Billy could show his heels to anything the Rurales rode. I followed in the trail of the Rurales, and the Rurales followed Ramon's trail, to where his fighting men were waiting for him. I wanted my prisoner, I guess, and it was the Rurales' business to round up those troublesome Yaquis, disturbers of peace and progress, and so on. The Rurales beat me to it."

A sound, or feeling, as of the rustle of the Autumn wind through the leaves, came from beside him.

"On top of the mesa we found him—for of course the Indians were cleaned out, just as they always have been and always will be, if it were still possible to keep up that senseless revolt.

"He was still alive, but he couldn't speak. But he could look, and a dying man can say a lot with his eyes." Inwardly, the Ranger cursed the sobbing music. "I asked him the questions, and he answered with his eyes.

"His loving farewell he sent to that girl-wife of his, that nobody'd known about, and I didn't know where to find. If she could have seen him, she'd never 'a' been afraid of death—no, nor anything that might happen after!"

The Ranger paused a moment; then he took up the purple sombrero, holding it in his hands and frowning down upon it.

"This sombrero is the hereditary sign of the chief of the Yaquis—the chief that never dies——" he paused again; "in the war that never dies, as the Indians say, but has gone marching on, just as modern progress and civilization comes marching on its trail to throttle it, every time. It was about the sombrero I asked him, to be honest—it had made so much trouble; but he wanted her to know just how things had been with him, I guessed, and poor fellow, he had nothing else to send her. And now there are no more fighting men among the Yaquis; the last man went out in that fight on the mountains—that is, almost the last."

The music had stopped, and something in his tone startled her. The Ranger felt the girl's eyes upon him, and they were growing wide; he felt her panting as though with fear of him.

"The chief, Ramon, he was alone with me—me and a handful of my men, and Billy, my horse. The Rurales were drifting off—there was nothing else for them to do. So—something came into his face that surprised me, when I spoke of his wife, you know. I noticed then that Ramon was hit high up—there was a fighting chance—and one of my fellows was a fair surgeon. I called him—Steady, girl!"

She was on her feet, her great eyes like stars. He put out his hand, but she brushed it away, almost impatiently, her lips parted and quivering. Like a man making a desperate plunge, he spoke quickly, harshly:

"The States wanted him, you see, and Mexico. And his wife—*she* thought he was dead. It was an awful job, but we did pull him through—we smuggled him. My boys helped me—and Billy, the broncho. On a little ranch in Southern California he lay for weeks, as though dead, but—of course, we had to keep it from everybody."

"Where is he? Oh, kind God, where is he?"

"There, waiting, ma'am! He couldn't move—you'll hardly know him, poor chap. So I came up—I'd heard about you and your hopeless search—just as soon as he could tell me. Only came to-day, and saw you."

"I knew you!" she whispered. "Oh, good, kind man, I knew, and my heart——"

"I s'pose you recognized Ramon's old sombrero, eh? I deserted myself—from the Rangers, you know." He looked down upon her, trying to smile whimsically. She rocked on his breast, moaning—strange little sounds that sent a sudden fear through the rough plainsman, until she looked up, straightening away from him, with her hands on his broad shoulders, her beautiful head back, her face radiant in the glory of great joy—and decision.

"I must go to him, now, at once!" she said, and her eyes lifted to heaven.

"Why, of course," he said simply. "The poor old chap's just dying to see you—I had to put a guard over him. And, Miss—Mrs. Ramon, about squaring things for what he done—Well, your father's a United States Senator, isn't he? And maybe we can prove what I told you about Ramon. As for me——" he picked up the purple sombrero, tossing it with boyish abandon high into the air—"I'm goin' to tote this old thing out into the other room there and auction it off to the highest bidder! It'll never make any more mischief—anyway, it'll never get on the head of another Marching God, that old bullet-proof sombrero!"

And the Ranger Captain's eyes twinkled as they took in the tall slim figure standing in attitude of silent prayer before him. Whatever missions thiefs and common men might have, at least he had carried out his own self-imposed mission to his perfect and entire satisfaction, and that along strange and difficult trails into the lair of civilization.

Finished Business

A new stunt in smuggling

By Granville Fortescue

A SMILE lurked behind the lips of the secretary to the Third Assistant Secretary of the Treasury as he passed over a certain letter to his chief, saying, "This one is a bit off the beaten track. What instructions, sir?"

The Third Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, a bright light from Boston, took the sheet of gaily-headed hotel writing-paper to read as follows:

ENGLISH SPOKEN
ELECTRIC LIGHT
LIFT

GRAND HOTEL
EUROPA
Boulevard des Batignolles,
Brussels.

Oct. 2, 190–.

To the Secretary of the Treasury,
Customs Department,
Treasury, Washington, D. C.
U. S. A.

Honorable Sir:

Because I feel it my duty and, in case Mr. Skinner should forget to declare it, I beg to bring to your attention the fact that Mr. A. Willing Skinner of New York, U. S. A., yesterday purchased from C. Callaux y Cie., 8 Rue Palais Royal, Brussels, a diamond necklace for which he paid more than one million francs (over two hundred thousand dollars). I know that he paid more than stated price, for I offered $200,000 for the same necklace myself. Mr. Skinner is a friend of mine and I would feel sorry for him if he should fail to declare his necklace when he arrives in the United States and thereby get himself into serious trouble.

I would feel very badly if anything happened to Mr. Skinner.

He sails from Bremen for New York within a month and if I can be of any further assistance to you, I shall be much pleased.

I remain, honorable sir,

Yours truly,
ARTHUR B. STRAIGHT.

P. S.—I understand it is customary to recompense those furnishing this character of information in proportion to the sum saved the Government. If it should happen that I assist in saving money for the Government, I trust you will see I am properly rewarded.

A. B. S.

The Third A. S. T., with the superior
nile of the young man who understands
ıman nature, said, "Mr. Straight's sense
duty is no doubt acute, but the unkindly
itical might be led to suggest that he is
ıre because friend Skinner beat him in a
ırgain. To quote the immortal words of
eorge Monroe, 'Be that as it may,' we will
vestigate."

The young man took up a blue-bound
ook from his desk and, turning to his secre-
ry, asked, "Do you remember who covers
russels?"

"Special Agent Williams, sir," was the
ady answer.

"Well, wire Williams to verify the facts
this letter, send us a description of Skin-
er and when we may expect him on our
ıores. Kemp, the new collector in New
ork, can then prepare a glad 'Welcome to
ır city' if memory fails Mr. Skinner when
e makes out his declaration-slip."

So it was that a letter, written in a second-
ass foreign hotel three thousand miles
vay by a small man, rather fat, with a
eavy black mustache and beady eyes that
ıve him a look of being some relation to a
rret, touched the button that moved the
ımplicated machinery of a highly special-
ed department of the most modern system
government to his selfish ends. The
resident, opening the Seattle Fair, touch-
g a telegraph-key in the White House, was
ementary in his work compared to this.

The first effect of this curious epistle was
carefully worded cipher dispatch forwarded
Williams, Special Agent, Brussels, which
return produced a concise code letter to
e effect that:

C. Callaux y Cie., 8 Rue Palais Royal, Brussels,
ve recently sold a diamond necklace, listed as fol-
vs: Necklace of diamonds consisting of 462 white
ımes, matched, sizes varying one and a quarter to
e carats, platinum settings, special clasp, cata-
ıue price, francs 1,500,000. . . . that an accurate
scription of the purchaser has not been obtained
ıs far, but it is known he is a prominent diamond
ıker of Maiden Lane, and a detailed account of his
ysical characteristics will follow as soon as ob-
ned.

This information was filed with the first
ter and New York was notified to expect
r. A. Willing Skinner with diamonds.
ıen, in a subconscious way, the young wise
ın who assisted in the Treasury was men-
lly grateful that kind fate in the person of
e Arthur B. Straight had put him in the
position of being directly instrumental in saving his Government a large sum of money, thereby proving the superior intelligence of his chief, who had selected him from a large number of highly recommended aspirants to the position of Third Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

Within the week another letter arrived to drive all abstract consideration of motives from his mind and he brought all his mental forces focused to a single end. This letter read:

ELECTRIC LIGHTS
AMERICAN BAR

GRAND HOTEL
DE PARIS
6 *Rue Montabor,*
Brussels.

Oct. 5, 190–.

To the Secretary of the Treasury,
Customs Department, Treasury,
Washington, D. C.

Honorable Sir:

Since my last letter, I am sorry to say, I have come by some information my duty as an American citizen compels me to impart to you. Mr. A. W. Skinner, of whom I wrote under date of October 2d, I have reason to believe is going to try and pass in the necklace of diamonds, valued at more than two hundred thousand dollars, *without paying the just and fair duty demanded by the Government.* I tell you this as I am extremely opposed to smuggling and have advised Mr. Skinner against trying to do anything so foolish. Also I must tell you that Mr. Skinner will not have the diamonds concealed in his trunk or in his baggage in any secret way, but he will *hide them under a porous plaster* which is worn on the small of his back. How I came by this information I am not at liberty to state, but I may tell you that I am in a position to know a great deal about Mr. Skinner, also please under no circumstances would I like him to know that I am writing you. He sails on October 20th on S. S. *Kaiser George the III*, from Bremen, being a small man with a black mustache. If any reward should accrue, because of action taken on above information, please forward the same to me care Royal Hotel, New York.

Thanking you in advance, I am,
Yours truly,
ARTHUR B. STRAIGHT.

P S.—Please do not let my name get out.
A. B. S.

A chance for bettering his record for wiseness was what really prompted the blond young man from Boston to extreme interest in this case, although, if questioned, he would have denied that this was his motive and claimed that he only responded to duty's call.

"Take this!" said the Secretary to his stenographer in such a short tone that it brought that young man's pencil to pad on the instant.

"To the Collector of the Port of New York, etc., etc., This Department is in receipt of information——" And there followed, in well-rounded phrases, an epitome of Mr. Straight's two letters, with the results of Mr. Special Agent Williams' independent investigations. Any one reading this letter could not help but be impressed by it as showing the wonderful efficiency of that particular bureau of the Treasury Department and the subtle cleverness of its sub-chief. Perhaps if Mr. Straight had been able to read it he might have felt that his small share of suggestion was slighted, for, strange to relate, his name in no way appeared in the text. The epistle ended by saying that more exact details of Mr. Skinner's personal appearance would be furnished later.

"Wire Williams to get on the job and send us a life-like sketch of Skinner," said the Third A. S. T., smiling as he pictured to his mind the sad disillusionment awaiting the deceptive diamond broker and the kind words of congratulation his own chief would surely speak to him as a tribute to his sagacity.

The good ship *Kaiser George the III* sailed on schedule with that promptness that is characteristic of German ships and chefs, and those who studied the passenger-list would have found the name Skinner under the S's. Mr. Skinner occupied a modest single stateroom and had little baggage. A new trunk and a square hat-box marked A. W. S. held most of his belongings. He was common in looks and atmosphere except for his eyes, which held that shrewdness so often seen in the eyes of high financiers and captains of industry. A small man, rather fat, with a heavy black mustache, thus one might casually describe him, but the day he sailed from Bremen a dispatch was sent, containing about one hundred words giving such a complete summary of his physical idiosyncrasies that it would have revealed him to the most superficial observer, and the boys on the dock in Hoboken could scarcely be classified as superficial observers. Even his liking for black-and-white check waistcoats was not unnoticed by the careful Williams, S. A.

Mr. Skinner, being that type that is inconspicuous by its presence, was little noticed in the smoking-room, where he spent much of his waking time, but on the arrival of the liner off quarantine any one who was interested might have observed that a short, dark man, wearing a black-and-white check waistcoat, smoked long cigars rather nervously. It is the saying of the inspectors that old travelers are ever the quickest to get their declaration-slips, so Mr. Skinner must have traveled some, for he was almost the first to find a courteous official ready to examine his trunk and bags, this courteous official being followed by two square-shouldered gentlemen who seemed to take a leisurely interest in the passengers struggling in the letter S section.

"I have nothing dutiable," said Mr. Skinner in a convincing tone, as he opened his baggage, but his hands trembled a bit with the keys when he added, "You can search."

The customs official poked perfunctorily in the trunk and hat-box while the two square-shouldered gentlemen advanced to place themselves on either side of the traveler. One of them caressingly passed his hand across the small of the stooping man's back as he bent over his trunk. This assistant deputy inspector winked at his companion and said, "Just step in here, mister. My friend and me would like to have a few words in private with you." Then, turning to the customs examiner, he added, "That's all right, George, you can pass that stuff. This gentleman will be out in a minute," and led the frightened Skinner away, protesting as he went.

In the privacy of the searching-room they developed an interest in the symptoms of Mr. Skinner's weak back worthy of doctors with their first patient. In vain did the little man protest that he was suffering from trouble in the lumbar region. "Tell that to the Danes," was the answer, and it is to be feared that the two pseudo doctors were not over-gentle in tearing the large, firmly attached porous plaster from their victim's affected part. Indeed, his shout of pain rose in protest to the guards, mingling with their words of pleasure, as the perforated black cloth came off and a necklace of wonderful diamonds fell to the floor.

One of the searchers picked it up quickly to examine it, smiling the while, and the very stones gave out a light and sparkle under the electric lamp as if shining their joy at release from such an uncomfortable and unworthy hiding-place. Skinner fell on his knees:

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," he cried, "this

is all a mistake! I will pay the duty. Please don't take my diamonds, my dear diamonds!" and the tears fogged his eyes while his voice broke.

"We will take charge of this little keepsake," said one of the deputy customs inspectors unsympathetically. "On your way, little near-smuggler, and don't do it again!" he added, as he held up the diamonds to the light.

"Send for the jewel-appraiser," said his companion, while Skinner was struggling into his clothes.

The little diamond merchant was a lifelike lithograph of misery as he returned to the dock to collect his impedimenta and put them on a taxi. The sense of his loss weighed heavily on him, for his voice broke as he told the driver to go to the Royal Hotel in a hurry.

Then, as he lost himself in the engulfing streams that pour into the heart of a big city, his expression changed and, slipping his hand into his hat-box, his fingers closed over a case carefully concealed in the lining. He chuckled, and the smile of the man who wins the last jack-pot sparkled in his eyes.

The Government jewel-appraiser was busy that day and hours passed before he was led into the presence of the diamond necklace that had been confiscated. When the sparkling jewels came beneath his eyes, he spoke his admiration plainly, "Wonderful, wonderful," he exclaimed and, fumbling in his waistcoat pocket, he produced a watchmaker's magnifying-glass and screwed it into his right eye. "How they do it is one of the secrets of the age. Now, to anybody but an expert——"

The faces of all who stood round him — for the fame of the find had brought all the force to the examination — wore comical looks of surprise and disappointment.

"What, are they phony? Fakes?" almost shouted one square-shouldered young man, he who had first felt the porous-plaster.

"Yes," came the quiet reply, "but wonderfully done. A true work of art," added the admiring appraiser. "Now, if you will look——"

But the sleuth had not stopped to admire the beauty of the workmanship. In a moment he had mounted a taxicab and was on his way to police headquarters, where he enlisted the aid of the chief, but it was late that night when, from information furnished by the house detective, he entered the lobby of the Royal Hotel, hoping to find the illusive Skinner. It was a wild goose chase he knew, for he had no claim on the man now, but he had put over bluffs before and perhaps—anyway he would try.

Fate favored him, for seated in one of the deep leather chairs that lined the walls of the gaily lighted corridor he saw his victim, correctly dressed in a smart dinner-coat, with a large fat cigar encircled by a fat gold-and-red band protruding from his fat lips, being the sign of a prosperous one who has done himself well. Without a moment's hesitation the deputy marshal strolled up to his prey and said in a low tone, meant to frighten: "You waltz with me, Mr. Skinner, and I want that diamond dog-collar you smuggled in your trunk, and I want it quick! You thought you were foxy with your fake ones, but you better give us over the real thing and don't make any trouble!"

It was all spoken with a firmness that should have brought results, but the man addressed only blew a long whiff of smoke from his cigar and, after a pause, answered:

"You must be mistaken, my friend. My name is not Skinner."

The look in the speaker's eye convinced the sleuth his bluff was called and, as he knew the rules of the game, he dropped out.

"I beg your pardon, I got you mixed up with somebody else," he said, and he walked over to the desk.

Then, more out of curiosity than for future reference, he glanced down the list of arrivals, asking the clerk the name of the little dark man sitting in the big chair, indicating the person he had just been talking with. The clerk glanced towards the person indicated and answered readily, "Him? Why, that's Mr. Straight, Arthur B. Straight, one of our regular guests. Always takes the parlor suite on Thirty-third Street. He arrived to-day."

"Stung!" was the mental answer of the detective, though his lips framed a phrase of thanks for the information.

And the next day, in Washington, a young wise man from Boston, who filled the spacious chair of Third Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, mused on the mutability of mundane affairs and recalled the shrewd saying of a Scotch poet concerning the schemes of mice and men, while he locked away certain letters in a drawer marked "Finished Business."

The Mutiny on the Tonga Belle

by H·D·Couzens

"MUTINY!" said the Mate; "no sir, it *ain't* common, for a fact. The mutton-heads that follows the sea nowadays ain't got sand enough for them performances. For the matter of that there never *was* much of that sort of thing, though you read a good many yarns about it by men with pipe-dreams of the sea who never even smelled the inside of a forecastle. Why? Well, because seamen ain't bloodthirsty pirates in the first place; they're more like sheep. A mate or a master can haze a crew of seasoned old flat-feet till they yell murder; he can starve 'em on rotten grub till their teeth drop out, and though they'll kick like Sam Hill and sometimes behave nasty when they get ashore, they don't come pirootin' around aft, Captain Kidd fashion, to heave the officers over the side and take charge. You see, there ain't any *sense* in the thing on a well-regulated ship, even if the officers are a little rough. What can a gang of ignoramuses like that do with a ship when they've got it?"

"Couldn't they run it on their own account—say the officers died, or something like that?" I asked, though I knew better.

The mate looked at me pityingly. "Humph!" he said. Then he went on, slowly, almost painfully, as one would explain to a child, emphasizing his remarks by tapping his forefinger on his palm. "A sailor lives on a ship from port to port. It's his home, so to speak. While he's aboard he has certain work to do day after day. You might say it's a humdrum sort of a life; and when anything out of the regular routine happens he's flabbergasted.

"Now I was on one ship where the mate was killed. It was done accidental-like by one of the men in the heat of argument. It was the roughest ship I was ever in, but did the crew come hell-roarin' aft to finish the job? No. They stood around on one foot like a lot o' whipped curs, scared stiff.

"Here's this boy of ours that tried to knife the old man in the donkey-house. I simply took the knife away from him and smashed his face, perfectly peaceable, and the crew never made a move, though our old man ain't what you'd call popular. He was their skipper, just the same, and the boss of the ship, and only for me they'd have killed the Jap.

"Suppose a crew does take charge—what happens? To lay her ashore somewheres takes a knowledge of navigation. As for making port with some sort of a yarn like you say—" the Mate spat dryly—"huh! You don't know sailor-men! Every man-jack would be afraid of all the others giving him the double-cross. You see, the brains of a ship is all aft. If any one forrard had brains he wouldn't be there. A sailor is nothing but a common laborer, and he can no more run a ship than a hod-carrier can build a house. Put him on the quarter-deck and he's as much at home as a pig in a parlor. Now there *have* been times when the men turned rusty in a body. I've seen that myself, but no good come of it."

The Mate and I were sitting in the Shipping Commissioner's office. One of the men on his vessel, a Japanese, had developed homicidal mania and been brought ashore badly damaged. The Mate had affixed his signature to the necessary papers and I had

drawn him into conversation regarding disturbances aboard ship, but to my despair he insisted in treating the subject technically, without imagination, which he did not appear to possess.

He had a stern, uncompromising glance, a stormy eye, and at some time a knife had laid his cheek open to the bone, leaving a frightful scar, but his voice was mild and pleasing, and I was not without hope.

"Have a cigar?" said I, offering my case.

The Mate selected one with care, lighted it, and sat silently inspecting the smoke with the air of a connoisseur.

"How about the mutiny you saw yourself?" I ventured. "Was it caused by bad food or ill-treatment?"

"Neither," said he. "It was caused by the tactics of a gang of cutthroats. They weren't seamen or it wouldn't have happened, and the treatment and grub they got was altogether too good for them. It was stopped by the bravest man I ever saw or heard tell of.

"You see, as I was saying, seamen, as a rule, don't think of anything more desperate than deserting, and as they usually jump ship with pay coming to 'em, some skippers would just as lief they'd do it as not. Sort of encourage 'em, so to speak. But down around the South Seas it's different. There's a lot of men knocking about there that are bad clear through. I don't mean the ordinary, casual kind of badness; I mean the kind a rope or a bullet between the ribs is the only cure for. That's the kind of a man Black Jack Mahoney was.

II

"ABOUT twenty years ago it was. I was a mere kid then, though I'd been to sea for five or six years, and, being in Sydney, I got a notion in my head I'd like to see the Islands, and I shipped in the *Tonga Belle*, 'Lonzo Daggett, master. The pay and grub were both good and there ain't much discipline aboard them Island traders, so the life was an easy one. But this one voyage cured me.

"The *Belle* was a big topsail schooner. The Lord knows how old she was! Her hull was as sound as a dollar, but the old man was mighty close in the matter of paint and cordage, and she was always dingy and her rigging a mass of splices, so she looked her age, whatever it was. Daggett knew about everybody in Polynesia and was said to have a fortune laid away. He was a goat-faced old Yankee from New Bedford, with long, white whiskers; a fine sailor, full of clear grit and, for all his closeness, one of the whitest, squarest men I ever met.

"Every reef and channel in the South Seas was all mapped and charted in that wise old head of his, and the way he would walk that old hooker of his through the coral with breakers booming all around and the horseheads close aboard would make a man's hair stand up. It did mine more than once.

"Our crew was the usual mixture you find aboard a trader, part Kanakas and part white riff-raff, ex-convicts and such, but on this voyage we had a worse outfit than common. When I looked around that forecastle I felt lonesome. There were four Kanakas and six white men besides me—more hands than we needed to work the schooner—but two of the Kanakas had shipped down on the last voyage on condition that the Captain take them back home the next trip. The six white men looked as if they'd come straight off the rock-pile, and it didn't take me long to find out that every one of them had a dirty record. They took pride in blowing about past performances, and some of them poisoned the air of the forecastle.

"The Second Mate, who bunked forrard with us, was a felon named Jem Mellish. He talked less than the rest, and for that reason I put him down as the worst of the lot. He had real influence with the men, which was more than Mr. Blaisdell, the Mate, had. Blaisdell was a remittance-man, an easy-going British chap with a red nose, a long mustache like a Skye-tarrier, and an everlasting souse. He was a friend of the old man's and interested in the cargo on some sort of a lay, but he was a poor sailor and not up to handling the jail-birds forrard. I've seen them spit over the side and grin when he'd give an order.

"Well, we loafed about among the Islands for a couple of months, taking in copra, trepang, and occasionally a little shell, till finally we put in at Butaritari, in the Gilberts, and there we found Bully Hayes high and dry on the beach.

"Ever hear of Bully Hayes? Yes? I thought you might; there was a lot of talk about him at one time when three Governments were aching to string him up. He had lost his brig somewhere in the Carolines

and cruised about in his boats looking for another till he had fetched up at Butaritari. Here he chased the traders off the beach, confiscated their copra and, along with that, had bullied the old king out of the rest of the crop. So here he was, the sheds full to bursting, waiting for some one to come along and take him off, and gin and siva-dances and all kinds of indecencies going on on the beach day and night.

"I suppose you've got the usual idea about Hayes—that he was a real genteel, big-hearted sort of a pirate, turning a shady trick with one hand and dealing out generously with the other, and just full of what they call chivalry and fair play. I've heard a lot of stuff like that, and it beats —— how ready some people are to fit a halo around a successful murderer or thief, especially if he's educated and has a front.

"But you can take it from me that Hayes was a cutthroat—a dirty blackguard and hypocrite who would double-cross his best friend. They say he used to cry in his cabin sometimes when he'd lost his temper and butchered somebody, but my argument is that the man who cuts your throat ain't your friend, even if he weeps about it afterward. Hayes stood six feet four and weighed about two hundred and thirty, and at that he used to delight in beating some trader half his size into a jelly. So much for the fair-play part of it. He may have had sand, as they say, but Billy Englehart—well, wait, I'm getting off my course.

"Daggett smelled trouble from the looks of things on the beach, so we anchored well out in the lagoon and hove short on the cable. Presently Hayes came out in a whale-boat, the crew half-drunk and covered with wreaths of flowers.

" 'Ahoy, 'Lonzo!' he sang out. 'The old *Belle's* a sight for sore eyes. Knew her the minute I set eyes on them dirty pocket-handkerchiefs of yours.'

"The old man laughed. 'Yes,' says he, 'most every one knows them tawpsails. Where's the brig, Bully?'

" 'Under twelve fathoms of green water,' says Hayes, stepping aboard. 'Cap'n, shake hands with Mr. Englehart, my supercargo.'

"Englehart was a short, stocky man with queer light-gray eyes and a general business-like, well-set-up look about him.

" 'Billy Englehart!' says the old man, shaking hands. 'Why, I've known him ever since he was knee-high to a shrimp! How's the opium market, Billy?'

"Englehart grinned, shook hands with Blaisdell and they all went into the cabin.

"They had brought a couple of pigs, some chickens, fish and fruit, and the crew of the whale-boat helped us get them aboard, but while they all had gin on the deck forrard I hung around the cabin skylight, kid-like, to hear what was going on.

" 'Now, 'Lonzo,' says Hayes, 'you've come along just in time. I've got all the copra in sight and you can take it along with Billy Englehart and me. Of course it will be share and share and you'll be well paid, and as for Billy and me, we're dog-tired of the beach, and it will be God's blessing to set foot in a civilized port again.'

" 'I'm full up, Bully,' says Daggett. 'Haven't room for more than a ton or two. Ferguson here was my man and I calculated to get in his stuff and weigh for Sydney.'

" 'Ferguson!' says Hayes. 'Ho, ho! He's back there in the ferns and I've got his crop. Now see here, 'Lonzo! Hook or crook, we've got to get out of here! Better take us along!'

" 'I'll take you and glad to do it,' says Daggett, 'and make a deck-load of what stuff I can, but that's the best I can do. I'll promise to send you a ship, though, before long, and go out of my way to do it.'

"Hayes sat awhile, mighty thoughtful. Twice he looked up right into my eyes, his eyebrows all puckered up, and didn't see me.

" 'Well, so be it!' he says at last. 'Of course we can't go and leave all this stuff, but I do need a ship mighty bad. Billy, we'll hit the beach for a while longer.'

"With that they all came on deck.

" 'By the way, 'Lonzo,' says Hayes, 'that copra of Ferguson's—I'll send it aboard for you and take him his trade if he'll come down for it. I've enough on hand without it.'

"' Why, thankee!' says Daggett; 'I take that mighty civil of you, Bully. I'll certainly send you a ship.'

"' Oh,' says Hayes, laughing, 'I don't intend to let you off with it for nothing. I've a man here who's homesick. You can give him a passage to Apemama. It's Black Jack Mahoney.'

"Well, they went ashore and in an hour or so there came out a couple of boat-loads of copra and our passenger, and of all the

tough hands I've ever laid eyes on he was the toughest. He was a great big hulk of a man with hair all over him and burned as black as a native. He carried himself stoop-shouldered-like, and his long, hairy arms hung down, thumbs in, like a monkey. Hardly any of his face showed through the mat of hair and beard, and the whites of his eyes were all red. He was tattooed all over in front, but his back was criss-crossed with horrible welts that showed blue-white against the brown of his hide, and he wore a girdle of grass around his middle. This scarecrow was Black Jack Mahoney. With him was his *fafine*, a fat Samoan woman with a hidjeous shock of lime-bleached red hair all fluffy around her fat, wrinkled face. Up to that time I'd never seen a white man like Black Jack, and at first I thought he was a joke. Afterward I used to get cold inside just to look at him.

III

"WE GOT under way without losing any time. I think Daggett was glad to get away from the neighborhood of Bully Hayes. Nobody paid much attention to Black Jack, who had changed his grass skirt for pajamas. He had brought a couple of cases of gin aboard and would sit all day with his back against a skylight swilling square-face with a dead, fishy look in his red eyes, singing the most indecent Kanaka songs I ever heard of. The Samoan woman sat beside him, rolling brown paper cigarettes and waiting on him hand and foot. But I noticed two things myself.

"One was that he and Jem Mellish were old friends and shook hands when he first came aboard; the second was that while Black Jack seemed to be pig-dog-drunk all the time he was chumming with Mellish on the quiet. It was a word slipped here and there, and sometimes a mumbling talk in the night watch. Then, one by one, the other hands seemed to be drawn into it and there were a good many little talks over the rail and a deal of whispering in the bunks. The old man and the Mate never noticed, and you better believe I didn't like it. I was only a kid, mind you, and I began to have bad dreams full of the hairy, rummy face of Black Jack Mahoney.

"I started out of some sort of a nightmare of this kind one night at about seven bells. We'd been tearing through one of those short tropical hurricanes since the night before and I had turned in dog-tired and all standing, but I jumped broad awake, eyes and ears both wide open, and heard a voice say in a whisper, low but very clear: 'Why didn't Hayes do the job himself?'

"'Why,' says another voice—Black Jack's; he was sitting on a chest beside the lower bunk—'it's too much touch-and-go there on the beach with the Kanakas all about for one thing, and it's Billy Englehart for another. Englehart's a friend o' Daggett's, and afeared some one gets killed. He won't stand for no rough-house with Daggett—Englehart won't—so Bully sends me aboard to do the job with your help. He thinks a heap o' you, Jem, that he does. "No unnecessary violence," says he, "unless," says he, "they resist," says he. Mark you that! "*Unless they resist!*" and he winks, hearty and jovial, like he always is, is Bully.'

"Just then came the call for the watch, and Black Jack went aft through the bulkhead door. I did a lot of yawning and stretching, but I was shaking just the same and thinking hard, for it was plain there was going to be action before long and I had no idea what part was coming to me in the melly.

"I stood leaning over the rail, trying to think it out when a naked arm slid around my neck, a big, hairy paw closed over my mouth, and I saw the bushy head of Black Jack close to mine.

"'Kid!' says he, in a gin-soaked whisper, 'kid, we're goin' to take the ship! Hear me?'

"I nodded. I nodded real quick, because I felt a knife-point right under my left armpit.

"'An' you're goin' to help us, kid. Is that right? What?'

"I nodded again.

"'At daylight,' he went on, 'stand by to collar the Mate. I'll take care of the old man. An' mind, son—' his hand slipped down to my throat and the knife-point jabbed in about an eighth of an inch, 'mind, now, one wrong move and you're shark-bait!'

"Was I scared? I was scared sick and cold and forlorn in my inside. There was four miles of blue water under our keel and no place to run to. That jab with the knife had done one thing, though—it had made me desperate, and I made up my mind

to get word to the cabin if I could. I hadn't no virtuous ideas about the right and wrong of what was going to happen, mind you, only I wasn't a cutthroat or a pirate and was enough of a sailor to have a lot of confidence in the old man and the policy of standing in with the officers.

"When it came my trick at the wheel luck seemed to come my way, for though it was Mellish's watch, the Mate himself came on deck and, after a look around, strolled aft and looked at the card.

"'Mr. Blaisdell,' says I, quick, in a whisper, 'look out for trouble, sir!'

"He looked aloft, then all around the horizon in a dazed kind of way, then at me, pulling at his long mustache. 'Trouble?' says he, his face all puckered up; ''sno trouble 'tall. Fair wind. Wha's matter o' you?'

"I could have mashed his face in! Drunk! Pickled to the eyes, and here was I risking my precious life for the likes of him! Then I thought of the old man and let her run up a couple of points, careless-like. 'Steady there!' says he. 'Keep her off, you ijjut!'

"'Aye, aye, sir!' I sang out; then, in a whisper again: 'Look out for trouble forrard, sir; at daylight. Tell the Captain, *please!*'

"He looked at me again, pulling his fool mustache. 'You're drunk!' says he. 'Too bad! Able seaman! Keep her steady!' and he stumbled off below, leaving me raging inside like a lunatic.

"Well, I'd done my best; all I could do now was sit tight and save my own skin. When I was relieved, the men had gin forrard and you better believe I took my share, and it had no more effect on me than so much water. That was the longest night I've ever been through. There was no sleep for any of us.

"At last, after years, it seemed, the Mate came on deck, blear-eyed and yawning and shaky on his pins. There was a thin streak in the east and a sickly gray shine over everything; a morning calm, and the sails were slatting and the jaws creaking. The men were in little groups in the waist of the ship, taut as a new shroud. As for me, I wanted to yell, to shriek, to do something; I was crazy mad at being so helpless.

"Then it all happened, swift and sudden as the flicker of a gull's wing.

"The cook was rattling the pans in the galley. The Mate walked aft to the binnacle, the helmsman clutching the spokes so tight his knuckles were white, and looking at him with his eyes bugged out as if he were a ghost. There was a yell from the cabin —not a big, husky yell, but the shivery cry of a weak-voiced old man—then a curse from Daggett, and: 'Hands off, you drunken scum of the beach!' then a sickening, shuddery groan.

"The Mate jumped for the skylight. At the same time the helmsman left the wheel, quick as a flash, and with one spring landed between the Mate's shoulders. The men swarmed over them.

"The Mate put up a game fight. He fired one shot and Mellish staggered back, both hands clutching his stomach. '——!' he says, and fell over on to the skylight. The Mate had got to his knees, the men clawing and kicking at him, when Black Jack ran on deck, swinging a long knife on his dirty pajamas. Grabbing a pin from the rail, the beast brought it down with a full-arm swing on Blaisdell's forehead, smashing his skull like an egg.

"It was all over in two shakes. Here lay the Mate, his blood pouring into the scuppers; in the cabin the old man lay across the table with a knife in his ribs, and Mellish squirmed and blasphemed on the skylight. I stood there gaping, with the Kanaka boys, who took no part in the muss. The whole world was changed. I had never seen a man killed before; I was only a lad, alone on this ship with that spawn of hell! I was in a stupor-like, paralyzed—and heartsick for that poor old white-haired man dead across the cabin table. I looked around at the lonely sea and the sun that had just come up as though I had never seen them before. Then I shook all over and got deathly sick.

"The men swarmed into the cabin and broke out the old man's brandy, then the stores. They stuffed their pockets with tinned salmon and pickles and raisins as though it were their last chance on earth to gorge themselves. Mellish died, cursing horribly; no one paid the least attention. They went on with their rioting and looting as if it were a picnic or a bean-feast. They were all drunk presently and parading around the deck, woman-fashion, wrapped in Turkey-red trade-print and roaring obscenities. Then Black Jack found the money-chest and dealt the coin around, left to right, like a deck of cards, holding his knife in his teeth, for the greedy dogs couldn't resist making snatches out of turn.

"While this was going on something caught me by the shoulder. It was Black Jack's Samoan woman and she says in my ear: 'More better look sharp! Bimeby plenty wind!'

"Sure enough, it was banking up to windward. I looked aloft at that spread of sail and thought what would happen if it came on to blow. Then I got the Kanaka boys away from the brandy, cuffed them fairly sober, and between us we lowered away the foresail, clewed up the topsails, double-reefed the mainsail and bent on the storm-jib. That left her ready for any dirty weather. Then we got the bodies overside and cleaned up the cabin. After that I must have collapsed, I guess.

"Anyway, my mind's not clear as to all that happened that day nor the next nor the next. I know it blew like blazes, and me and the Kanaka boys ran the ship. The sail-birds lay around either dead-drunk or playing seven-and-a-half for the gold-pieces and fighting over it.

IV

'THE third day we got the trades back and the sun came out, and where we were the Lord only knew. Not a man-jack aboard could shoot the sun. I could work a course fairly well by dead-reckoning, but with what had happened I was all of a snarl with nothing to reckon from. There was a good stiff sailing-breeze on, and all of a sudden some one sings out:

"'Sail ho!'

"That struck 'em all cold sober. I never saw such a lot of scared cutthroats before or since. It was a bark, beating up out of the sou'west. We set all sail and ran, and it must have looked —— funny to the men on that bark to see us turn tail that way, but running was the *Belle's* best point of sailing, and we took no chances.

"I got the charts out of the locker and tried to make some head or tail of things from our last observation, but it wasn't no use. If we hadn't been scared of the rope around our necks we could have beat up, hailed the bark and got her latitude, but there wasn't no thought of that. The best thing I could do was make a jab at the chart like blind-man's-buff and lay out a course from that to Butaritari. I was willing enough to get back to Bully Hayes now; the quicker the better. The thought of wandering about in 'Lonzo Daggett's old schooner with that crew aboard wasn't wholesome. The bark had scared us all into seeing that, and Black Jack was willing enoug hto take my course.

"We kept it for three days and then there was a smell of land. Yes, sir, a *smell* of land! I don't know as it's a real smell, but if you'd been on many deep-water voyages you'd know what I mean. It may be a hundred miles off or more, but you suddenly get a hunch that there is land there, and there usually is.

"There were birds, too, and away off near the horizon there appeared a little black speck. It might have been drift or it might have been a boat, and it was right in our course, but nobody paid any attention to it till we were close up and saw that it was a native canoe with a man in it.

"He was paddling toward us for all he was worth and when he was within hailing distance he dropped his paddle and stood up.

"All of a sudden Black Jack jumped up and yelled as if he was shot: 'By ——! It's Billy Englehart!'

"'Ahoy there!' says the man in the canoe. 'Aboard the *Belle!*'

"Great, big, hairy Black Jack began to shake and froth at the mouth. 'Put her over, there! Hard over, —— you! *Run that man down!*'

"He grabbed the wheel and spun it round till the schooner headed straight for the canoe.

"Englehart didn't try to get out of her way; he stood there like an image, with the schooner tearing toward him, and never made a move. Black Jack was cursing and raving, I couldn't understand why. We heard the smack of the canoe against the stem, and Black Jack dropped the wheel and sprang forward. We were all looking over the rail to see the last of Englehart. The splinters of the canoe swept by in the froth, and then from over the bobstay, where he had grabbed hold, Englehart swung a leg over the bowsprit shroud, balanced on the bowsprit, and jumped on deck.

"Mahoney, his knife out, had run forrard. He brought up so short he almost fell backwards, for Englehart held in each hand a big black revolver. He stood there, cool, business-like, somehow as if he belonged there and *ought* to be there. Maybe you know what I mean. There's a cocksureness in some men that makes everything they do

seem just the right thing in the right place —the sort of men you trust to and take chances. That was the kind Englehart was.

"He stood there, looking around from face to face, and when his eyes looked into mine I could see there a lot of things I didn't have myself and wished I did. There was cold courage, 'way down where you can't shake it, and education and understanding, and somehow, though I knew Billy Englehart marked me down with the rest of the gang, I was glad he was aboard. I felt that somehow *he* would handle things now, and that he would play the game right. Funny how things like that cross your mind sometimes, isn't it?

"'Where's Daggett?' says he. No one spoke. 'Where's that ass, Blaisdell? Who's in command here?'

"'I am,' says Black Jack, stepping forward.

"Englehart looked him slowly up and down like so much dirt. '*You* are, eh? You filthy butcher for Bully Hayes! You lousy squaw-man! You chicken-livered he-gorilla, stand aside!'

"Black Jack stepped back and Englehart, keeping his eyes on us and covering us with his guns, edged around, backed up the ladder and stood facing us on the quarter-deck. We were running free before the trade-wind.

"'Lash that wheel, you!' said Englehart to the helmsman. 'And get forrard! Now,' he went on, standing there alone and facing us all, 'you men have killed Daggett and Blaisdell. You, Mahoney, came aboard with those orders from Hayes. For once Hayes beat me out and I didn't learn it till four days ago. What happened then don't matter. I hoped to meet up with you bloody lunatics, and luck's been with me. Now, I'm in charge here—understand? You men will do what I tell you and if you value your polluted lives you'll try no fancy work. To begin with, heave your weapons over the side! Mahoney, drop that knife!'

"Black Jack was balancing his dirk to throw it. His arm was raised to the shoulder. There was a crack from one of Englehart's guns and *ping!* the knife was gone.

"'Now the rest of them! Lively there!' A stream of knives and pistols went overboard. 'Now get to your stations. Take this wheel, somebody. Hold your course as she is. Butaritari's due south.'

"Butaritari! I wondered. What the devil was Englehart taking us to Butaritari for? Mahoney grinned and went among us exulting. 'I don't know what he means,' he whispered, 'but anyway, Bully's there and they're on the outs. Stand by to get this man, boys. I know him and he's a devil!'

"Englehart said nothing more and paced up and down or stood leaning against the rail where he could see all of us at once.

"Toward dark the wind hauled round. We were in for storms that cruise, all right. By three bells in the dog-watch it was blowing a hurricane straight from the south and we were running away from it into the nor'-west. At midnight we hove her to, pretty near tearing the works out of everything. We got out a drag and for two days we drifted with the storm. And all that time Englehart stood there like an iron man, never taking a wink of sleep!

"Well he knew what it meant to drop off even for a minute. Black Jack watched him all the time, licking his lips stealthy, like a cat. He had another knife and every time Englehart nodded, or seemed to nod, he started to creep aft. At these times I wanted to sing out to Englehart, or rush aft and tell him I was with him and would stand by, but between Mahoney and the crew on one hand and the fear that Englehart wouldn't understand and would let daylight through me on the other, I was, as you may say, between the devil and the deep sea.

"When the blow was over and the trade-wind back again, we got on our course, Englehart seemingly as watchful as ever. The strain must have been horrible. Here was this man, playing a lone hand against the lot of us, kept up by sheer nerve and self-control, and I tell you, sir, it was the finest thing I've ever seen! There was nothing in it for *him* except a principle, and I didn't understand him then and I don't now.

"You see, what had happened was that Hayes had got drunk and boasted of how he was going to have Daggett's ship, and Englehart, though he was half his size, had beaten him to a pulp. Then Hayes had cried and said it was all a joke, and that night he and his men, armed with rifles, put Englehart into a canoe and drove him out to sea. Instead of running down the coast where he might have found a welcome, Englehart had paddled out to sea to waylay the schooner on his own account. It was one chance in a thousand, but he got away with it.

"The day after the storm he nodded, and a belaying-pin whizzed by his ear. It was flung by Cockson, one of the Melbourne jail-birds.

"'Hold up your hand there!' yelled Englehart. You, with the rum nose!'

"Cockson held it up as if he'd been on wires, and Englehart shot him through the middle of the palm.

V

"THE FOURTH day we were getting close to Butaritari. Englehart sent the helmsman below for the instruments and shot the sun. No more pins had been thrown, but Black Jack, with the Samoan woman beside him, sat watching and watching and licking his lips, with a murderous look in his fishy red eyes. I knew that as long as Englehart kept awake he had him cowed, but no mortal man could stand what he was doing forever.

"He was breaking down. There were times when he stood upright, hanging on to the rail, when no one knew if he was asleep or awake. Just when we decided he had gone he would break away and start walking up and down. His eyes were burning with fever. At first, when we brought him grub, as he made us do, and set it at the head of the ladder, he wolfed it down like a hungry shark. Now he had quit eating anything. Maybe you wonder why I didn't tip him off that I was a friend, same as I had done Blaisdell. Well, he wouldn't have believed me then, and all hands were watching him too close.

"My chance came, though. I was at the wheel when it happened. Englehart was leaning against the rail, his head forward on his chest. I heard a sound like a snore and suddenly his knees bent and he slid forward. Just then Mahoney dashed up the companion. He had stolen aft through the bulkhead doors. The open knife was in his hand, and he was on Englehart in a flash. But Billy had instantly scrambled to his feet and they met with a clash, Englehart grabbing Mahoney's wrist with one hand and his throat with the other.

"Then out of the cabin the Samoan woman darted, quick as a cat, and clutched Englehart from behind, twining her arms and legs around him, pinioning him and nearly bringing them all down in a heap. I saw Black Jack's arm raised, the knife in his hand, dropped the wheel and jumped in. The arm came down—not where it was intended, and that's where I got this beauty-mark on my chart.

"I got hold of the woman by her greasy red hair, put my knee in her back, bent her head and swung on her jaw with all my might. It weren't no time to be polite to women. She let go and went over in a lump. Englehart and Mahoney were locked tight together, and the hands were swarming up the ladder. I was in it now for all I was worth, and my fighting blood was up. I grabbed one of Englehart's guns that was sticking out of his pocket.

"'Get back there, you dogs!' I yelled. 'Back there with you or I'll blow you into kingdom come!'

"The foremost man stood with his jaw dropped, and then, all at once, the fight was over. Mahoney was half a head taller than Englehart, fresh and sound from plenty of sleep, but Englehart got some kind of a ju-jutsu hold on him and sent him clean over his shoulder, crashing to the deck with a broken collar-bone and the blood running out of his mouth.

"Englehart turned to me, his eyes bright once more.

" 'Thank you for that, my lad!' said he. 'But what the devil does it mean?'

"Then I told him and he shook my hand without a word. I tell you it was good to feel the grip of that hard palm of his!

"The woman had crawled below, moaning. Englehart kicked Black Jack forrard, and I didn't see why he didn't shoot him. He handed me his guns with never a doubt of me left, set another hand at the wheel and, telling me to be sure and wake him as soon as we raised land, went off into a dead sleep, with me on watch.

VI

"THE men spat curses at me, but they were as scared as trapped rats. Mahoney nursed his broken shoulder, soaking in all the gin he could hold. When the land was close under our lee I woke Englehart, took the wheel and, when he told me, threw the schooner into the wind. We were then in the middle of the lagoon.

"Englehart dived below and came back on deck, cramming cartridges into the magazine of a Winchester.

" 'Son,' said he, 'we'll just make ready

a surprise for Bully. There he comes now!'

"He turned to the men:

"'The first one of you that opens his mouth or makes a move of any kind will get a chunk of lead in the back!'

"Hayes's boat came on, with a whole fleet of canoes in its wake. Englehart crouched low against the rail. When Hayes was close to he stood up.

"'*Talofa*, Bully Hayes!' says he. 'Once again, Bully, and this time you lose! Here's the ship you wanted, and here's the crew all ready to keep you company on the beach. Hold hard, there! Pull up, or I'll put a hole through you!'

"Hayes had the long steering-oar. 'What game's this, Billy?' says he, all taken aback. At the same time he ordered his men to cease rowing. The canoes, full of wondering Kanakas, ranged themselves close by.

"'Bully,' said Englehart, 'You've beat me —the first time in your life. You've taken the life of Blaisdell and poor old 'Lonzo Daggett, who never did you any harm. But I've got the ship and I intend to keep her and sail her back to Sydney, and I'll send you another ship! A nice white cruiser to take you off and hang you as you deserve! And I've brought you back your friend and comrade, Bully; the one you trusted more than me. I've brought you Black Jack Mahoney, and I'll leave him here, too, to keep you company. Mahoney, throw up your hands!'

"He balanced the rifle and Mahoney threw up his good arm. His face was a sickly blue-white, like the belly of a fish.

"'That will do, Mahoney! Now, back up! Back, I say! Away forrard with you! Go on, farther back! Now stop!'

"Mahoney was standing on the butt of the bowsprit, facing Englehart. Billy raised the rifle quickly and shot him right between the eyes.

"The great hairy body jumped into the air and went with a splash into the sea. The Samoan woman, with a yell, dove after it over the side.

"Bully Hayes stood like a log in the stern-sheets of his boat. Englehart studied the faces of the Kanakas in the canoes.

"'Here, you Tarani!' he called to one of them. 'Come aboard here! And you, and you, and you!'

"He raised the rifle, threatening them, and in a minute the men he called were swarming over the side.

"'Now, you prison-spawn, I've got my crew. Overboard with you! Lively now, or you go like Mahoney!'

"And overboard went the jail-birds like rats, Cockson, with his bloody hand, shrieking that he couldn't swim.

"'Now, men, step lively! Back that jib! Hard-a-port with that helm! That'll do! Let go now, and trim sheets!'

"The schooner fell away, jumping like a horse, and soon we were dancing toward the mouth of the lagoon.

"Hayes stood watching us, and, as we got steerage-way on, shook his fist.

"'I'll get you yet, Englehart!' he called.

"Englehart said never a word, but stood looking back over the rail till we were far out to sea. Then he turned and there was a sad kind of look in his eyes.

"'Son,' said he, 'it's mighty hard to lose faith in a chum. I thought that dog was white once!'

"That's about all. We got to Sydney without more trouble, and Englehart turned over the schooner and cargo to Daggett's estate, refusing to take a cent for salvage.

"He was very good to me, quiet and gentlemanly, and, now that the trouble was over, with no more roughness than a woman. He taught me something of navigation and offered to take me with him on a schooner of his own, but I'd had enough of the South Seas. So he got me a berth as second mate on a lime-juicer bound for Liverpool.

"We didn't meet a cruiser on the run to Sydney, so I never knew what became of Hayes and I've never met any one since who knows for sure. One man told me he was hung, and another that he was a monk in a monastery in Luzon, so there's no telling. I must get aboard now. Good day, sir!"

Dynamite Stories

by Hudson Maxim

EDITOR'S NOTE—The name of Hudson Maxim, author of the accompanying series of Dynamite Stories, is perhaps the most distinguished in the development of high explosives and kindred inventions. First to make smokeless powder in the United States, he has worked with dynamite, maximite, stabillite and motorite, with torpedoes and rams, with projectiles and armor-plate, with automatic guns and detonating fuses, as a veritable familiar of these grim agents of destruction. Long the most famous inventor in his field, he has gathered many an anecdote of explosion. Though some of these stories make saturnine sport of death, they are unique in their crisp dramatic quality, and ADVENTURE is fortunate in giving them to its readers.

THESE tales, gathered from long-continued and intimate experience with high explosives, have interested and pleased my friends, when related by word of mouth. It is owing to the suggestion of those who have heard the stories related thus that I have been led to write them out, with the object of offering whatever entertainment they may afford to a larger circle.

Just as a dark background accentuates the high lights of a picture, so does the dark background of a tragedy accentuate the humor of the often funny phases of it.

Men whose occupations bring them often face to face with danger and death become accustomed to the conditions as though they were normal.

As the ax is to the woodman, so are high explosives to the engineer; more, they are the ax and the spade with which he cleaves the mountain range to let the iron horse pass, and, like the Martian, cuts through the land a web-work of canals and waterways, uniting rivers and seas. With high explosives he smites the rugged ribs of the earth, and the yield of a day in mineral wealth would shame Solomon in his glory. Since the time when the great Hannibal with fire and vinegar cut through the White Alps and burst like an avalanche upon the fair fields of Italy, vast strides have been made in the science of overcoming obstacles to human progress, and in this work the blasting agent has played no minor part.

Always in the van of civilization there is the churn of the rock-drill and the echoing crash and roar of the dynamite blast. Modern smokeless gunpowder is a form of high explosive that has been chained and tamed by the chemist's cunning, so that it will burn without detonation and thus permit the utilization of its awful energy in the hurling of shot and shell from war's great guns. Thus it is that dynamite, in its varied forms, deserves its high place with steam and electricity as one of the great triumvirs that have been the architects of the modern world.

THE FORGOTTEN BIT OF FULMINATE

IN ORDINARY business, whether the work be experimental or otherwise, accidents may occur; operatives may be thoughtless and careless with disastrous results. In the manufacture of high explosives and in experimenting with them, a little absent-mindedness, a very slight lack of exact caution, a seemingly insignificant inadvertence for a moment, may cost one a limb or his life. The accident that cost me my left hand is a case in point.

On the day preceding that accident, I had had a gold cap put on a tooth. In consequence, the tooth ached throughout the night and kept me awake a greater part of

the time. In the morning I rose early and went down to my factory at Maxim, New Jersey. In order to test the dryness of some fulminate compound I took a little piece of it, about the size of an English penny, broke off a small particle, placed it on a stand outside the laboratory and, lighting a match, touched it off.

Owing to my loss of sleep the night before, my mind was not so alert as usual, and I forgot to lay aside the remaining piece of fulminate compound, but, instead, held it in my left hand. A spark from the ignited piece of fulminate compound entered my left hand between my fingers, igniting the piece there, with the result that my hand was blown off to the wrist, and the next thing I saw was the bare end of the wrist-bone. My face and clothes were bespattered with flesh and filled with slivers of bone. (The following day, my thumb was found on the top of a building a couple of hundred feet away, with a sinew attached to it, which had been pulled out from the elbow.)

A tourniquet was immediately tightened around my wrist to prevent the flow of blood, and I and two of my assistants walked half-a-mile down to the railroad, where we tried to stop an upgoing train with a red flag. But it ran the flag down and went on, the engineer thinking, perhaps, from our wild gesticulations that we were highwaymen.

I then walked another half-mile to a farmhouse, where a horse and wagon were procured. Thence I was driven to Farmingdale, four and a half miles distant, where I had to wait two hours for the next train to New York.

The only physician in the town was an invalid, ill with tuberculosis. I called on him while waiting, and condoled with him, as he was much worse off than I was.

On arrival in New York, I was taken in a carriage to the elevated station at the Brooklyn Bridge. On reaching my station at Eighty-fourth Street, I walked four blocks, and then up four flights of stairs to my apartments on Eighty-second Street, where the surgeon was awaiting me. It was now evening, and the accident had occurred at half-past ten o'clock in the morning. That was a pretty hard day!

As I had no electric lights in the apartments, only gas, the surgeon declared that it would be dangerous to administer ether, and he must, therefore, chloroform me. He added that there was no danger in using chloroform, if the patient had a strong heart. Thereupon I asked him to examine my heart, since, if there should be the least danger of my dying under the influence of the anesthetic, I wanted to make my will.

"Heart!" exclaimed the surgeon, with great emphasis. "A man who has gone through what you have gone through today *hasn't* any heart!"

The next day after the operation I dictated letters to answer my correspondence as usual. The young woman stenographer, who took my dictation, remarked, with a sardonic smile:

"You, too, have now become a shorthand writer."

Even though so grimly personal, the jest appealed to my sense of humor.

On the third day I was genuinely ill and had no wish to do business. Within ten days, however, I was out again, attending to my affairs.

HOW BENDER LOWERED THE PRICE OF DYNAMITE

ONCE, when entering my storage magazine at Maxim, in which were several carloads of dynamite, along with 37,000 pounds of nitro-gelatin, made to fill an order from the Brazilian Government, I saw John Bender, one of my laboring men, calmly but emphatically opening a case of dynamite with cold chisel and hammer. With some epithetitious phraseology, I dismissed him.

It was not long after this incident, when the Boniface of the inn at Farmingdale, a near-by village, called upon me to buy some dynamite. He told me that he had employed John Bender to blow the stumps out of a meadow lot. I related to him my experience with that reckless person, and tried to impress him with the fact that Bender was temperamentally so constituted as to court death, not only for himself but for others about him, when handling dynamite.

But Boniface was unconvinced. He wanted Bender to do the work and he wanted the dynamite to do it with. Bender, he said, had assured him that he was a great expert in the handling of dynamite—that he could so place a charge under a stump that he could always tell beforehand

the direction the stump would take and about how far it would go under the impulse of the blast. Therefore, it was only a question of the price of the dynamite.

"Well," said I, "the dynamite you want is sixteen cents a pound, but, if John Bender does not succeed in blowing himself up and killing himself with the dynamite, you can have it for nothing. On the other hand, if he does blow himself up, you must pay for the dynamite."

A few days later, there was some hitch in Bender's exceptional luck. A particularly refractory old stump had resisted a couple of Bender's dynamic attacks. The failure to dislodge the stump Bender took as a personal affront, because it reflected upon his skill as a stump-blaster.

"Next time," said he, "something is going to happen." He placed about twenty pounds of dynamite under the deep-rooted veteran, touched it off, and several things happened in very quick succession. The huge stump let go its hold on earth and proceeded to hunt Bender. It was a level race, but the stump won. Striking Bender on the north quarter, it stove in four ribs, dislocated several joints and damaged him in several other respects and particulars.

Boniface came to settle for the dynamite.

"Sixteen cents a pound," I said. "Bender hasn't a chance in a hundred. Wait till the doctors are through with him."

"What do you say to a compromise," suggested Boniface, "of eight cents a pound? For really," quoth he, "I do not believe that Bender is more than half dead."

And the account was settled on that basis.

FOOLHARDY KRUGER

ONE of the most daredevil men I ever had in my employ was a young man by the name of Joe Kruger. He was a very hard worker, and that won pardon for his many indiscretions.

I sent him one day to a neighboring explosive works to get a special kind of guncotton that was made there, and told him to have it sent by freight in a wet state. Instead, however, he filled about fifty pounds into a big burlap bag, in a perfectly dry state, and took it on the train with him and into the smoking-car, placing it on the seat beside him. He struck a match, lighted a cigar, and, smoked through the entire journey. Had the least spark of match or cigar fallen upon the bag, the guncotton would have gone off with a tremendous flash and, although it would not have detonated, it would have burned him terribly, as well as any persons sitting near.

At another time, in order to test the insensitiveness of a certain high explosive, a quantity of it was charged into a four-inch iron pipe, and the pipe hung against a tree as a target to ascertain whether or not the bullet would penetrate the high explosive without exploding it.

Kruger and I fired several shots from cover at long range without hitting the cylinder of explosive. I was then called way and told Kruger to continue firing until he hit the mark. As soon as I left him, he advanced with the gun within a few rods of the tree, with the happy result that his first shot penetrated the cylinder, exploding it with terrific violence, blowing the tree, which was about eight inches in diameter, clean off, while the fragments of metal flew about Kruger's head like hailstones. But none happened to hit him.

The following is the sort of adventure that is likely to happen to any one under similar circumstances and has doubtless happened many times before and since.

Kruger had a dog which was well trained to fetch anything that his master threw for him. One day Kruger took some sticks of dynamite and went to a neighboring stream with the intention of dynamiting some fish. He attached fuse and exploder to a stick of the explosive, and threw it toward the stream, but the dynamite landed on a rock.

The faithful dog, thinking that the stick had been thrown for him to bring, ran and returned with it to his master in great glee, with the fuse sizzing nearer and nearer to the explosive. Kruger ran in horror, the dog, deeming it great sport, after him. The dog being the better runner, danced about his master. Finding it impossible to escape the animal by running, Kruger climbed a tree with all the alacrity he could muster, and had just reached a vantage of safety when the dynamite exploded, and the dog—well, the dog was holding the stick in his mouth when it went off.

THE FATAL HAT

OUT in the Pennsylvania oil regions in the early days, while nitroglycerin in the liquid state was being used experimentally as a blasting agent, some boys found in a creek an old felt hat, which had been used as a filter for nitroglycerin.

One of the boys accidentally discovered that when laid upon a stone and the edge of the hat hit with a hammer, it would crack, so they took it to the blacksmith's shop, where they could have some fun by hammering it on an anvil. At the first blow the old hat exploded. Two boys were killed outright, and two more badly injured.

The blacksmith at the time of the accident, happened to be standing outdoors, which thereafter constituted his blacksmith shop until he could rebuild.

AT FOLLY'S MERCY

AFTER I had sold the works at Maxim and had invented motorite I needed a place in which to make the material, and hired a branch of the works there for that purpose.

It was Winter. My wife had accompanied me as a precautionary measure. She was sitting in the laboratory to keep warm, near a big barrel stove charged with bituminous coal.

On entering the laboratory for something, my wife asked me what was in those two tin pails sitting near the stove. She said that she had a suspicion it might be nitroglycerin, and she informed me that one of my men had just been in, stirring the fire, and that the sparks flew out in all directions, some of them lighting in the buckets, to be quenched in the very thin film of water floating on top of the oily liquid.

"Horrors!" I said. "It *is* nitroglycerin!"

I called the man who had placed it there, and told him to take it away. As it was necessary to keep the material from freezing, he took it into the boiler-house near by. A little later, on going into the boiler-house, I saw one of the men stirring the fire, while the other was standing with his coat-tails outstretched in either hand, forming a shield to keep the sparks from flying into the nitroglycerin!

It is practically impossible to make the ordinary laboring man appreciate the necessity of care in the safe handling of explosives, and the life of the careful man is always endangered by the actions of the careless one.

THE WATCHMAN'S DOUBLE VISION

MY SUCCESSORS in the use of the dynamite plant at Maxim had in their employ a watchman, an all-round combination useful and useless man, his usefulness and uselessness alternating with the alternation of his inebriety and sobriety.

One morning, after a night of it, he proceeded to build the fire in the laboratory stove. To start up the kindling wood, he had been in the habit of lighting a handful of shavings and then pouring on a little kerosene from a tomato can, which he kept upon a nearby shelf.

During that night, some one, possibly one of the laboratory operatives, had placed a similar can, filled with nitroglycerin, upon the same shelf, to keep it from freezing.

In periods of convalescence from his various stages of intoxication, the watchman had before seen two cans upon that helf shelf, but he knew that one of them was real, and the other an hallucination. Couldn't fool him that way!

Thinking that the hallucination would naturally be the lighter of the two cans, he took the one containing the nitroglycerin and proceeded to pour its contents upon the fire.

There was so little of him left together after the explosion that, like Captain Castagnette, he died of surprise at seeing himself so dissipated.

CURIOSITY'S UPLIFT

SHORTLY after the Russo-Japanese war, there drifted in upon the Chinese shore one of the huge floating mines constructed by the Russians, containing about five hundred pounds of guncotton. This strange object greatly excited the curiosity of the Chinese, who flocked in large numbers to view it. While half a thousand of them were crowded in close upon the mine, marveling over the mystery of this flotsam, one of their number began to investigate it with a hammer, and, hitting the fuse a heavy blow, exploded the mine.

An American witnessed the event from a distance. Wondering what all the excitement was about, he had started toward the

crowd with the intention of making an investigation on his own account, when, of a sudden, there was a flash. The horde of Chinamen that had been clustered about the mine vanished in a cloud of dust. Fragments of heads, arms and legs rocketed into the air in the form of an inverted cone. The head of a Chinaman, severed from the trunk, went hurtling through the air, with the queue outstreaming behind, like a comet. It passed just over the horrified American and struck the ground more than a thousand feet beyond him.

It has been truly said that curiosity, more than any other faculty, has been the uplift of the human race; but it is seldom that curiosity gets in its uplifting work as suddenly and effectually as it did on that occasion.

DISCHARGING PAT

A WORKS foreman of mine, who had been employed as assistant superintendent in another dynamite factory, told me the following story:

He one day intercepted an Irish laborer, who was taking a barrel, which had been used for settling nitroglycerin, down to the soda dry-house, with the intention of filling it with hot nitrate of soda from the drying-pans. The foreman scolded Pat roundly and told him that, should he do such a reckless thing again, he would be instantly discharged. The foreman then went to the superintendent's office and reported the matter.

In the meantime, Patrick, utterly ignoring the injunction, simply waited for the foreman to disappear, then proceeded to the dry-house with the barrel and began to fill it with the hot nitrate of soda.

Over in the superintendent's office the foreman had just completed his narration when there was a thunderous report and a crash of glass. Then Pat's booted foot landed on the office floor between them. The superintendent dryly remarked, "Calm your agitation—Pat is already discharged!"

THE IRREVERENT NATIVE

AFTER I had sold out my interests at Maxim, the place was taken over by a dynamite-manufacturing company. As there was left in one of the magazines a considerable quantity of dynamite when the property changed hands, the new concern, not choosing to sell it as their own manufacture, proceeded to utilize it as fertilizer upon a field of potatoes.

One of the natives, with his team and helper, was engaged to do this work. They had been instructed to use great care in opening the cases, but they still held their own opinions about the care necessary, which were based largely upon the contempt that is born of familiarity, and, having arrived upon the potato-patch with a good, big load of dynamite, they began to knock the cases open in any old way.

There were no surviving witnesses, not even the horses.

Can a Man Be True?

by Winifred Graham

Author of "The Vision at the Savoy"

SYNOPSIS: Maldio, the young ruler of the small European kingdom of Lambasa, attempts to free his country from medieval abuses. His stepmother, Queen Horatia, has him poisoned by Count Bistoff so that her own son, the puppet Gisdel, may succeed to the throne. Bistoff, really loyal to Maldio, gives only a trance-producing drug. Mortimore Dugdale, English Secret Agent, suspecting foul play, is doomed by the Queen, and, at Bistoff's suggestion, sealed up in Maldio's tomb, whence Bistoff rescues both through a secret passage. Maldio demands a respite from kingship and returns in disguise to the English girl, Loti, with whom he had previously fallen in love. Her unpractical father, Professor Magnus, being on the verge of financial ruin, Percy Sharm, a vulgar multimillionaire, offers to save him in return for Loti's hand. Loti, true to the "dead" Maldio, refuses Sharm. A letter announces Maldio's rescue and arrival; Loti meets him secretly and promises to be his morganatic wife. Sharm, surprising them, is knocked down by Maldio for his insolence, and vows revenge. Secretly, even from her father, Loti is married to Maldio, who assumes the name of Marmaduke Kingsley and leases the estate of Red Tower for their honeymoon. A stranger, Mr. Smith, arrives with an ominous message.

CHAPTER XXI

"ALL MEN ARE LIARS"

MALDIO glanced uneasily toward his wife, and his eyes said: "Ought she to remain?"

"I think it would be better for Mrs. Kingsley to hear what I have to relate," the stranger murmured uneasily, "although it is so painful. I have come as a friend to warn you of a great danger. There may yet be time to evade the cloud overshadowing your future."

Loti trembled as her penetrating gaze took in every detail of his appearance. Instinctively she mistrusted his face, she could not have told why. The voice was harsh, the eyes cold. It annoyed her that he hesitated, keeping them purposely in suspense, as if by so doing the blow would be softened.

"Please," she said, "tell us the worst at once. Is my father ill?" The words shook with anxiety.

"Not to my knowledge, for I do not know your father. Perhaps you have seen in the papers that the world recently lost a great financier in Mr. Percy Sharm. Of course you heard of his death?"

Loti turned pale and shook her head.

"Oh, poor Mr. Sharm!" she murmured,

feeling angry with herself that a sense of relief made the words a mere outward form of regret. She had feared some terrible catastrophe which would affect Maldio's happiness.

The supposed Marmaduke Kingsley raised his eyebrows in surprise. "I had not the pleasure of that gentleman's acquaintance," he announced, and the word "pleasure" held a slight touch of sarcasm.

"Possibly not, and yet you are responsible for his untimely demise," retorted the stranger breathlessly. "I was one of the three medical men called in on the day of his death. Mr. Sharm suffered from a weak heart, and he never recovered from the effects of a severe fall at Hinxton near Cambridge, when one Marmaduke Kingsley dealt him a crushing blow. He described the scene fully; he testified that his injuries were caused by this cruel and unexpected assault. To-night his assailant, who has been traced to Red Tower, Yewton, will be arrested on a charge of manslaughter!"

A little cry of horror escaped Loti's lips. But for Maldio's protecting arm she might have fallen, for everything grew dark and the terrace seemed whirling round at dizzy speed. Then she heard Maldio saying:

"Pull yourself together, dear—we must face it out. I am not afraid."

His tone of courage, the sure, unfaltering words, made her realize her own weakness.

Mr. Smith drew nearer, and now his voice was low and insinuating, and his piercing eyes seemed looking into Maldio's soul.

"Perhaps you may resent advice," he said, "but my only object in bringing you this news was to urge you to escape. You are a foreigner, I understand, a native of Lambasa; you have come to England to enjoy a holiday, and marry a wife. Why not fly before the arrest? At present you are not supposed to know there is a warrant out against you. Be recalled to your native country by an urgent business telegram. Leave this house within an hour, save yourself from exposure and possible punishment!"

As he spoke Loti saw how absolutely Maldio could sink the identity of Marmaduke Kingsley by returning to Lambasa and claiming his throne. No one need ever know he had set foot in England. Vaguely she wondered whether he had parted with his disguise. He had come in the garb of a nun; he could travel back under the same name, in the same clothes. She opened her lips to gasp out a word of gratitude to the man who had troubled to warn them, but, even as she did so, Maldio's voice broke in, cutting the sentence short.

"Do I understand," he said, and his bearing had never been more kingly, "that you suggest I should run away as if I were a criminal escaping justice, simply because I knocked a man down for insulting my wife? You think I would sneak off in deadly terror of the law, like a man guilty of murder? Really, sir, you must have spoken without weighing your words!"

Mr. Smith put on an injured air and his mouth grew stubborn.

"Of course if you like to be foolish enough to remain, that is no affair of mine. I heard you were newly married, and made the proposition simply from the kindness of my heart. I shall be called, of course, as one of the witnesses present at the time of Mr. Sharm's death. I warn you the blow killed him. I fear you have little or no chance of escaping punishment."

The words were hard, almost vindictive; it was impossible to believe that Mr. Smith would have gone out of his way to do a kindness. Instinctively Loti felt there must be something beneath this apparent act of thoughtfulness and consideration. He knew Marmaduke Kingsley was a rich man; perhaps he had come to warn him, hoping for a reward.

"I have great faith in the justice of Englishmen," said Maldio, with a proud look at his English wife. "I know as a nation they use their fists, and never fight with swords. Would one of your countrymen, worthy of the name of man, stand by and hear a lying scoundrel abuse a virtuous woman, without landing him on his back?"

"Oh, Maldio, remember—remember Mr. Sharm is dead!" whispered Loti in a tone of embarrassment.

She had murmured the familiar name "Maldio" without realizing they were in the presence of a third person.

Mr. Smith evidently took note of it, for he looked furiously from husband to wife. It was natural, of course, that many Lambasians were named after the late King.

"I hope indeed that the trust you place in an English jury may be justified," replied the stranger, and now his manner changed to one of resigned humility. "I regret if I have given offense by my well-intentioned

remarks, made quite disinterestedly. I have to return at once to London; doubtless we shall meet again, when the case is being tried."

Loti offered him her hand. "It was very kind of you," she said, "to take so much trouble for us. I feel my husband is right in deciding to remain. The whole affair is very terrible, and unhappily I was the cause of it all." Her voice broke and she turned quickly away.

Maldio, remembering his duties as host, pressed the visitor to take some refreshment before leaving. But Mr. Smith refused the offer coldly, and appeared pressed for time.

"Can we send you to the station?" asked Maldio. "The car will be at the door in a very few minutes."

Again Mr. Smith declined the attention. He preferred to walk, declaring a little exercise would do him good after the train journey.

Maldio added his thanks to Loti's. "I am indebted to you for preparing me for what is in store," he said. "I trust I may some day be able to repay your kindness."

Mr. Smith made no answer. He merely bowed, and beat a hasty retreat.

Loti forced a wintry smile, and murmured the desired words.

The remaining hours of the day were fraught with suspense. Hurriedly Maldio made plans, carefully instructing Loti how to act should he be arrested. He explained to her all the details of Red Tower, which would have to be given up at the end of the month, and wrote a full account of this unfortunate affair to his good friend Bistoff, to be posted only if Mr. Smith's words proved true.

"It is possible the man acted simply upon speculation," Maldio declared cheerfully, at dinner. "If so, we had better go to London to-morrow and find out all particulars of Sharm's death. We have been too wrapped up in each other to trouble to read the papers. Oddly enough, every moment I feel more convinced that there was something wrong about Smith."

The sound of wheels on the gravel caught Loti's ear. "Listen!" she whispered, and her blood ran cold. "Some one is driving up to the door!"

A moment later the hall-bell rang.

They exchanged looks in silence. Then Maldio rose and, pressing her hand, laid his lips gently and lovingly on her forehead.

"Don't let any one see your fear," he whispered. "Innocent people are never afraid."

The door opened and a tall Police Inspector advanced to the table.

"I regret to disturb you, sir," he said respectfully, "but I hold a warrant for your arrest on a charge of manslaughter."

CHAPTER XXII

THE PURSUER

MALDIO followed the Inspector into the hall. "I am quite ready to come with you," he said, in that quiet, dignified way which had impressed Lord Rotherfield's servants and made them think that, though Mr. Kingsley had no title, he must be a great gentleman. Now the startled butler and footman wondered whether they had served and respected a common criminal. They looked pityingly at the young bride in her white evening dress. Her wide eyes were fixed upon her husband with an expression of hopeless misery.

"Must you go to-night?" she whispered. "It seems so terribly hard!"

Maldio whispered softly: "Don't make it worse for me, darling. I shall soon be cleared, and then we will finish our honeymoon."

Inwardly she told herself: "Then you will go to Lambasa—this is the end!" Her heart felt like stone; she was paralyzed by the agony of bitter parting.

"Can I trust you to come quietly, sir?" asked the burly Inspector.

A rather scornful smile parted Maldio's lips. "I have no intention of trying to evade the law," he said. "As an innocent man I am only too anxious to clear my character as quickly as possible."

He was shrugging his shoulders into an overcoat, and a servant came forward with his hat.

Loti stood rooted to the spot. The astonished footmen, the shocked butler, the uniformed Inspector, and Maldio ready to start, all appeared like figures in some awful waking dream.

Maldio turned to bid her good-by. She rushed into his arms and for a moment buried her face on his breast. "Don't fret, sweetheart," he whispered. "It's only a short parting."

She could tell by his voice how her suffering pained him, and what it meant to Maldio to leave her thus.

"Of course," she gasped quickly, speaking as if she really believed the words, "only a very short parting!"

He kissed her with all the passion of his strongly emotional nature. "*Au revoir*, beloved," the words were only for her ear. "In spirit we shall be together."

The hall door stood open, and the Inspector shuffled his feet impatiently on the step.

The arms that had clasped Loti fell limply to his sides. He was not thinking of his own fate, but of that young, desolate woman, left alone at Red Tower, the great solitary house which had grown so homelike through the humanizing influence of their strong mutual love. Fearing to tarry a moment longer lest he, too, should break down, he passed out into the crisp evening air.

Under clear moonlight the country lay flooded in silver sheen, making the grounds of Red Tower ghostly and mysterious. A cab with door set open stood by the white steps on which the pale beams danced like will-o'-the-wisps about the prisoner's reluctant feet.

The Inspector stood back and remarked humbly:

"You first, sir."

As he reached the step, the man bent forward quickly and, before Maldio could realize his intention, had snapped a pair of handcuffs on Marmaduke Kingsley's wrists. The helpless victim of this unexpected indignity shot a look of reproach at the law's representative.

"I said I would come quietly; surely there is no need to add to my discomfort." The royal eyes were flashing now with hot displeasure.

"Beg pardon, sir, but we have a long drive alone, and it seems, from the case that is coming on, you are pretty good with your fists. I am single-handed and must not risk anything." The tone as well as the words were highly impertinent.

Loti heard all, as her anxious gaze followed her husband's retreating form. She stood like a white statue on the moonlit steps, watching in speechless horror the rough Inspector push Maldio violently into the cab and slam the door on his stumbling figure. Tremblingly she advanced, pale as death in her deep resentment.

"How dare you"—she gasped—"how dare you treat an unconvicted man as if he were a criminal! You will hear more of this—a good deal more than perhaps you think, when you learn who Marmaduke Kingsley really is!"

The Inspector merely shrugged his shoulders with insolent disregard and sprang up on the box beside the cabman.

"You can drive on," she heard him say.

Furious at the indignity placed upon Maldio, Loti looked up, intending to speak some last word which might force him to respect his royal charge. But the sentence never reached those parted lips. Instead, she remained spellbound, gazing with speechless wonder at the two men on the box. A direct ray of moonlight shining fully on the driver's sharp features had brought a flood of bewilderment to her baffled senses. She could have sworn that beneath the cabman's hat, drawn low over his forehead, she had recognized the pointed chin and hollow cheeks of Mr. Smith!

Before she could fully recover from the shock of the discovery, the driver whipped up his horse, and the cab containing the one she loved more than life itself vanished down the drive. She looked wildly round for assistance. Surely Providence would prompt her in this awful moment of suspicion! Her heart cried for help and, as if in answer to the cry, she espied a small light against the laurel bushes. Quickly she ran towards the dark-gowned figure of a girl standing by a bicycle.

It was Lady Rotherfield's French maid who had remained with the rest of the staff at Red Tower.

"Marie," whispered the terrified bride, "lend me your bicycle—quick—quick!"

Marie looked in dismay at the speaker's white evening dress with its long flowing skirt.

"But," she gasped, "it is impossible that madame should ride in that costume!"

For Loti there was no such word as "impossible." Mad with fear, she pushed the astonished maid to one side and in a second she had flung the white draperies over her arm; with the agility of a boy she sprang to the seat and, regardless of all appearances, rode swiftly away in the wake of her captured husband.

The desolate country lanes were as deserted at this hour as the city through which Lady Godiva rode, and as the cab-horse

trotted at a steady pace Loti found no difficulty in keeping the vehicle in sight. She was still quite ignorant as to the geography of the surrounding neighborhood, but soon became aware that the driver had skirted the village and was making for vast tracts of uninhabited land, stretching toward the distant hills.

In her deep agitation she entirely forgot her unconventional garb. Though the night air beat upon her bare neck and arms, she was burning with feverish heat. Movement and nearness to Maldio gave her the courage of a lioness defending her cubs. If treachery surrounded her dear one, she would fight to the death to deliver him from his enemies. She dared not think what it all meant, as she followed breathlessly up steep, muddy hills, on, on towards the great stretching distance which looked like a dead world.

The moonlight gave silent assistance, enabling her to keep the cab in view. Aching limbs made no appeal to the unconquerable spirit of the pursuer. The great object of this weird ride numbed every minor sensation. She would not try to unravel the mystery; she could only keep her eyes fixed on that dark vehicle, lest it should escape her in the shadows.

What if, in the end, the horse conquered the woman, and her strength gave out? What if she were left fainting with fatigue by the wayside?

The road was still winding uphill, toward high downs which seemed to her like vast billowy waves vanishing into a sea of mist, unpierced even by the moon's pale radiance. She felt herself growing dizzy with overpowering fatigue, but still she pressed forward, straining her eyes to keep in a direct line with the rumbling cab.

Suddenly in the distance, across the summit of the hill, two huge glaring lights flashed into view. Strangely uncanny they appeared in the absolute silence of that mountainous land. This brilliant illumination could come from only one source, the strong head-lights of a swiftly moving motor-car.

The horse was going at a foot's pace now, and instinctively Loti sprang from her saddle and stood panting on the grassy border of the road, an amazing figure in her trailing evening-dress, leaning on a mud-bespattered bicycle. The costly rope of pearls, Maldio's wedding-gift, rose and fell on a breast heaving with breathless emotion. The car slowed as it approached the cab, and both drew up simultaneously.

CHAPTER XXIII

AT DAWN OF DAY

IN A MOMENT it flashed across Loti's mind that this was a prearranged meeting. Quickly she flung her bicycle down on the ground, extinguishing its light, and crept nearer upon hands and knees. The long grass helped to conceal her figure, and the men in the road appeared utterly unconscious of watching eyes.

As she stealthily approached, a strange thing happened. The cab-driver, whose features so accurately resembled those of Mr. Smith, sprang from the box wth the bullying Inspector, and, abandoning the horse and vehicle in which Maldio was imprisoned, leaped into the waiting car. Only a second elapsed before the powerful motor started off at full speed and vanished like an apparition in the silence of the night.

Loti felt as if her eyes must have deceived her. She started forward, seeing the reins hanging limply over the tired animal's back. Grasping them quickly in her firm fingers, she called, "Maldio! Maldio!"

The prisoner leaned out of the window, gazing in speechless astonishment at the mud-stained vision of his rescuer.

"Loti!" he gasped.

"Yes," she cried, "I followed! I knew there was something wrong—some trick you never suspected when you gave yourself into that villain's keeping!"

"Can you open the door?" cried Maldio. "I'm terribly hampered by these irons."

She obeyed, and the handcuffed King sprang to her side.

"What in the name of heaven can have happened?" he asked, looking round in utter amazement at the desolate country. "And how is it you are here, most wonderful of women?"

He could see at a glance her pitiful plight, as she stood before him in the low evening-dress, which clung to her slim form in damp, soiled folds.

Loti put her arms protectingly round him, and the sight of his fettered wrists maddened her as she replied: "Don't you see, Maldio? We have been the victims of a hideous trick! Some one has done this for

evenge, possibly Sharm himself. Those rutes meant to abandon you in these wilds. 'hey left you bound, at the mercy of a wan- ering horse, to live or die as fate willed. f I had not followed—my God! if I had ot followed—''

Her voice broke, shaken by the horror of he thought, as she leaned weakly against im, dizzy with the shock of this amazing dventure.

The cab-horse wandered to the side of the oad and grazed peacefully.

"You might have been shut in there help- ess for hours, perhaps days," she added in awed whisper, "and I should have waited, ot knowing! Don't you see, Maldio, how leeply the scheme was thought out? The upposed doctor, who warned you of your oming arrest, wanted you to escape away rom England, and your refusal to do this rove him to another plan. The sudden reaking of our honeymoon, the separation nd agonizing suspense, the frightful posi- ion in which he meant you to be stranded, nust have been planned carefully by one who wished us ill and spared no trouble to ain his end."

"Our enemy little thought he had such a natch in you!" murmured the bridegroom roudly. "But this has revealed to me what splendid woman I chose from all the world —a brave, true, stanch partner, with the ourage of a strong man and the tender weetness of a flower."

He tried to wrench his hands from the onfining irons, but the attempt was useless nd only scarred his skin. Loti added her fforts without avail.

"It will need a skilled hand to release me rom my fetters," he said, and involuntarily light-hearted laugh broke from his lips.

Youth and high spirits were playing their art now, and the reunited lovers treated he amazing adventure as lightly as possi- le, considering the grave inconvenience of he situation. Having rescued Marie's bicy- le, they both climbed to the box and, turn- ng the horse's head in the direction of Yew- on, started off in search of familiar ground.

"We can not return like this to Red Tower," said Maldio. "I have no mind o sleep in handcuffs. We had better go traight to the police station and let a real nspector write our story down in detail. Doubtless they will manage to free my wrists for me, and by telephoning to Scot- and Yard we can soon find out if there is any truth in the statement of Sharm's death. We must also deliver up the horse and cab, which may help to trace the men."

It was dawn when at last the quaint vil- lage loomed in sight, guarded by the lordly mansion which had sheltered the Rother- fields for centuries. To Loti it seemed years since her eyes last rested on the tower which stood out against the clear sky, pure with the beauty of a timorous sunrise.

A very astonished and sleepy policeman answered their summons, and instantly roused the chief inspector in response to Maldio's request. The tenant of Red Tower was an important personage in local eyes.

Next to the astonishment at seeing them in such a plight, the discovery of the cab caused palpable excitement.

"Jim Bain's cab, as sure as I am alive!" muttered the policeman, who no longer showed signs of sleep.

"Who is Jim Bain?" asked Loti eagerly, believing they had discovered a clue.

"Why, he is the local cabman, madame; he came round here in an awful state about midnight. It seems that two men ordered his cab about nine o'clock, saying they wanted to drive to Red Tower. One got inside, the other, a police inspector, stepped up beside Jim on the box. He began talk- ing confidential-like, saying he was down here from London on business. He waited till they were in the very quiet lanes leading to his lordship's gates and then, drawing a flask from his pocket, remarked:

"'We may keep you out late on this job; just have a friendly nip of something warm, mate.' Jim, being rather partial to a drop of spirit, took it kind. He drank the fluid, and remembers no more. Hours afterward he woke to find himself lying in a dry ditch, robbed of his hat, coat and vehicle. But rattling in his trousers pockets he found five gold sovereigns. It seems his property is none the worse, thanks to Mrs. Kingsley for bringing the old horse safely home. But it is altogether a very queer affair."

When the Inspector had heard the expe- riences of the two other victims, he sug- gested that, instead of ringing up Scotland Yard, they should first try a call to Mr. Sharm's London residence.

Loti and Maldio, their faces alight with excitement and interest, listened eagerly as he spoke into the receiver in his clear, ringing voice.

CHAPTER XXIV

"MYSELF AM HELL"

PERCY SHARM lay tossing on his bed. It was one o'clock before he retired, yet sleep appeared to him as some wilful goddess refusing to be wooed. He felt nervous and ill at ease; the shaded electric light still burned beside the massive four-poster, for the restless man feared the dark. It seemed as if some strange spirit of depression haunted the priceless historical bed.

Sharm knew that in the early morning the supposed medical man and the bogus police inspector would be on the high seas, traveling to foreign posts provided for them by the millionaire, whose business reached to the four corners of the globe. A telegram, in guarded words, already revealed Marmaduke Kingley's refusal to fly the country. Ever since its receipt Sharm fancied a dark shadow followed him from room to room. As he sat at dinner he was sensitive to the nearness of a presence at his side—as if, indeed, his troubled conscience had materialized into a gaunt figure, silent-footed and hollow-eyed, whispering of coming ill. To distract his mind Sharm had hurried off to the theater, but even there Regret stalked him, and he was thankful when the play ended.

"I wonder," he thought, "if it is always like this with people who plot evil, or is it only that I am such a raw amateur in crime? And I pictured to myself the supreme satisfaction of getting even with that young foreigner!" He had vowed to break the honeymoon bliss of the man who assaulted him, and of the woman who spurned his love. The desire had raged like a fever in his veins, becoming an obsession—the whole object of existence. Not until his deeply laid plans were put into action did the sweets of success change miraculously into the bitterness of remorse. Fate had tricked Sharm in some mysterious way and, in the hour of victory, peopled the silent bedchamber with spectral figures warning him of possible murder.

"I must be going mad," he muttered. "After all, those fellows had no intention of killing Loti's husband. I own she will have a bad time until she discovers a trick has been played on her, but of course she will get him safely back in the end. Some one must find the unfortunate fellow in his ignominious trap, and restore him—perhaps the worse for wear—to the wife of his bosom."

Sharm gave a short laugh which echoed through the dimly lighted room. Once more he flung himself back upon his pillows, determined to sleep.

As he lay beneath the handsome canopy that had sheltered royal heads a vision passed before his eyes, created by his waking imagination. He saw a man handcuffed in a cab, alone in some wild, hilly country. The night was dark, and the horse, with hanging reins, wandered toward the edge of a precipice, gleaming white in the surrounding gloom. Nearer, nearer to the death-trap the weary beast advanced, then the laggard hoofs broke suddenly into a sharp trot, and a moment later the unguided vehicle fell with its human freight into the deep yawning abyss of death.

Sharm sprang up, covering his face with his hands.

"It's clear I've been overworking," he said. "I was a fool to bother about scoring off Kingsley. Why, the whole miserable business might be brought home to me, and land me in a lawsuit!"

He pushed back the curtains and stretched out his hand for a book. As he did so the telephone by his bed rang violently.

He answered the call in a trembling voice; from head to foot he was shaking with fear. "Who is there?"

The reply sounded far away: "Are you Mr. Sharm, please?"

"Yes, what do you want?"

A pause; doubtless the unknown person was consulting some one near the telephone. Then he told Sharm:

"A lady wishes to speak to you. Hold the line."

The millionaire felt the cold drops break out on his forehead. A soft feminine voice reached his ear:

"I am glad to hear you are alive, Mr. Sharm. My husband and I were told a terrible story of your death. Forgive me for ringing you up at this hour."

"I don't understand what you mean," he replied. "Who is speaking?"

"Mrs. Kingsley. I was Miss Magnus."

"Oh, yes, yes, of course. What was that about my being dead? I assure you I am very much alive—just had a very amusing evening at the theater. Pray allow me to congratulate you on your marriage. I trust your husband is well?"

He held his breath as he waited for Loti's next remark.

"Oh, in the best of health, thank you! He asks me to say that he, too, has had a late night, and we shall both sleep all the better for knowing that the rumor of your death was incorrect."

"A most amazing rumor!"

"Yes, wasn't it? But then we live in an amazing world. Good-night."

"Miss Magnus—are you there? Don't cut us off, Exchange," he said; "can you tell me——"

But the words were interrupted by a wave of sudden dizziness; Sharm staggered back and fell fainting against the heavy brocade of the bed curtains.

When he came round he dragged his weary limbs beneath the quilt, where he lay in a state of utter exhaustion until the morning sun streamed in at his windows.

"I feel sure," said Maldio, "we were right not to prosecute Sharm. Far better leave him wondering; nothing is more galling than an unsolved mystery. He will never know how that strange night ended, or by what piece of good fortune I was restored to you so quickly. A big case in the law courts now would tie me to England, and if it is necessary for my country's peace, you, Loti, I know, would be the last to hold me back from duty!"

The bride looked fearlessly into her husband's eyes.

"Percy Sharm has done something for me," she murmured; "it is the good coming out of evil. That terrible night has given me confidence in myself, has taught me I can be brave. For the rest, I counted the cost long ago; I chose my path. Pray that when the hour comes I may have strength and courage."

Maldio drew her to his heart. "Once you asked me," he whispered, "can a man be true? You do believe that I shall be true to you—till death parts us? Tell me those doubts are dead for ever; say you will never let them rise again!"

As she murmured her assurance, a foreign telegram arrived for Marmaduke Kingley. Together husband and wife read the contents:

Serious trouble on foot. Mademoiselle de L'Isle has been recalled to the Capital.

BISTOFF.

CHAPTER XXV

MOTHER AND SON

KING GISDEL was resting with his head pillowed on large purple cushions, his feet propped upon a footstool, and his white hands hanging limply over the broad arms of a comfortable divan chair. At his side a glass of some strong spirit had been partially consumed, and a box of cigars stood open by a gold ash-tray on which the initials of the new monarch were designed in rubies and diamonds.

His clothes hung loosely on his thin figure, and his chest appeared strangely sunken. He was blinking his eyes, as if the heavy lids refused to remain open without an effort. Queen Horatia's stern gaze took in every detail with sharp criticism. Nervously her fingers grasped the long jewel chain suspended from her thick red neck. Her complexion changed from crimson to a dull white as she addressed her son in tones of passionate anger.

"Am I to understand," she cried, "that you defy me? Do you imagine for one moment I would suffer this De L'Isle woman to live on in the Capital, a stone's throw from our Palace gates, and hear her name connected with yours? Gisdel, you must be mad—as well as bad. If you forget your duty to your mother, at least remember what you owe to your country. Is this your way of repaying my devotion and supreme indulgence? Surely you can not think I would stand by and see you disgrace your position, without a strong and even violent protest!"

Gisdel gave a little grunt and sank lower in the yielding depths of the cushions.

"Really," he said in a bored voice, "it is hardly worth while being King if one is to be ordered about by a woman! I have had enough of petticoat government."

He yawned behind his delicately veined hand.

"Petticoat government indeed!" broke in Horatia, her heavy frame trembling with rage. "That is just what *I* complain of! A common dancer, a woman of the people, rules you at this present moment, and you are as clay in her hands. To be fêted and admired by royalty would naturally be the ambition of her life. The name of De L'Isle is on every tongue, since she poses as the King's favorite. I hear her salary was

doubled on her return to the city. It was known she came back in answer to your summons, and in defiance of my expressed wish. Now, of course, the theater is crowded, that curious eyes may judge of King Gisdel's taste.

"Can you wonder that the lowering situation is gall and wormwood to the mother who meant to be so proud of her son? You were my soul's delight, the apple of my eye —to advance your interests I would have gone through fire and water. There were no limits to my ambition on your behalf. Yet suddenly I find the old tie broken; the son who relied on me, the child I loved, the man I trusted, cares neither for his mother nor his throne. He is dominated by a bold-eyed, brazen actress, reared in the gutter. He is spoken of as a failure, a profligate!

"Remember we are not living in quiet times. Maldio prepared a stony path for his successor. The impossible alterations he proposed, his wild promises to the people, his foolish philanthropy, sowed the seeds of discontent in the heart of the populace. It is for us to prove ourselves strong, to wipe out his memory, and show the nation that Maldio's schemes were nothing to us. If you would send Lambasa wild with joy, make a suitable marriage—let them see that you intend to do your duty to the State. So long as Mademoiselle de L'Isle reigns over your heart, so long will you, a king, remain in the dust, jeered at, pitied, despised, ridiculed by those who bend the knee in outward homage!"

Horatia breathed the words of hot disapproval in panting syllables, and her breast heaved with violent emotion. She emphasized her sentiments by bending down to shake his shoulder roughly. Gisdel winced, for his flesh was tender and lacked muscle. His eyes were full of resentment, and his sulky face showed no sign of relenting, as, pouting, he kicked the footstool violently away as an illustration of displeasure.

"I wish you would leave me alone!" he muttered. "I am sick of being nagged at! I can't help what the country wants. I am sure I never had any desire to be king. You seemed to think it was a very fine lift for me when Maldo died, but I always knew he was the right man in the right place. I wish to heaven he had lived to bear his own re-responsibilities! I should greatly have preferred to remain a prince; then I could have enjoyed myself in my own way. You are a good hand at lecturing, mother, but may I ask, in return, by what right you banished an innocent and unoffending woman from the country without consulting the wishes of your King?"

Gisdel looked away nervously as he put the question, lest the Queen should read in his eyes the effort these bold words cost him.

"I tried to save you from yourself," she answered quickly, "and I will save you yet. I am surprised you should set your wits against mine and attempt that dangerous ménage—a house divided against itself."

"Yes, we had better look out for danger," Gisdel retorted, lighting a cigar. "You say the times are unquiet—well, does it strike you that the Queen is just as unpopular as the King? I am not blind; I know the people compare me unfavorably with Maldio. But I am also quite alive to the fact that there are many old scores to *your* account. If my throne is insecure, you have helped to make it so. Everybody knew you hated Maldio. Half the country merely pretended to worship him in order to annoy you. The fact that I am your son makes it very difficult for me to gain the confidence even of my Ministers. You look upon me as a fool, but perhaps I see further than you think. I believe the very people round us, the very members of our Court, are enemies at heart, for you never spare them. To me you are a woman with one friend and one only. His name is Diarmid Bistoff."

The Queen listened to these cruel home-truths in haughty silence. She was recalling all she had done for Gisdel, from infancy to the recent plot against Maldio's life. She counted, with calm precision, the crimes that might rise against her in the hour of Revolution. She thought, too, of the ghastly secret shared by a handful of men in her employ, men who could spread abroad the details of Mortimore Dugdale's death. What if her trusted guards and councilors voiced the hideous deed throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom? Her blood ran cold, and the color faded from her face. Of late she had aged terribly. Deep lines of care proved that the evil-doer suffered certain pangs of conscience, sharpened by bitter disappointment in her son.

"Yes," she murmured, "at least Bistoff is true; he has been always my devoted slave. I have noticed lately he seems sad and distrait. Naturally he, too, resents the insult you are hurling at the throne. I com-

missioned him to find out whether Mademoselle De L'Isle boasted openly of her conquest. Perhaps it may interest you to know that even your letters are flaunted abroad as proof of a friendship which some of her fellow actors and actresses were inclined to disbelieve. Your presents to her have not only become the talk of the theater, but the whole town gossips about them. Tradesmen are eager to advertise that Mademoiselle patronizes their establishments; the crowds are as anxious for a sight of her when she drives through the streets, as if she were a royal personage. I wonder your father's wraith does not rise to curse you for your gross and stubborn folly!"

Gisdel flung the cushions on the floor and sprang to his feet in a sudden fit of rebellious indignation.

"I'm sick of your lecturing!" he cried pettishly. "Can't I, in all this Palace, have one room to myself where I may sit quietly and think out affairs of state, without being scolded as if I were a child? You make my life unbearable because I happen to have taken a fancy to a pretty face. You were just as hard on Maldio. You drove him wild about that girl at Cambridge, the Miss Magnus with whom he corresponded to his dying day."

Horatia laughed scornfully. "Your stepbrother's bad example need prove no guide to you," she declared, with a cruel curl of her lip. "As to affairs of state, I see no important documents or correspondence occupying the King's leisure. Drink, smoke, and idle lounging appear to occupy his days. It is I, your mother, who rise early and bear the heavy burden of your neglected responsibilities."

He echoed her laugh of disdain, as he snapped up the Queen's words hotly:

"That is just what you have worked for, just what you want, precisely what you like! You could not bear this so-called burden when Maldio elected to go his own way. He insisted that everything should pass through his hands. You could have killed him for ignoring your advice, keeping you in the dark, taking the reins of power. Now you have it all your own way, and still you grumble. It is impossible to please some people, and I confess I have given up trying to please you."

His words were interrupted by a servant with a note.

Queen Horatia snatched the scented letter from the salver before the King had time to take it, dismissing the footman with a wave of her hand.

"From that woman of the theater!" she muttered, breaking the seal.

"How dare you!" cried Gisdel, hot with resentment at her appropriation of his property.

He made no effort to wrest it from her, but as she drew the closely written sheet from the envelope she dropped it with a cry of pain.

Gisdel had bent down suddenly and fastened his teeth in her wrist.

CHAPTER XXVI

A DOUBLE GAME

QUEEN HORATIA sent for Count Bistoff; she always summoned him instantly when in trouble. As he was ushered into her presence she noticed how thin and careworn he appeared. She held out the royal hand for a respectful salute, and as he raised it to his lips he saw that her wrist was bandaged.

She bade him be seated, and a deep sigh accompanied the words. Beneath her eyes blue lines marked the dusky, discolored skin which spoke of sleepless nights and mental suffering.

"You wished to see me medically, your Majesty?" he queried. "I fear that much anxiety of mind has affected your Majesty's health."

She looked at him with an expression of unmistakable distress. "The body must be affected by the mind," she murmured sadly, "and at the moment my malady lies here."

She placed her hand to her heart with a tragic gesture. "You alone," she added quickly, "know what I have done for the child I loved and spoiled, the child who has turned on me like a serpent. I gave him the throne—with your assistance, certainly. We made him the highest in the land, and now he is doing his utmost to break my heart!"

Tears shone in Queen Horatia's eyes, tears that were never shed for the sufferings of others.

Bistoff's attitude was one of tender sympathy and commiseration. He had trained himself to his rôle of hypocrite so well that in the Queen's presence the part was second

nature, though inwardly his fine spirit rebelled against the fate that forced him to play a double game.

"I presume," he said, "his Majesty is still infatuated with Mademoiselle de L'Isle."

Queen Horatia smiled bitterly: "My dear Count, we have almost come to blows. See, this is the result of my last interview with Gisdel! I dared to touch one of her letters, and he bit me like a mad dog!"

She unwound the fine linen bandage, revealing the marks of human teeth. Bistoff examined the injury with shocked eyes.

"Is it as bad as that?" he murmured. "I believe, your Majesty, that such women as De L'Isle can turn men into devils. There is something hypnotic in her charm. She holds King Gisdel in the hollow of her hand. At present you are in a difficult position. If any harm befell the dancer—any mysterious harm, I mean, all the country would look to the Queen-Mother for an explanation. You could not attempt to remove her at present. She is popular with the people and, if I may breathe a word in confidence, they applaud her for making the King appear less noble in the eyes of a critical world. We have not finished with Maldio; he rises from the dead at every turn. His influence is as much alive as when he walked the earth. We have yet to stamp him out, to lay his ghost—you and I, who consigned him to the tomb."

It almost seemed as if Bistoff spoke against his will, and two bright spots of color appeared in his pale cheeks like danger signals.

A strange chill crept through Horatia's veins. She watched him with lynx eyes—the man who, to serve her and gain fortune, had murdered the late King.

"I think we are strong enough for that," she said, with a touch of the o d assurance. "I am more afraid of the living than the dead." She paused, and then a sudden idea flashed across her mind. "Count," she whispered, "I am wrong there. Mortimore Dugdale's body, entombed with Maldio, could tell a very unpleasant tale, if the truth were ever known. I have feared lately that the men who imprisoned him may not always remain silent and discreet. I think it might be wise to remove Dugdale's remains to some distant cemetery."

Bistoff bent low and placed his hand over his face as if absorbed in thought. For him the suggestion held innumerable fears. Her guards, finding the tomb empty, might institute a search which would possibly lead to the discovery of the secret passage to Villa Monastero.

"Do you agree?" queried Horatia, and still her eyes were fixed upon him with the piercing gaze so many of her courtiers had reason to dread.

"No!" The answer came firmly. Now he looked up with set lips, the strength of his character revealed in the determined expression which gave youth and vigor to his face. "Most certainly, your Majesty, if you command these men, who placed Mortimore Dugdale in the vault, to seek his bones and remove them by stealth, it brings the whole story again fresh to their minds, impresses upon them the horror of his death. They will talk together of this sudden order, wondering what it all means, discussing your reasons, suspecting, perhaps, that fear has prompted you to the strange new move. Why set them talking once more? I speak strongly because I feel strongly, and your Majesty knows well I have her interests at heart. At present we are concerned much with the living; pray do not let us trouble about the dead."

"But you yourself said we had not yet finished with Maldio," broke in Horatia, and her face wore just a faint look of suspicion.

"Yes, but we have finished with Mortimore Dugdale, your Majesty. That is quite another matter. He is the sleeping dog who will lie asleep for all time. He is not a memory in the minds of every Lambasian, like Maldio the Thinker."

"Perhaps you are right," she murmured, but her voice sounded unconvinced, and in her heart she asked herself: "Why is Bistoff so determined on this point? He was suddenly confused; he shielded his face; he took some moments to collect himself before hurling this advice at me with so much warmth. There must be some reason. Is it the one he has given? Can I trust him completely?"

As if in pursuit of the thought, she put an unexpected question: "Tell me, Count, if I may ask, how have you spent the large fortune I gave you after Maldio's death? I am informed there is no visible change in your household; that you still live in the same style at Villa Monastero. It almost looks as if my generosity were unappreciated."

Bistoff winced, but his ready wit came to his aid—and he knew he must lie.

"Most gracious Lady," he whispered, 'is not your servant ever cautious? To become suddenly rich after the death of the King whose life I, as a physician, was unable to save, would possibly have caused talk. I am paving the way to my mysterious fortune, telling my friends of a wonderful copper mine in Russia, in which I have invested some of my capital. I say that if the scheme proves successful my fortune wil' be made for ever. My wife, knowing my devotion to your Majesty, must never guess the princely sum is the gift of a royal hand. A jealous partner makes the home impossible, and how can I help admiring the most beautiful Queen in all the world, with a reverent homage that amounts to worship?'

Horatia held out her hand to him.

"Diarmid," she murmured softly, "if—if your wife could be removed, I would make you greater, even, than you guess!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE SILENT BRIGADE

THE words fell like lead on Count Bistoff's heart, revolting his higher nature by the baseness of their insinuation. So this woman of red crimes, this cruel, inhuman monster of iniquity, actually hinted that his pure, sweet Heldra might be removed in order that he should be raised to the proud position of second husband to the Queen-Mother! For a moment he betrayed a passing flash of displeasure in telltale eyes, a look that set Horatia wondering whether his professed adoration could be relied on.

"Dear Madame," he murmured, "I look for no reward save your esteem and the joy of doing you service. At present we must not think of ourselves; we must seek to save the King from a youthful folly."

Horatia could see he was turning the subject, and the knowledge came as a rebuff to her amorous words of a moment since. Proud to the core, she bent forward and touched a bell.

"I will order you some refreshment before returning to the Villa Monastero," she said coldly, "but I must ask you to take it alone in a separate apartment, as I am tired and wish to rest."

This sudden dismissal warned Bistoff he had betrayed something of his real feelings, yet his relief at escaping was so great that he did not linger to try to remove the impression he had made on the Queen's mind. For once he had failed in his hypocritical part; the power of acting deserted him, and he knew his wisest course lay in flight.

"Your Majesty is most kind," he answered, rising and bowing in stately fashion, "but I am neither thirsty nor hungry, and would prefer to return, as I have some duties to perform that must not be longer neglected."

Queen Horatia waved her hand airily, and looked away as if she took no interest in his words.

"Doubtless," she said, "the food provided for you by the Countess will be more to your liking than the Queen's fare. I quite understand, Count. You need not come again until you are summoned."

"Good-night, beloved Queen," he murmured, and the words came haltingly. "May you be guarded from all harm!"

"Good-night," she echoed, with no heart in her voice.

Then she heard the door close gently; once more she was alone.

"To think," she said, "that after all his protestations this man prefers the pale-faced Heldra to the greatest lady in the land!"

The knowledge came to Horatia as a severe shock, a blow which so hurt her sense of pride that she could no longer understand how it had been possible for Bistoff to fascinate her in the past.

"He must have changed," she told herself. "He can not be the man I almost loved. Perhaps I misjudge him, though—he may have been so awed by my amazing condescension that his brain became temporarily affected. I hardly know what to think, for certainly it was very strange—his speaking so hotly on the subject of opening Maldio's tomb."

She moved to her writing-table and began hurriedly penning orders. Where secret and difficult work was involved she never trusted anybody's memory, lest mistakes should occur. Presently she folded the long sheet of paper and sent in hot haste for a tall Guardsman whose peculiar reticence gave him the name of "Dumb Zavair." His reputation for loyalty was second only to Bistoff's.

"Good evening, Zavair," said the Queen in a slow, condescending voice. "I have an

important piece of work to entrust to you and your picked men—your silent men, the few who executed my orders in regard to a spy named Dugdale."

The soldier bent his head in acknowledgment of the words.

"Your Majesty can rely on the Silent Brigade!" he answered in a hushed tone of deep solemnity. "They know well that if they speak it means the forfeit of their tongues. They obey implicitly and say nothing. What are your Majesty's commands?"

Horatia handed him the sealed document.

"This contains," she said, "my wishes for the small service I require at your hands. It must be carried through without fail as soon as possible. Do not delay in making the necessary arrangements. I desire that the royal vault be opened secretly, and Dugdale's remains removed to a distant part of the country. It no longer pleases me that a stranger's bones should rot in the late King's tomb. When your work is done, come and report to me each detail of the business, but do not name it to King Gisdel. His Majesty is too occupied with more important affairs to trouble about so small a matter."

Once more Zavair's large head bowed low as his hand saluted.

"That is all," added Horatia, turning again to the papers on her desk.

The gigantic Guardsman retired, backing to the door with the Queen's written orders held against the scarlet cloth of his handsome uniform.

"Perhaps I shall lay his ghost now," she murmured. "I always felt he was near—so near! When I attended service in the Cathedral I almost fancied he wandered in the gloom of the aisles and looked at me from shadowy corners. Perhaps it would have been better to let the soldiers shoot him in the barrack-yard, but Bistoff's proposition tempted me at the time—it was such a great revenge!"

As Horatia sat alone, brooding over the past, Gisdel was privately interviewing the leading jeweler in Lambasa, who had brought a selection of costly ornaments for the King's inspection. The following morning was Mademoiselle de L'Isle's birthday anniversary, and the royal mind was busy with thoughts of a suitable present.

Already he had planned a feast at the residence of the dancer, to take place immediately after her performance at the theater. She had given him the list of invited guests for his approval, and though the names were all unknown to him, he passed it without comment. He cared little who was present if the beautiful Caroline de L'Isle were content and he could watch her eyes dancing with pleasure as he listened to her witty speech.

What an evening they would have! Not till dawn brightened the sleeping city would that merry throng break up and leave Caroline to dream of those mad, glad hours.

The wine had been sent from the royal cellars; the fare, provided by Gisdel, would be of the choicest. Everything that money could procure should deck the board, and out-of-season dainties were to astonish the favored guests. This theatrical banquet, at which a queen of the footlights would preside with King Gisdel, was to make history in the career of the famous dancer. Horatia was naturally to be kept in ignorance of the revels arranged. Gisdel well knew that if the secret leaked out his mother would take steps to spoil what he termed "an innocent frolic."

The contents of the jeweler's bag proved so bewildering that Gisdel hardly knew which dainty decoration to select.

"This diamond heart with the ruby center is almost the prettiest," he said, gazing on the glorious red of the stones that lay like spots of blood in a setting of brilliants as fine as any possessed by Horatia. "Then again this emerald necklace is hard to surpass," he added pensively, "and Mademoiselle is devoted to the color green. I am at a loss to know which of the two she would prefer."

The jeweler appeared quite overcome by the King's appreciation of his wares. "If I might be allowed to make a suggestion, your Majesty," he said, "I should propose that Mademoiselle be given her choice. These two pieces are of equal value. I could call, myself, at her residence and leave the one which takes her fancy."

Gisdel heaved a sigh of relief; the responsibility was removed.

"Let Caroline choose by all means," he thought, as he gave his consent with a brief, "Very well."

The following morning Gisdel received a letter in the now familiar handwriting of

Mademoiselle de L'Isle. It began in the usual quaint way that she had adopted since their friendship:

MY KING: Your gifts are all around me in glorious profusion. Such flowers, such fruit, and such bonbons! Hurrah! for to-night we will spend an evening to remember all our lives. I shall return home immediately after my dance and be in readiness to receive a beloved benefactor. Even as I write, fresh evidences of your kindness are to hand. The great Bendo has arrived with two lovely cases of jewels—a necklace and a heart. He tells me they come from you—that it is the royal command I shall select the piece that gives me most pleasure. Let me confess they are so beautiful, lying side by side, that it is impossible to say which is most fitted to my style of beauty. So, dear generous King, I decide to keep both in memory of this wonderful birthday, the first I have spent with you.

The Queen of your heart,
CAROLINE.

Gisdel wiped his brow and drew a deep breath.

"Both!" he muttered, turning pale. "Does she think there are no limits to a royal purse?"

He shuddered as he remembered Horatia, and wondered how soon she would discover his new enemy—Debt.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EMPTY!

KING GISDEL little knew how closely he was watched by Horatia's paid spies. His lavish expenditure was reported to her, and no one realized more acutely than the Queen-Mother that such a woman as Caroline de L'Isle would, if possible, bleed the King of his entire fortune. The royal gifts sent to the actress on her birthday were duly noted, and throughout the day Horatia kept a sharp eye on Gisdel to see whether he visited the dancer. But no alteration was made in the official program, and though, since their last quarrel, the mother and son were hardly on speaking terms, they drove together through the streets of Lambasa, smiling upon the populace and appearing not to notice how grudgingly their presence was acknowledged.

Just as they returned to the Palace gates Gisdel said suddenly: "How is your wrist, mother?"

Evidently the words cost him an effort, for he colored to the very roots of his hair.

Horatia appeared startled, and a little gratified, at the question. "The marks are still there," she replied, "but I should not mind that if I thought you were sorry."

Gisdel commanded the one tender spot in her nature, and well he knew the fact. "Of course I am sorry," he muttered. "I should never have done such a thing if you had not infuriated me beyond words. It isn't safe to rouse the devil in people. You will do it once too often some day."

"Thank you," she said coldly, "but I think, considering my age and experience, I can manage my own affairs. My path has always been one of success. May you live to see the social triumphs I have known during my splendid career at the side of your noble father. What a man of iron, what a great and illustrious ruler he proved himself! Try to be worthy of the blood which flows in your veins; try to be 'Gisdel the Great,' not 'Gisdel the Weakling,' who wastes his substance upon a woman of the stage."

The horses drew up at the Palace steps, and Gisdel alighted, pale as death. His momentary repentance passed in a flood of fresh resentment. So she knew that the beautiful De L'Isle proved expensive! But how? Had she spied upon him, or were her words a mere shot in the air?

For the rest of the day he avoided his mother, and at dinner that night did not once trouble to address her. He was thinking of the merry evening in store at the residence of the now famous Caroline de L'Isle. How cold and meaningless the Court etiquette appeared, compared with the spontaneous gaiety and reckless atmosphere of that Bohemian environment! Gisdel told himself that in a few hours he would be free to enjoy— he would be really a man, tasting the wine of life. Other men of his age sowed their wild oats and drank deeply of the cup which held the sweets of dissipation and the allurements of love, then why not Lambasa's youthful King?

So set was his mind on the wonderful banquet in store, at which Caroline would preside, a witty, sparkling, radiant personality, that he felt dead to every other emotion. He was hardly conscious of the moving forms about him, and the voices of his courtiers appeared to people another world. In fancy he heard the shouts of applause as Mademoiselle de L'Isle danced with her incomparable grace and vivacity to a crowded house. He knew of whom she

would be thinking; he knew, too, that many eyes would note the magnificent new jewels sported by the popular favorite on this her birthday night. Other gifts had probably been laid at her shrine, but none so splendid as the gems from a royal admirer.

To-night Gisdel was in no mood to count the cost. He felt he hated the Palace and its heavy formality. His mother's presence jarred his nerves. He desired only to get away to the unconventional atmosphere of another and completely different setting.

"I am suffering from a bad headache," he told Horatia. "I shall retire early, and please do not disturb me by unnecessary inquiries. I only wish to sleep. Good-night, mother."

He bent his head for the customary salute; her lips felt like ice upon his brow.

"Good-night, my son," she said, in chilling accents. "May you rest well and feel refreshed in the morning."

The words were spoken in a whisper which held some vague insinuation. Horatia remembered it was Caroline's birthday-night.

Dismissing her attendants, she retired to the solitude of her boudoir, where Zavair was to be admitted with a detailed account of the secret work entrusted to the Silent Brigade. She knew he might be late, and for a while sat with closed eyes, turning over in her mind the many events requiring consideration. She tried to see the end of it all, to picture the years to come. Would Gisdel, in time, fulfil her hopes, grow weary of Caroline and her extravagant demands and, turning to some worthy princess, do his duty to the country? She dreamed of a future heir, strong as Maldio and Gisdel's father, able to rule with the sound judgment and necessary diplomacy of kings who are kings indeed.

So engrossing were her thoughts that she did not notice the lateness of the hour when eventually Zavair was shown into her presence.

His usually ruddy face had changed to a sickly hue as he saluted, meeting the inquiring eyes of the Queen-Mother with a nervous stare.

"Well," she queried, "what have you to report?"

A momentary pause followed, during which Zavair looked down in palpable confusion.

"Your Majesty," he faltered, "I have something amazing to relate. I fear it will trouble you sorely, as it has troubled us, seeing the explanation is hard to discern. *We found the royal vault empty! Both bodies have disappeared!*"

Horatia clenched her fists, her whole body underwent a violent contortion; then she caught her breath, with a strong effort at self-control.

"Empty!"

"Yes, your Majesty. The King's coffin is there, but the lid has been removed and there is not a sign of the royal corpse, nor yet of the spy's bones. We could find no trace of the tomb having been tampered with. It is a complete and baffling mystery."

For a moment Queen Horatia could not speak. Then she attempted an air of calmness, though inwardly she was appalled, terrified.

"What did your men make of the matter?" she queried at last, sitting like a woman carved in stone.

"They were consumed with fear, your Majesty. They say the bodies have been transplanted by some heavenly device—that angels have carried both King and commoner to another world."

"And what do you think, Zavair?"

"Your Majesty honors me by permitting me to give an opinion. I believe that thieves must have skilfully broken into the vault in order to rob the dead and, for some reason best known to themselves, conveyed the bodies away. The question then arises, did they find the prisoner Dugdale alive? If so, he may be waiting now to avenge his wrongs."

The guilty woman trembled from head to foot at the horror of this suggestion. In a moment the fact returned to torment her that Bistoff had objected with extraordinary vehemence to her suggestion of reopening the tomb.

A hideous suspicion leaped to her mind—that he knew, that he had plotted against her—he, the man she trusted, the only living soul who shared the murderous secret of Maldio's end! Her teeth chattered as if with cold.

But Bistoff had himself proposed that Dugdale should be buried! Was it possible the proposition had been made in order to save an enemy? Then why, if he, the Count, were a traitor, should he consent to poison Maldio? Again she remembered that the stranger from England had declared that

Maldio moved in his coffin—had sworn Maldio was not dead.

The Queen's brain reeled. A thousand petrifying fears crowded upon her. She put up her hands instinctively, as if to ward them off.

"Zavair," she cried, "Count Bistoff knows what occurred when Dugdale disappeared. I wish for his counsel now. Take a carriage instantly to his residence, with the swiftest horses procurable, see him privately, and tell him exactly what you discovered. Say he must return at once to the Palace for an audience with the Queen. Bring him here with all possible speed. I will accept no excuse if he tarries after receiving the royal command!"

She knew Diarmid had never failed her. Yet a strong misgiving warned her that now, for the first time, he would fail her.

CHAPTER XXIX

ZAVAIR'S DISCOVERY

WITH careful nursing and great medical skill Count Bistoff wooed back the wandering reason of Mortimore Dugdale. At first he encouraged the mind to remain a blank, while building up the body and giving the nervous system entire rest. From the moments of returning consciousness the patient had clung to Bistoff as to a rock of safety. The kind faces of Heldra and her husband filled the agonized brain with a sense of peace and security.

Gradually, as time went on, flashes of memory returned. Just at the right moment the tactful doctor assisted with helpful words the efforts made by those hampered powers of reason. Slowly he pieced together the scattered forces, readjusting their balance with the careful treatment of a man who had made an exhaustive and life-long study of nerves. Eventually Dugdale began to question intelligently, to recall the awful happenings of the recent past, and to take in fully the doctor's account of subsequent startling events.

Dugdale, the man of adventure, rose from his sick-bed with the same dauntless spirit as of old. He scorned the idea of returning quietly to England under another name and seeking British assistance to avenge his wrongs, when Lambasa was on the eve of a great revolution.

"If there is fighting to be done," he said, "I will stand by you, my friends." He gazed gratefully as he spoke upon his deliverer and the sweet Countess who had nursed him with such unfailing care. "I have been laid by long enough. Let me remain upon the scene of action, for Queen Horatia's day is over, I understand, and I need not look to my country to bring her deeds home."

In reply Bistoff informed him that danger undoubtedly surrounded them and that, though his decision was a daring one, so long as he chose to remain at Villa Monastero he would be a welcome, honored and much-loved guest. It seemed as if his illness and recovery bound them together by strong ties of mutual affection. Mortimore might have been their own brother, so great was the intimacy between the married couple and their rescued guest.

The Count and Dugdale were smoking on a balcony, enjoying the cool night air, heavy with the scent of flowers, when Heldra joined them, her face paler than usual.

She went straight to her husband and laid a trembling hand on his shoulder.

"Diarmid," she said, "a messenger has come from the Queen. He asks to speak with you privately. He has brought a carriage to take you back at once to the Palace. I believe it is Zavair. Do make some excuse not to go! A strong intuition warns me there is a plot in the air against your safety. You told me the Queen was annoyed with you to-day. Why should she send one of her Guards to fetch you? She has never done that before. She knows a message by a servant has never failed to take you instantly to the Palace. She may be going to place you under arrest. By the love you bear me, by the life you owe to your country, let me implore you to remain here! I will be seized by a sudden fainting-attack. Surely the serious illness of your wife should prove a sufficient cause for staying at home!"

"A woman of resource!" said Dugdale, smiling. "The idea is a good one."

The Count shook his head. "Have no fear, Heldra," he whispered. "I can take care of myself. If I disobey now it will only widen the breach, and at present it is needful that I should have access to the Palace."

He kissed her with lingering passion, turning in the doorway to add soothingly:

"I will see you again before leaving and

tell you the nature of my interview with Zavair should it prove of consequence."

As the Count came into the presence of the tall Guardsman, he knew that something must be wrong, for the usually silent Zavair revealed his agitation at once.

"Her Majesty the Queen has sent you to fetch me, I understand," said Diarmid in his calm, even voice. "May I inquire if anything is wrong at the Palace?"

The man drew nearer and whispered his reply:

"Indeed, most gracious Count, her Majesty has cause to fear! She ordered the royal vault to be opened that we might remove the remains of the foreign spy who was incarcerated with King Maldio. The tomb is empty! The body of our illustrious 'Thinker' has been stolen, and we know not if the Englishman has escaped alive."

As Bistoff listened he, too, grew pale.

"The news is serious and amazing," he replied. "I will come at once. I must inform my wife of my absence, and then shall join you without delay."

He hurried from Zavair's presence, bursting in upon Heldra and Dugdale, breathlessly excited. Instantly he informed them of the unfortunate occurrence and the danger it predicted.

"You will never enter that trap?" gasped Heldra in an agony of dread. "You must not—shall not go!"

"No," he answered reassuringly. "Circumstances alter cases, my dear, and I should be mad to enter the Palace now. I have paid my last visit to our bloodthirsty Queen. At present I have other axes to grind. The day of waiting is over; the hour has come to pay back old scores, to resurrect the dead, to set alight the smoldering fires burning in a thousand hearts! You may play your part of sudden illness, Heldra. Lie back in this chair with closed eyes. Keep quite still and leave the rest to me. Already you are pale as death—no one will doubt your insensibility."

Heldra obeyed, and her husband touched the bell. As the servant entered, Bistoff bent over his wife and, sprinkling water on her forehead, chafed her hands in well-feigned agitation.

"Your mistress is taken ill," he said. "Prepare her room instantly and tell the soldier below I can not come to the Palace. He must carry my regrets to her Majesty and say that I will not leave the Villa until the Countess is out of danger."

With these words, Diarmid picked up his wife in his arms, and bore her to her chamber, a limp figure, lying against his breast.

Zavair drove back to the royal residence at breakneck speed. When he came into the Queen's presence great drops stood out on his forehead, while his eyes appeared starting from his head.

"Where is the Count?" asked Horatia, her voice shaking.

"At the Villa Monastero, your Majesty," gasped Zavair. "He would not come."

The Queen tossed her head indignantly, her nostrils inflated like a war-horse scenting blood.

"Then you have failed in your duty! Did I not command you to take no excuse? Had I realized you would disobey, I would have sent a whole regiment to arrest the Count, rather than be treated in this disgraceful fashion! Why, pray, did he refuse to come at my bidding?"

"His wife, your Majesty, was suddenly taken ill, after I acquainted him with your wishes. No word of her indisposition was breathed before I told him of the disappearance of the bodies. Then he refused to see me again—he was attending to Madame. But there is something more to tell—something I hardly dare name, most mighty Queen——"

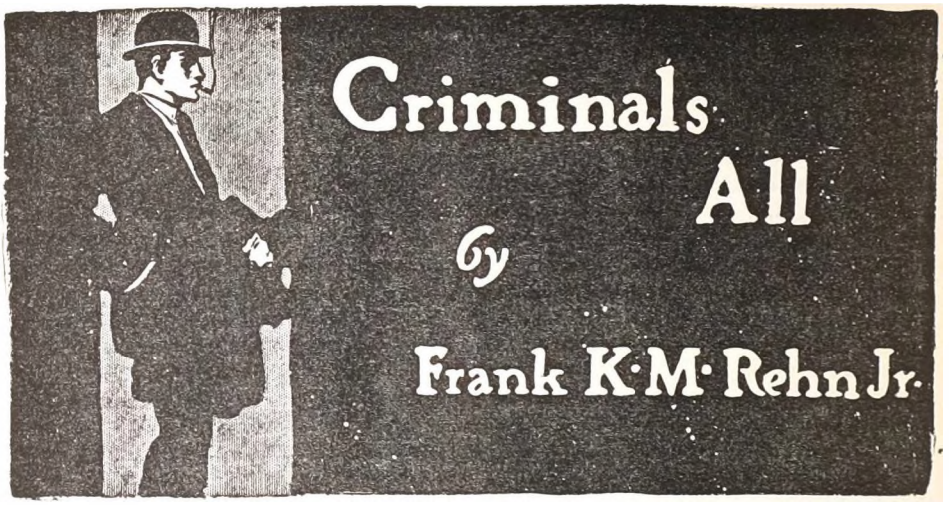
He paused, and now the drops rolled down his face.

"Say on!" she whispered, and the low words revealed her inward unrest. "Do not fear. Keep nothing back; you know my courage."

Zavair drew himself up as if making a supreme effort. Then he looked her full in the face and uttered his amazing statement:

"Your Majesty permits me to deal her a blow. As I live, I swear I speak the whole truth, that I was not deceived. As I returned crestfallen from the Villa to reenter the carriage, troubled sorely at the Count's disloyal action, I happened to look upwards. Above me I noticed a balcony in which a tall lamp stood. Beneath its crimson shade sat a man. The light fell upon his face—and for a moment I stared and stared, unable to believe my eyes. That man, your Majesty, was—Mortimore Dugdale, the very same we buried with King Maldio!"

TO BE CONTINUED



IN CHESBROUGH'S rooms we were gathered, a doctor, a lawyer, a catcher-of-thieves, Chesbrough and myself. I may be disposed of as an artistic stenographer. Chesbrough has been about everything and everywhere, though when forced to confess to some livelihood and habitation he subscribes—mechanical engineer, N. Y. C.

A wave of crime had enveloped the city. Crime was therefore the topic of conversation. Amid the tinkle of ice in the glasses the Doctor expounded the theory, the Lawyer exposed the practise, the Catcher-of-Thieves explained the technique, and Chesbrough and I—sipped our drinks.

Suddenly Chesbrough broke his silence:

"You speak of criminals as a class apart. Probably every man in this room is a criminal," he asserted calmly.

The Lawyer bristled. "Legally?"

"Unfortunately only at the Bar of Conscience," smiled Chesbrough. "Man's laws are too short-sighted for what I speak of."

He paused, suddenly serious, and somehow no one broke the silence. Then he looked up.

"Do you remember in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'—

> Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
> By each let this be heard,
> Some do it with a bitter look,
> Some with a flattering word,
> The coward does it with a kiss,
> The brave man with a sword.

"Wilde saw that men do that to the thing they love. Yes, and to the thing they hate, to the thing they are indifferent to—wantonly, waywardly, carelessly; too stupid to know they play with crime—too stupid."

There was another brief pause, unbroken by the rest of us.

"I can site you a case," Chesbrough continued. "I had come up to Paris and had installed myself in a quaint little hotel on the south side of the river. Lounging into the salon after dinner, I chanced upon Al Devore, who promptly hailed me to his rooms and there introduced me to the assembled company, several of whom were staying at the hotel. They were mostly art students with a sprinkling of literary men and young army officers.

"The night was stifling. A few played cards, but most of us sat talking and smoking just as we are doing now.

"A little to my left sat a young fellow who interested me greatly. He was tall, French, and handsome as a thoroughbred. He took no part in the cards or conversation and flared up angrily when some of the men chaffed him on his glumness. Once or twice our eyes met, it seemed to me, in understanding. I learned afterwards, he had just had an unfortunate love-affair."

Chesbrough broke off sharply, and addressed himself to the Doctor: "You ought to know of him, Doc; his name was Chenal."

"André Chenal!" cried the Doctor. "Of course I do. He was the first, you know, to advocate the use of 'Suggestion' in professional medical treatment. It's a brilliant little book, I tell you! We look upon Chenal as a sort of medical Chatterton."

"That's the man," said Chesbrough. "Do you remember how he died?"

"No, can't say I do."

"Well, something about that man seemed to fascinate me, and I couldn't keep my eyes off him. He was conscious of it, too, for I could see the nervous twitching of his face. When the party broke up he seized my hand and wrung it with surprising warmth, blurting forth some apology for his reticence.

"Chenal was staying the night with Devore, and most of us were on that same floor. One of our party, however, a scatter-brained young fellow, had a room directly below Devore's.

"About a half-hour later the crash of a shot aroused the house. It came from the room below Devore's.

"Of course every one made a rush to the floor below, Chenal and Devore leading, and the rest close behind. The door was locked and they burst it open.

"The room was lighted, but empty. In the center stood a table and against the wall on one side was a couch. Between these two, on the floor, was a great splotch of fresh blood, while splashes of it marked the side of the couch and dripped from the table-cover. The room was filled with the acid smell of powder. An open window gave on to a balcony from whence an iron fire-escape descended to the ground two stories below. Two minutes had not elapsed since the firing of the shot, yet the room was void of victim or assailant.

"Suddenly Chenal, quicker-witted than the rest, stepped out on the balcony, descended to the street and ran toward the river. There he came upon a little group surrounding two excited gendarmes, who were gazing eagerly into the black impassive waters of the Seine. They told of a man who had leaped from the bridge and disappeared.

"No trace of his body was ever discovered. A more thorough search of the room in the hotel revealed a 38-caliber bullet lodged in the wall over the couch; some scattered fragments of glass, though these had not come from the window or mirror; and a blood-stained handkerchief found outside upon the balcony. Not the least peculiar occurrence was the fainting of Dr. Chenal, who had to be carried to his room by his friends.

"The morning papers printed a notice of suicide—cause unknown."

Chesbrough paused to light a cigar. We all watched him intently.

"That," he said, turning the cigar between his lips, "that was many years ago. Well, some five years after the incident I have just narrated, I was recuperating from an attack of the yellow fever in a certain little Italian village not far from Florence. Strolling through the country one Autumn afternoon I came upon a modest villa and, feeling rather weary, stopped to request a glass of wine.

"The owner was most cordial, and we were chatting gaily, when I chanced to espy under an olive tree but a few steps away a figure carefully bundled in a steamer-chair. Something there was about the face that seemed familiar. Suddenly I placed it and sprang to my feet. 'Dr. Chenal!' I cried, and hurried to his side.

"At the sound of his name the figure looked up—but the once spirited eyes were vacant and lifeless, his face the saddest, most terrible wreck I had ever seen.

"A hand on my arm pulled me away, and then and there I heard the sequel of that night in Paris told by the lips of a faithful and loving friend of him concerning whom the world had ceased to care.

"It seems that on that night André Chenal was deeply considering suicide. His proud nature could not brook the rebuff some girl had administered. Sitting there, surrounded by our talk, he had considered poisons and discarded them, fixing at last upon blowing out his brains and, if he failed in that—the river.

"As he had decided, so had it occurred—*not to himself, but to another!* And the responsibility for that other's act? Prophet and practitioner of Suggestion that he was, he could not escape the inevitable conclusion. This time he had, however unwittingly, infused into a human brain not health, not hope, but despair and death. He saw himself a murderer, and the vision would not leave his brain. He made a gallant struggle, even a fierce one, but in vain. Melancholy seized him. Gradually that brilliant mind gave way, was undermined, shattered and destroyed—and I found him a harmless, brainless creature, awaiting with vacant eyes the supreme suggestion—the suggestion of Eternal Sleep."

Chesbrough ceased and the Doctor voiced his doubts:

"I can readily understand the effect this

affair had upon Chenal. Men of his temperament are very susceptible to melancholy and readily obsessed by an idea. But I fail to see, Chesbrough, how any one was guilty of crime other than the poor unfortunate who committed suicide—unless, of course, you can positively prove his death was directly due to Chenal's suggestion."

"And that is exactly what he can't do!" triumphed the lawyer.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I stated that I could."

"Well, how, then? Can you bring a dead man back to life?"

"No. But I can produce a living one."

"Why, you stated that the fellow jumped into the Seine and was never seen again!"

"Exactly. But you see, my friend, that was only one of those strange coincidences that prove how little trust can be put in circumstantial evidence. Who that poor suicide was, no one knows, but he was not the man whose blood was found upon the floor of the hotel that stifling night in Paris for —*I was that man!*"

"But—but what happened to you?" I cried.

Chesbrough, for once in his life, showed signs of embarassment. "A man can not be forced to testify against himself," he said, "but—well, upon leaving Devore's room I descended to the office and found there orders directing me to take the night train to Milan. I made hasty preparations, so hasty that in stropping my razor I cut my left wrist clumsily and really very badly. To complete the havoc, in attempting to catch the blood in a glass and prevent a muss, I knocked it to the floor, where it smashed to bits and left a great red splotch on the carpet. Feeling faint, I lay down for a few minutes, then rose and sitting down at the opposite side of the table, facing the divan, commenced to cipher some code messages I had to send.

"On the table lay a pearl-handled revolver I had won in a shooting-match and used only for a paper-weight. I had a great habit of playing with it while thinking—turning the chambers and fumbling with it generally. I was doing so on this particular night, utterly forgetful that a day or so before, being obliged to have some repairs done to my regulation 'Service' weapon, I had shoved a few shells into the chambers. Suddenly the thing went off, the bullet burying itself in the wall over the couch.

"I sprang to my feet, thinking for a moment some one had shot at me, and right then the inexcusable desire to make a dramatic exit and leave a fascinating mystery for the men up-stairs to solve seized me, and, grabbing my handbag, I beat a hasty retreat, via the balcony and the fire-escape, and rushed for my train, which conveyed me out of Paris for two whole years.

"Upon my return I found great amusement in surprising my friends, many of whom had seen the notice of my suicide in the Paris papers. In fact, I felt rather proud of the neatness and completeness (always a matter of wonderment to me) of my little farce—until I found myself gazing into the unseeing eyes of Dr. André Chenal and heard the consequences of my act from the lips of his friend. Then suddenly I found myself—'Guilty!'

"Gentlemen, I have chosen an extreme case, one in which the irresponsibility and careless attitude of mind were exceptional—to say nothing of the run of unusual coincidences that played a part in it. *But—*" and Chesbrough paused for his words to go home, "*but*, search your own experiences and see if you can afford to sneer at the criminal who steal's another's money or stabs an enemy in the back."

For a long time we were very silent.

As we rose to go, the Doctor held out his hand.

"Chesbrough," he said, with what I thought a rather serious twinkle in his eye, "you've made me out a criminal. Thank goodness you're not a prosecuting attorney, for I should have had to plead guilty."

"Same here!" said the Catcher-of-Thieves.

I likewise pleaded guilty.

Only the lawyer objected, but that was merely professional—he had been counsel for the defense.

Humpo, Limited

Carmelita Sofia McCann Mixes Love and High Finance

by

Clarice Vallette McCauley

CARMELITA SOFIA McCANN uttered an exclamation of annoyance and sat back sharply among her satchels and wraps. She had been leaning forward with eager interest, her beautiful Spanish face aglow with color, her wide-open Irish gray eyes alive with curiosity, and the look she had surprised on the face of the tall and stately Du Maurier matron, who had, without either hesitation or haste, removed herself from under the very nose of the horse, had not been as complimentary as Carmelita had grown accustomed to expect. In fact, there had been distinct criticism in it, as though something about her—her style, her hair, her clothes, or her manner of wearing them—had failed to come up to the faultlessly well-bred standards of her judge. Carmelita bit her lip vexedly; just so had Her Ladyship, from the impregnable vantage-ground of her well-guarded steamer chair, been wont to regard her.

"Oh, pshaw!" muttered Carmelita Sofia, "these Londoners make me tired!"

The next moment, the four-wheeler, taking advantage of a sudden break in the traffic, turned sharply out of Kingsway into Aldwych, and, from among the pedestrians, another figure stood out distinctly. Over this woman's face (she was tall and dark, generously built, and of commanding presence) there flashed an illuminating look of instant recognition. Carmelita gave a little glad cry of greeting, and in a moment the cab had been stopped and the girl was seated at her side. When she spoke, a certain mobility of features, a redundance of expression, suggested the stage.

"Of all people in the world!" she exlaimed. "How *did* you get here?"

"The *Mauretania.*"

"But when? Why?"

"Arrived this morning. Don't ask me why.' That's just what I've been trying o figure out ever since I landed. I supose you're playing here?"

"Like fun I am! Oh, Carm, I've been uch an utter fool!" White teeth against n under lip that would have trembled acented a control that was half-hysterical.

"Tell me!" commanded Carmelita; then, nore solicitously: "Poor old thing! I hought you were looking rather seedy."

"That doesn't begin to express it; I'm n rags!" Her disgust was sincere, though he exaggeration was obvious. "I came ere eight months ago, expecting to get an English reputation. I've never been even ear enough to an engagement to see it hrough an opera-glass. I owe my landady for six weeks' lodging, and I've been ating any old way, any old thing, till I ate the sight of two-penny pies and soft-oiled eggs! I was just wondering where could beg, borrow or steal enough money o go home in the steerage."

Carmelita drew in her breath sharply. She had been used to the fantastic tricks of a gambler's luck all her life, but she had never been penniless, in a strange land, half-way round the world from the town of her birth. The girl beside her, misunderstanding her silence, flushed uncomfortably.

"Where do you intend stopping?"

"The Cecil," answered Carmelita, abent-mindedly.

"I'd better get out here, then; you're almost there."

"Why? Did you have an engagement?"

"Yes, an appointment—with the manger."

"Listen, then," said Carmelita briskly. 'Leave me at the hotel, and I'll have the abby drive you there. Don't argue! Never walk when you can ride. That's he motto of all successful financiers. I want you to come up this evening and take linner with me."

"At the Cecil?" The girl's eyes fairly blazed. "You mean well, Carm, but you don't know what you're talking about. Your very gladdest rags, my dear, will be what you'll want at the Cecil. As for me, I haven't an evening dress that's fit to wear to a dog-fight!"

Carmelita's lip curled with good-humored scorn. Always immaculately and appropriately dressed herself, she had a masculine abhorence of the feminine excuse "Nothing to wear," yet she had her own object in wishing to dine that evening at the Cecil. She compromised.

"To-morrow, then, at lunch. Name your own place."

The girl hesitated, in her pose the hurt resentment of a proud nature that has appealed for sympathy and been denied. She shook her head.

"Don't be an everlasting idiot," chided Carmelita softly, her contralto voice suddenly husky with comprehension. "Of course I'm going to see you through. We'll talk it over to-morrow. In the meantime, let me prescribe for you: One Turkish bath, a shampoo, a facial massage, a nap, a good feed, and an evening at the silliest show the town affords. Kindly invest the accompanying as directed," she mimicked, suiting the action to the word. "Where are you living?"

"In Bloomsbury, near the Museum; Woburn Place. You won't have any trouble finding it. I'll write the address."

"I'll be there," said Carmelita briefly, "at ten-thirty to-morrow."

And a few minutes later Carmelita Sofia McCann was swallowed up in the unostentatious but soothing luxury her soul so loved. Yet, even as she registered, she was conscious of a recurrence of the feeling that had haunted her intermittently since her landing at Liverpool, for the clerk looked at her, through her and beyond her, as though seeking the companion he had reason to expect. Moreover, when, in the simplest and, at the same time, most elegant gown her wardrobe offered, Carmelita Sofia went down to dinner she was uncomfortably conscious of an observation that ordinarily would have delighted her.

"This will never do," thought Carmelita. "They don't take me for a Yankee. To them I'm a Spanish girl, and what in the world is a 'nice' Spanish girl doing here without her duenna?" And from out her scanty store of French she recalled a phrase, and, with a mischievous little smile, said to the oysters on her plate:

"*Nous allons arranger tout cela.*"

As a first step, therefore, toward rectifying her omission, Carmelita stopped for a moment at the desk.

"No telegrams for me yet?" she asked—"Miss Carmelita Sofia McCann." Then, as the clerk answered negatively, she added: "I expected my aunt to meet me here; she has evidently been delayed. When she arrives, she will want the suite adjoining mine. It can be arranged?"

"Certainly, miss."

"In the meantime, should any message arrive, let me have it at once, please." And Carmelita swept gracefully away, serene in the consciousness that her words had been overheard by the one pair of ears in all England she wished to reassure.

II

THE theatrical temperament has recuperative powers plus. It was, therefore, no surprise to Carmelita to find awaiting her, on the following morning, a radiant, confident Nancy—albeit a rather disheveled one—in a somewhat frayed and tarnished Japanese kimono.

"I slept for the first time in months, Carmelita!" was her greeting. "Are you a witch?"

"You'll think so when I tell you my news. I have an engagement for you."

"What! Don't tease me, please, dear."

"I'm not joking. Can you play a *grande dame?*"

"You saw me often enough at the Burbank."

"A Spanish one?"

"I ought to be able to do so. We used to see enough of them in the old California days, Carmelita *mia.*"

"This is not a matter of dialect. She's not supposed to speak English; but you'll have to learn some Spanish."

"All right. And how about wardrobe?"

"That will be furnished you."

"It would have to be. That was on the level, Carm—what I told you yesterday; I'm flat broke. Consequently, the financial end of this interests me considerably more than the artistic. What does the part pay?"

"That will depend——"

"On what I can get, I suppose."

"Not exactly; on what the company makes."

"What on earth are you talking about? I never heard of such a thing! Why, who's managing the show?"

"I am."

"Carmelita! Are you crazy?"

Carmelita leaned forward in the chintz-covered chair and eyed her friend with smiling shrewdness.

"Let's see how much good your theatrical training is."

"It doesn't qualify for Pinkerton's."

"No?" laughed Carmelita. "But it might help you to grasp a dramatic situation. I'm going to be perfectly frank with you, Nancy. You know how Dad made his money?"

"Well, er—not exactly."

"Shucks!" said Carmelita impatiently. "Everybody in Los Angeles knew that Terry McCann's extremely erratic income depended on a lot of dark horses known as 'Bucket Shops.'"

"He was awfully successful," ventured Nancy tentatively.

"Oh, *awfully!*" admitted Carmelita dryly. "I don't suppose there was ever a get-rich-quick scheme that blew over the Rockies that Dad didn't try. The funny part of it was, he was *always* successful; yet we never seemed to amass much money."

"What the critics call a '*succès d'estime*'?"

"I don't know," replied Carmelita rather vaguely. "The trouble with Dad was that it took too much to put his ideas across. There's where I intend to go him one better."

"But, my dear! A woman can't——"

"Oh, can't she, though? You wait and see. We're going to make the money fly, I imagine, and I don't mind telling you that I'm over here to annex a little necessary coin from some one before what I have gives out. Fortunately, I've already picked out one of the contributors, the dearest little 'baa-baa,' a Lord, or Honorable, or something. Met him on shipboard, or rather, *didn't* meet him; his godmother wouldn't let me. You see, he's a younger son, and a sort of pet of godmama's, who rather likes to have a handsome boy gallivanting around with her. The old lady is a tartar! I hoped at first she'd prove unseaworthy and retire. Not much! She was on deck earlier than I was, and sometimes later; always later than the Honorable; and she disapproved of me mightily. The Honorable didn't, though. He was a nice boy, and terribly smitten; I could see that."

"But what are you going to do to him?"

"My dear, I'm going to *interest* him in something."

"In what?"

"How do I know, until I find out his hobbies? I've got to meet him first. Unfortunately, I'm afraid he has imbibed some of godmother's caution; and—there's where you come in."

"Oh, indeed! Would you mind explaining?"

"That's what I'm here for. *You* are Señora Dolores Mercedes de la Guerra, my mother's sister. (Don't be alarmed; she never had any.) Your knowledge of English is confined to a tourist's handful of necessary phrases——"

"That's what I call pretty mean of you! Oh, that's rotten, Carm!" protested Nancy, with unconscious assimilation of the slang of two continents.

Carmelita's eyes danced impishly.

"Why, you *have* a sense of humor. I was beginning to be afraid you'd lost it. You will arrive from Paris—to-morrow."

"Am I supposed to master the Spanish language overnight?"

"Oh, dear, no! Say twenty simple phrases, like, 'Are you much fatigued, dear one?'"

"Much use that will be!"

"On the contrary, it will be invaluable. You will probably make use of it every evening. These phrases will form a code in which we can exchange useful hints. For instance: 'Are you tired, dear one?' will mean to me, 'Shall I feign a headache and retire?' and, according to my answer, you will, or will not, go to bed."

"I see—*very* clever!"

"And convenient. I wonder if any one ever thought of using her duenna that way before?"

"And you're going to all this trouble to absorb some of 'Bertie Cecil's' money?"

"That's not his name," said Carmelita, with well-simulated displeasure.

"Why don't you marry him? It seems to me it would be easier, safer and lots more profitable."

"There I differ. Because this boy appears to have more money than is good for his health is no reason why I should make off with him as well as his coin. No, my dear, he belongs to his family, and—they're welcome to him. Loot is loot, and—er—business is business, but the laws of Great Britain against kidnapping are excessively severe. Now I've no more time to waste explaining things to you. You must leave here early to-morrow. Your own trunks will do—minus those theatrical tags. As for wardrobe, you need outfitting from head to foot, especially the head. How about a wig? A white one won't do; you could never live up to it."

"'For this relief——'"

"Don't mention it. An iron-gray, and lots of it, will be better. We'll get that first. Then we'll dress up to the wig. We're not going to spare expense, my dear. Remember, *this* is on the Honorable; or, rather—" she smiled reminiscently—"on the Honorable's godmama."

III

THOUGH Carmelita Sofia's stately head was bent most attentively over the menu she was quite aware of the little stir their appearance had occasioned at the fifth table on their left. Likewise, she experienced all of a general's elation as she stole, from beneath lowered lids, a glance at her companion (to all appearances a handsome, well-preserved woman of forty). Her Junoesque figure was exquisitely draped in all that was richest in half-mourning (it bore the name of the most famous house in London and, therefore, the imprint of elegance and good taste). The half-mourning had been one of Carmelita's inspirations; it obviated all need for jewelry and accounted for the gentle sadness of the histrionic mask that Nancy had so gracefully assumed at will. Now she swept the tables about her with tranquil gaze before she spoke.

"*Le vio Usted?*" she murmured softly.

Carmelita's brow contracted swiftly. The waiter was not in sight; there was no one within hearing.

"You're in a hurry to practise," she replied.

"But *did* you—see him?"

"Oh! Why—yes."

"So did I."

"Where?"

"Fifth table down, on the left. The boy looking this way; the one with the peaches-and-cream complexion. Am I right?"

"Yes," said Carmelita indifferently. Then, as she returned the bow of the boy's companion, she added: "That is the Honorable Penrhyn Lowther Crawshay Robinson. Every time I see that string of names I feel like separating them with commas."

"Goodness gracious!" gasped Nancy.

"And his friend? Is he as well endowed?"

"His handicap is James More; but his signature is good for three millions."

"Then, why——"

"—don't I separate him from some of it? My darling! Look at his dress-suit; doesn't *that* answer you?"

"American?"

"Exactly!"

"But it doesn't necessarily follow that ——"

"My dear Nancy! He's a connoisseur in gold-bricks, not a collector. Why, that man starts in where I leave off! I'm surprised that he's still in London. He's wasting time abominably if he's going to do Europe in five weeks. Now, the Honorable Penrhyn——"

"Is an awfully nice-looking boy; not the 'gilded youth' sort, at all."

"That's godmama's fault, not his. The Honorable 'Penny' is simply pining away for a chance to make Rome howl, but she (mean old thing!) won't let him. He'll erupt some day, and when he does there'll be something else besides smoke. He's broken loose from mother and the girls and is supposed to be living at his club. His club—" Carmelita grinned mischievously —"appears to be called 'The Cecil.' Poor boy! He hasn't any home, you know; only a miserable country seat or two, a shooting-lodge in Scotland and a town house in Belgravia."

"How on earth did you learn all this?"

"I spent the morning looking him up in 'Burke's.' Nancy, he has a lineage three columns long, and a coat-of-arms that reads like several kinds of dead languages rolled into one. Do you happen to know what a *fess wavy erminois* is?"

"Sounds like 'Alice in Wonderland.'"

"Doesn't it? Can you define a *canton vert*, or a *brock passant?*"

"Not guilty!"

"A *chevron arg. couped?*"

"I pass!"

"A *griffin segreant?* No? Your education *has* been neglected! What *do* you know? Do you think you could satisfactorily discuss filets de sole—Mornay, poulet en casserolle, asparagus, green peas and all the rest that goes with it?"

"Those are the first intelligible words I've heard you utter this evening," countered Nancy.

They had reached the coffee when the American left his table and came toward them; the Honorable Penrhyn, following leisurely, had stopped to greet some acquaintances on the way.

"Look out for yourself!" warned Carmelita, as she turned to give a welcoming hand to the newcomer.

"Still in London?" she smiled. "*Tia querida*, this is Mr. More: Mr. More, my aunt, Señora de la Guerra. She does not speak much English, but she's learning rapidly."

It was really wonderful how pregnant with gracious meaning Nancy could render a simple inclination of her regal head. Mr. More shot her a glance that was wholly approving, meanwhile expressing himself as charmed; then turned upon Carmelita a look of puzzled recollection.

"I thought you had no relatives living, Miss McCann."

"Did I say that? Of course I meant no immediate family."

"You've given over the idea of traveling alone, then?" persisted the gentleman, with a perspicuity that was rather rude.

"Yes, indeed! I never supposed that I could get Aunt Dolores away from her beloved Paris, but when she signified her intention of coming, naturally I was delighted."

"Naturally. I don't at all blame you. Such an aunt is a distinct acquisition. By the way, the friend who dined with me—you know who he is, I suppose—he crossed on the same ship with us." He spent the shrewdness of his gaze in vain on Carmelita's limpid orbs, which looked into his with an obvious effort at recollection.

"Why, yes, I've heard his name; it's a hyphenated one, isn't it? Something-or-other Robinson?"

"That'll be near enough," replied More laughingly. "It seems that he didn't have the pleasure of meeting you on the steamer, and he's quite anxious to make up for lost opportunities; that is, if it will be agreeable to your aunt."

"Oh, quite! I'll answer for auntie," said Carmelita, recklessly abandoning herself to the challenge in More's eyes, so that it was a radiant *espiègle* who acknowledged the introduction to the Honorable Penrhyn and completed with one dazzling smile the spell she had already woven. It was More who, with the daring that a week's steamer-acquaintance gives, suggested that they finish the evening at a show.

"But it's too late for the theater," said Carmelita.

"Just right for the Hippodrome. We'll see the Russian Dancers."

Carmelita hesitated, and at this moment her aunt ventured a gentle "*Qué hora es?*" This sentence was part of the code, and it was manifestly Carmelita's cue to speak; yet she continued to frown perplexedly at Mr. More. Nancy hesitated, and tried it again.

"*Qué tiempo hace, Carmelita?*"

Carmelita looked blankly at the face of her pseudo aunt and laughed outright. Evidently she had thoughts more entertaining than either the time or the weather. She turned gaily to the waiting gentleman.

"I am going to coax auntie into breaking her inviolable rule. You see, since her bereavement, she has grown the most retiring creature alive. But I'm dying to go, and of course——"

"With a name like McCann it would be quite improper for you to go alone," teased More.

"Oh, quite!" replied Carmelita, with an audacious wink. "My aunt would lose her reputation Come along, *Tia Dolorcitas*. Gentlemen, if you will see us to the lift, we'll go up and get our wraps and rejoin you in two shakes of a lamb's tail, as my dear old Dad (rest his sowl!) used to say."

"Why!" laughed the boy delightedly, "you're Irish, too."

"Half and half!" admitted Carmelita laughingly.

"Of course; that accounts for it."

"Does it, now?" quizzed Carmelita. "Sure, I thought it was the air of California."

The American saw his chance: "Your aunt has lived in the States, too, Miss McCann?"

"Visited them," corrected Carmelita gravely. "If you know the Pacific coast, Mr. More, you probably have heard that old Miguel de la Guerra once owned the half of Southern California,"

"Just fancy that!" said the Honorable Penrhyn. "Quite an estate, I should say."

"What became of it?" asked More.

"Oh, he gambled it all away at Frenchy Gratton's, an Egyptian banking establishment, where faro was the principal diversion," explained Carmelita laconically, to the intense amusement of the American. The boy's eyes opened to their widest.

"By Jove! He must have had rotten luck."

"Worst ever. All the De la Guerras had. Luck came into the family with the McCanns. My father's was proverbial. As for me, I couldn't lose a bet if I tried."

"Oh, I say now, Miss McCann," cried the boy, "I'd like to test that."

"Go ahead."

"What do you fancy at Epsom?"

"Nothing. Make your own choice—I'll lay against it."

"I'll go you a 'pony' that Evolution wins. Perhaps I should explain that a 'pony' is——"

"Don't instruct your grandmother," interrupted Carmelita sweetly, "and, if you will bet, don't do it like a child in arms. Make it a 'monkey' and I'll take you up," and, leaving the discomfited boy to recover from the surprise of his life, she followed her aunt into the lift.

Inside their rooms, Nancy turned eagerly.

"What on earth is a 'monkey'?"

"One hundred pounds, dear. Don't be worried; he'll lose. It was Dad's pet rule; I never knew it to fail."

"What was?"

"Always to let the other fellow do the guessing; you bet that he's wrong. Now I haven't time to let you digest that, *Tia Dolorcitas;* you ought to be in bed."

"Well, it is your own fault. I'm sure I gave you the right cue."

"You did; but I hadn't made provision for the expression in Mr. More's eyes."

"That gentleman doesn't appear to believe in you, Carmelita!"

"That isn't it; he's fallen in love with you; there's the reason. And it's the very situation I had neglected to provide for. Horribly inconsiderate of me, I'll admit, for you're surely a beauty, Nance. Well, let's get back to our lambs. The Honorable Penrhyn has more ginger than I had expected. It waxes interesting."

IV

J. BRIDGMAN TILLSBURY, who was known among such of his acquaintances as he would have preferred to ignore by the "Jimmy" he had all too lately dropped from his card, was what the Honorable Penrhyn would have called "a bounder." Yet a more suave, to all appearances well-bred, fellow than Tillsbury it would have

been hard to find. A gentleman-adventurer, a sky-rocket financier, a bunco-promoter and a dealer in polite methods of separating the public from its surplus coin, he was, nevertheless, a man of considerable polish, education and charm, in many ways as unlike the usual buccaneer of finance as could be, and—in all save morals and business integrity—a credit to the little New England hamlet that had seen his birth.

He was of more than medium height, and slender; with the suppleness and grace of a fencer he combined something of the aplomb and self-assurance of an actor. An artist he had frequently proved himself to be. In the City of Mexico the Tszactlequital Hotel had sprung up like a mushroom in the night, a miracle that was even then being repeated in London; while the outcome of another Arabian Night's Dream had been a palatial pile in New York, just off Central Park West. That one princely fortune had literally evaporated at an unexpectedly awkward turn in the stock market was nothing to a man who found it interesting to make another.

Carmelita had heard of him at home; by reputation he was well known, even in Los Angeles. Overhearing some one call him by name, a few careful inquiries had revealed the fact that he was *the* Tillsbury. Tillsbury knew every one, every one knew him, and at the moment of their meeting, Carmelita had foreseen that he would be of service, for he immediately made the Honorable Penrhyn exceedingly jealous. Having monopolized the fair Carmelita, and such of the attention of her magnificently decorative duenna as that languid lady, predisposed to headaches, was inclined to accord, it ill-suited his boy's pride thus to find himself suddenly a mere member of the party that was being lavishly entertained at dinners and after-theater suppers by J. Bridgman Tillsbury.

It was upon a beautiful June morning, after one of those late suppers, that the Honorable Penrhyn, in a most ungracious mood, joined the ladies in the breakfast-room.

"Morning!" he glumped moodily.

Carmelita, fresh as a Jacqueminot rose, turned her saucy face toward him.

"Mercy, Penny! what's the matter?"

"Oh, I've got 'the Hump'!" retorted the Honorable in a cross between vexation and embarrassment.

Carmelita laughed. Being a lightning-like assimilator of the idioms of class or race, she understood the expression, but, being also a young person whose temperance far exceeded her capacity, she had, in spite of the liberal entertainment of J. Bridgman Tillsbury, managed so far to avoid the experience that gave rise to its unpleasant "next morning" sensations. Favoring the gloomy youth with a tantalizing sidewise glance from beneath half-closed eyelids, she chanted rhythmically:

> "If we haven't enough to do-oo-oo
> We get the hump—
> Cameelious hump—
> The hump that is black and blue!"

"Oh, it's not that kind," said the boy. "To tell the truth, Miss McCann, I've a beast of a head this morning; and the worst of it is, her Ladyship has sent for me. I've simply got to show myself there, or get in her black books."

"Ah, godmama is asserting herself!" murmured Carmelita.

"Beg pardon?"

"I beg yours," laughed Carmelita. "I was talking to myself. I'm afraid she's going to scold you, Penny."

"I'm jolly well certain she is," retorted the Honorable Penrhyn, with increasing gloom. "Especially if I go there with this head. You see, she insists on my pretending to do something and—what is there for me to do?"

"Did you ever think of going into business?" suggested Carmelita. "Our young men don't fritter away their days just because they expect to inherit a fortune some time between coming of age and the Osler limit. Do stocks interest you?"

The Honorable Penrhyn shook his head.

"I'm afraid not. I suppose I seem a sad duffer to you, Miss McCann. That fellow Tillsbury, now—he's the sort of a chap you mean. He *does* things."

"But you do things, too."

"Oh, of course; shoot and golf and play polo; any chap could, if he put his mind to it. But Tillsbury, he deals in miracles—fascinating, incomprehensible, impossible miracles. It must be a great thing to take some little invention that the world has never heard of, a rivet, or a face powder, or a Spring tonic, and create a demand for it, and then supply the demand. As I gather it, that's what the promoters do, isn't it?"

"Just about," smiled Carmelita. She was heaping pulverized sugar on the dish of berries before her, with apparently all her attention concentrated on the artistic effect she was producing; but in reality, her imagination, with the Honorable Penrhyn's nebulous thoughts and the sugar for a nucleus, was trying to evoke some negotiable image.

"Of course, I know I put it badly," apologized the boy. "So would you, if you had my head."

"Poor Penny! Is it so dreadful?"

"Foggy! Rocky! I'm a dithering addlehead, Miss McCann."

Carmelita balanced the spoonful of sugar delicately, her eyes narrowing at its possibilities. Then:

"Wait here!" she said. "I have the very thing for you!" And with a whispered apology in Spanish, the gist of which Nancy understood not at all, she was gone.

It was the first time the Honorable Penrhyn had found himself alone with the Señora de la Guerra and responsible for her entertainment. He set about it with clumsy eagerness, while Nancy smiled and nodded and wondered wildly how much she was supposed to understand and just what rash act Carmelita was perpetrating. That young lady presently returned, radiant with the consciousness of doing good. In her hand was a little pasteboard box such as chemists use.

"I don't know why I didn't think of this at first," she said apologetically, as she seated herself again at the table. "I've never had occasion to test it, but I've absolute faith in its result, for it is the discovery of my own physician—a perfect magician, as you shall see." She had taken from the box one of its little folded powders and, carefully opening it, shook its contents into an empty glass.

"What is it?" asked the boy in an awed tone. "Must be something very powerful, there's so little of it."

"On the contrary," said Carmelita blandly, with the glibness born of many arguments with an irascible Hahnemannite. "It is what the materialistic mind of the allopath would call 'very weak.' It is the active principle of a vegetable juice quite commonly used in homeopathic practise, but its potency—that is, in curing 'the Hump'—lies in its attenuation. It is so attenuated that you would say it isn't there at all. But you would be wrong; that would be 'an error of mortal mind,' " continued Carmelita, borrowing cheerfully from Christian Science. "The gross particles of the drug, it is true, are gone, but the spirit of it remains. It is the *spirit* that I give you. It is the *spirit* that does the trick," she added softly, her hand resting thoughtfully on a bottle of brandy the waiter had just placed at her right.

Nancy's features twitched convulsively, but Carmelita, with unruffled countenance, continued with professional didacticism:

"You can take this in *any liquid* you choose. I ordered a brandy and soda partly because I thought it would seem more natural and partly because we are dealing with the homeopathic principle that 'like cures like,' or, as you might say,"—and Carmelita looked daringly into the deep blue eyes fixed so adoringly and uncomprehendingly upon her—"a case of the bramble-bush of nursery fame."

There was a sudden gurgling, choking sound from the Señora de la Guerra, as she pressed her handkerchief first to her lips, then to her eyes.

"*Cuidada!*" whispered Carmelita.

But apparently her aunt found it difficult to obey, for a husky, entreating voice came from the folds of her handkerchief:

"*La cabeza se me va, Carmelita.*"

Carmelita breathed a sigh of relief. Nancy had some sense, after all, and the code was useful. In a tone of tenderest anxiety she explained to the Honorable Penrhyn:

"Poor aunty! Her head is dizzy again."

"Dizzy! Why, here's the very thing," he cried eagerly, offering the medicated brandy and soda. A spasm passed over Nancy's shoulders, but Carmelita's sweet solicitude never wavered.

"Naughty boy! It's not *that sort* of headache, as you very well know. *Pobrecita*," she added tenderly, "you must go to your room and lie down. No, no,"—she waved the boy aside—"I will see her to the lift. You just sit still and take your medicine, like a good little boy."

V

BEFORE forty-eight hours had elapsed it was known to every occasional member of the McCann coterie that Carmelita had a marvelous prescription—the discovery of a little Irish homeopathist on the

Pacific coast—that was absolutely guaranteed to cure 'the Hump' and to eliminate every trace of that tired feeling, that remorseful gnawing, the aftermath of the too jolly "last night" session. She had tried it on Wilberforce Houghton, legal friend and personal solicitor for Tillsbury; also on George Benson Shaftesbury, a chance acquaintance whom they happened to pick up at the Alhambra and had since included in their party. And the very next evening, during the celebration of the Honorable Penrhyn's escape from ultra-respectability (and his godmother), Carmelita had had the nerve to offer Tillsbury two powders for use the following morning. He had teased and jested with frank incredulousness, yet at breakfast Carmelita had found a note among her mail. It ran:

Accomplice of Bacchus (and most accomplished of fibbers): *What* was in those powders? I took them as directed, on arising, not omitting the accompanying "Scotch and Polly," and something—could it have been the S & P? (perish the ignoble thought!)—surely did wonders for the muddled head of "yours truly." I expect, as a result, to pull off that deal I told you about yesterday; if I do, you surely deserve a commission. How will you take it?

Joking aside, when you are ready to float "Humpo, Ltd.," let me know. I want a half interest in *that* company, for, with your finesse, and my nerve, it's sure to make a million.

Without a struggle—your slave,

J. Bridgman Tillsbury.

To this note Tillsbury expected no reply. Yet, at noon that day, a messenger boy, bearing the heavy, cream-colored square envelope affected by Carmelita, interrupted a mathematical pyramid he was making anent the results of an extensive short interest in a rapidly declining stock-market. He read the note with amusement.

Dear Mr. Tillsbury:

So glad the prescription worked. Will you join us to-night? We are going to Prince's, and, later, to the Gaiety. Penny is waiting to book the seats.

Of course I wouldn't think of keeping "Humpo" to myself; it belongs to the public. I think that a capitalization of—say—£10,000 would be about right. What is a half-interest worth to you, dear friend and fellow-pirate?

Carmelita.

Tillsbury laughed. In the pleasurable glow of a successful day he entered lightly into the jest and scribbled rapidly an answer:

My Dear Miss McCann:

Your proposition of this date noted. I'll give you £2,000 for a half-interest in "Humpo." *My own cure was worth it.*

Of course, I'll be on hand this evening; you *know* that.

J. Bridgman Tillsbury.

He was greatly surprised when, an hour later, he received another note by the same messenger. This time it was short, and he frowned—as one suspecting a bad joke. It said simply:

Mr. J. Bridgman Tillsbury,
Aylesford Buildings, 23, Moorgate Street,
London, E. C., England.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of even date herewith is at hand. The offer of £2,000 for a half-interest in "Humpo, Limited" is satisfactory, and is hereby accepted. Details to be arranged later.

Yours truly,
Carmelita Sofia McCann.

"What the dickens?" exclaimed J. Bridgman Tillsbury, rereading the note and striving hard to remember just what he *had* written. Then his brow cleared. "Any one who didn't know her would swear she thought it was on the level," he said musingly. "Calling me, is she? The little devil!" He stretched his long limbs luxuriously and allowed his thoughts to wander in the realm of pleasant possibilities. Again he chuckled softly: "The little devil! I'll make her pay for that! Bluffing her Uncle Dudley? We'll see!"

Apparently his thoughts were not unpleasant, for he closed his office earlier than usual and, turning into Hatton Garden, sought out a diamond merchant with whom he sometimes had occasion to do business. Tillsbury had remarkably good taste and carried away with him in a little velvet case a single diamond, pure, flawless, sparkling as a dewdrop, caught on a chain as elusive as a silken strand from a spider's web. He was well satisfied with his selection and felt sure it would please Carmelita, who, he had noticed with satisfaction, in spite of all her gorgeous array, wore but few jewels.

As Carmelita trailed toward him that evening, all her rounded slenderness made more palpable by the gray fog in which she seemed to float (gun-metal chiffon, through whose shimmering folds came startling glints of color, like fire-flies in a mist—fire-flies that emerged in jeweled swarms), Tillsbury drank in the whole ha monious

effect without pausing to dissect the component trifles. He was too much an artist to pull a rose apart before he called it beautiful. The costume was one of Poiret's most daring creations, but such is the genius of dressing that the gown became but a manifestation—alluring, tantalizing, half-revealing—of the personality of the wearer. Behind her came Nancy (as night follows on the heels of twilight) regally satisfactory in black crêpe de Chine.

In the instant that Carmelita's eyes, serene and unabashed, had met Tillsbury's, that gentleman's imagination had seen about her throat his jewel, upon her lips his greeting, upon her hand the badge of his ownership. Just how primitive or how conventional he intended to be he did not pause to decide; that would depend on circumstances and the exigencies of the lady's mood. That Carmelita's flexible mouth twitched ever so slightly as she caught his expression was lost upon him.

It was not until they had finished dinner that Tillsbury contrived to convey to Carmelita his great desire to see her alone for a moment. This that young lady managed by feigning chilliness, deciding to go after a wrap and ordering Tillsbury to accompany her. Once in a cab, he leaned confidentially toward her.

"Well?" she challenged.

"Well," he smiled back, "I pulled it off! You are certainly my mascot and have brought me luck. I've got it all my own way; it's a better contract than I had dared hope for." (His hands were working at the clasp of the little velvet case he had withdrawn from his pocket.) "I wasn't joking when I said you'd have to accept a share of my good fortune, and I'm congratulating myself now on my taste and judgment. This sparkler is the single touch your dress needed."

He leaned forward and held the chain out so that she could see it in the gleam of the lamplight. Carmelita gave a little cry of pleasure. For one moment she regretted her afternoon's achievement, for one soft-hearted instant her fingers itched to destroy a certain document, safely locked up in her apartments. The next moment Tillsbury, with the touch of a master, was fastening the thread of gold around her throat, lingering unnecessarily in so doing; then, quite suddenly, she laughed, for he had tried to kiss her, and his lips were buried instead in a crumpled mass of chiffon that Carmelita thrust forward at the critical moment.

"Little devil!" he mumbled, his mouth full of the scarf. "I'd like to cover you with them!"

"With which?" asked Carmelita, demurely shocked.

"Both! Diamonds and kisses. That's what you were meant for."

"Mercy, no! I haven't any use for either," protested Carmelita.

"You, with your wise little ways that were not learned yesterday! It's likely I'd believe that!"

"It's the truth, though. Besides, though I appreciate your intentions,"—this with a sarcasm so fine as to be lost—"you'll have to take this pretty little trinket back."

"Why?"

"I don't think it's a good way for business partners to begin; unless"—she laughed—"you meant it as a bonus."

"Oh, what are you talking about?" said Tillsbury irritably.

"About 'Humpo, Limited,' of course."

"Don't you think that's gone far enough?"

"Why, I thought it had only just begun. It will take some time to get it started, but, really, I was quite encouraged when I found out this afternoon how quickly it could all be done. The preliminaries are all arranged, applications made, and your friend, Wilberforce Houghton, has been entrusted with the necessary business of organization. He will also get me a firm of auditors and arrange with a banking house. By the way, what a lot of red tape you have over here!"

"Is all this on the level?"

"Surely! Can't you believe in your good fortune? You said I was your mascot, you know. I am organizing a company called 'Humpo Limited,' for the manufacture and exploitation of a medical preparation called 'Humpo.' Capitalization £10,000; shares £1 each. I have advanced £100 for preliminary expenses, and will receive one hundred shares of stock, which, of course, I expect to distribute among the directors. By the way, Mr. Houghton seemed to think that you'd be able to arrange for five men willing to serve in that capacity. Of course, you will be the company's fiscal agent, and, naturally, neither of us will wish to appear in the corporation."

"And you've got the nerve," snorted

Tillsbury angrily, "to think that if I was going to foist such a game of bunk on the long-suffering public I'd be *buying* a half-share? My dear infant, if I was going to promote Humpo, Limited, I'd not take a half-interest, I'd take it all—for my work. You'd be in luck if you kept a quarter of it by the time I got through."

"I know," said Carmelita, with honeyed admiration thick and sirupy in her low voice; "I think you're just wonderful! I heard all about how you got control of the Bates Recorder and threw its silly little inventor out with five hundred to show for his patents; and of course every one knows what you're going to do with the Lusterine crowd." She met his glaring eyes admiringly. "You'll own the company before you're through with it, even if you have to wreck it first, though I can't see how you're going to work it. That's why I appreciate your *magnanimity* so much. Actually, I almost fainted when I got your offer."

"I dare say! And you mean to tell me that you thought I meant it?"

"Certainly! It's a contract, isn't it?"

"It was a joke," snapped Tillsbury, "and you knew it—not worth the paper it was written on!"

"Maybe it wasn't *then*, but *it is now!*" said Carmelita, with beatific satisfaction.

Tillsbury was not a phlegmatic man, and his temper had been severely tried. His heart gave a sudden angry leap as he asked, with an effort at self-control:

"What do you mean?"

"Why," said Carmelita sweetly, "when I got your offer I was so tickled that I posted right off to Somerset House and got the Official Seal put on it. So it's a contract now, all right. Not that I doubted you, Mr. Tillsbury, or felt afraid that you would change your mind, but I do love to have everything nice and legal, when I can."

Tillsbury's first thought was characteristic.

"Who put you up to this?"

"No one," said Carmelita. "You don't suppose that I'd come into a country without studying out some of its advantages, do you? Besides, Dad put me wise to that, years ago." Suddenly she dropped her jesting tone. "Oh, yes, Mr. Tillsbury, there's no use kicking. I've paid my little sixpence into his Majesty's treasury, and you're bound hard and fast. How do you like it?"

There was a considerable pause before Tillsbury spoke again. He was busily thinking of what she had said about the directors. Suddenly, he roused himself and said, with a not ill-natured little laugh:

"Well, I'll be da—— Say, it's a funny thing to be taken into camp at my age, and by a kid of a girl, too; but you've done it, all right! I suppose I'll have to take my medicine. After all, properly handled, Humpo may not be such a bad thing. Of course, *we* know it's a fake, but with the right sort of publicity, well—you leave it to me!"

Carmelita slipped her hand timidly into his.

"Then you're not angry? Honestly, *I need the money—awfully!*"

Tillsbury chuckled. "Angry? Why of course not! You shall have a check within the week. But no more tricks, mind! If I take hold of this thing I want a look-in for my money. Now just where do you figure that I come in? In other words—you petticoated highwayman, you—just how have you got this proposition framed up?"

"Well," said Carmelita, "there are eight thousand Founders' shares, and two thousand Treasury shares, ten thousand in all, par £1 each. I get the Founders' shares for my formula and the right to make and vend the preparation called 'Humpo.'"

"And what do I get?" said Tillsbury.

"For your £2,000? Four thousand Founders' shares, of course. That's half, isn't it?"

"Perfectly correct! Sir Wiliam Morgan himself couldn't have apportioned out the loot more evenly," replied Tillsbury gallantly. "I suppose I ought to feel quite flattered at this chance to get in on the ground floor. Just the same," he added, as he helped her from the cab, "you're the first fellow that ever put one over on me and got away with it." To himself he was grimly thinking: "Good Lord! What a little fool! And I thought she was wise. Tries to trim me, sells me half the stock, and then—gives *my* board of directors the controlling vote. Gee! It's *too* easy!"

VI

CARMELITA, from their balcony table, well away from the interruptions of the orchestra, looked across the dainty tea-service, beyond the Honorable Pen-

rhyn, and down at her old enemy, the Honorable's godmother, who was drinking tea in company with an exceptionally beautiful girl. When at last she spoke there was a velvety throatiness in her voice that betrayed unexpected tenderness.

"Penny, I suspect you of being ashamed of yourself; of having, in fact, behaved rather badly. Tell me about it. Of course, you're engaged?"

"That would be nothing new—if it were true; we first plighted our troth at a nursery tea. But I'm afraid it's all off."

"Oh, my dear boy! Nothing so irretrievable as that. Was—of course, it sounds silly, but—*was* it my fault?"

"Oh, see here, Miss McCann, you mustn't think that, you know. It's her Ladyship's doing; you're not going to let it make any difference?"

"N—no," Carmelita hesitated. She looked down at the implacable old lady who had snubbed her, and at the golden head of the unconscious girl by her side. Then she smiled reassuringly. "Why—no, Penny, why should it? Only business is one thing and—well, this is quite another. I want you to go down and join them."

"Now? Impossible!"

"Are you thinking of me? My dear boy, I appreciate it, but I've some figuring to do and you're only disturbing me."

"But I thought you wanted me to see the new offices," complained the boy aggrievedly.

"To-morrow will do. At eleven, by the way. In the meantime you belong at the side of the Lady Rosabelle Pamela."

"Then, if this is my *congé*, to-morrow, at eleven."

"To-morrow, at eleven," said Carmelita.

When the boy had been eagerly welcomed by the two ladies, Carmelita, leaving her tea untasted, arose and, once outside the Carlton, gave vent to her feelings in a rueful little gurgle of amusement.

"That's surely one on me! And I was beginning to feel alarmed about the Honorable Penrhyn's intentions! Nancy will guy me to death."

But, once more in her own apartments, all thoughts of Nancy's possible teasing were banished by the sight of that lady down on her knees before a steamer trunk, busily stowing away the wardrobe of her assumed personality.

"What on earth——" began Carmelita.

Nancy looked up quickly.

"Don't scold, Carm, and, for heaven's sake, don't preach! I'm going to be married to-morrow, and we sail for New York the following morning."

"Married? To whom?"

"Mr. More."

"Of all people in the— but you only saw him once!"

"Twice," corrected Nancy. "He's just been here; and we've been corresponding ever since that first evening."

"Corresponding? In what? Spanish?"

"No, in English," said Nancy demurely. "I didn't tell you before, for fear you'd lose your nerve, but the fact is, Carm, he saw through the whole thing at once, He didn't know what your game was, so he didn't let on."

"How'd he know there was a game?" demanded Carmelita.

"Well," drawled Nancy mischievously, "the truth is, he'd met me before."

"Nancy Sutherland! And you never told me?"

"My dear, I didn't recognize him until some time after we'd been introduced, and even then I wasn't sure that he knew me. It was at a stock company farewell reception on the stage, the mere matter of a handshake. I was playing in Denver at the time. How was I to know that he'd seen me in a score of parts and had a dozen photos of me in his trunk?"

"Goodness! As bad as that?"

"It *was* something of a crush, wasn't it?"

"See here!" Carmelita flashed around on the girl suddenly. "There are twenty thousand dollars coming into the treasury within the next twenty-four hours, and half of it is yours. You're not marrying him just to get out of this, are you?"

Nancy's eyes grew a little misty.

"I guess not, old girl!" said she. "You see, the crush is mutual. But, anyway, as a business proposition, doesn't a half-interest in three millions look pretty good to you?"

VII

J. BRIDGMAN TILLSBURY left the office of the solicitor for Humpo, Limited, feeling extremely well satisfied. What had taken place there concerned no one but the newly elected board of direct-

ors and himself. He was comfortably certain that by following the plan of delay he had stipulated for, Carmelita could easily be tired out. He thought he knew her, and reflected sneeringly that with apartments at five pounds a day, and everything else in keeping, she would before long be in a humor to sell her interest—at his price. The game entirely in his hands, no doubt, by following his usual methods of promotion, things would turn to his enrichment.

He walked rapidly through Cornhill and turned into Bishopgate Street. As he entered the new offices which Carmelita had taken for the company his first feeling was one of vexation that she was not already there; his second, one of surprise, as, through the door of the inner office, he spied the Honorable Penrhyn sitting at ease in a large arm-chair.

He acknowledged the boy's greeting coldly.

"Is Miss McCann here?"

"I think not yet. But she had an appointment with me for eleven, so she's sure to be presently," said the Honorable.

"A business appointment?" said Tillsbury suspiciously.

"Er—yes. Odd, isn't it? I suppose I'll get accustomed to it by and by. We're partners, Miss McCann and I, you know."

"The deuce you are! How do you make that out?"

"Why, you see, I've just taken on a half-interest in Humpo."

Tillsbury looked at him blankly.

"You have?" said he slowly. "Then, young man, *we* are partners, for I've got the other half."

"You have? When?"

"I paid for and received an order for four thousand shares of stock yesterday afternoon, and I'm here to get it!"

"You did? By Jove, so did I!"

Over the boy's ingenuous face there passed a succession of expressions—blank incredulity, chagrin, then dawning appreciation.

"By Jove!" he repeated. "I say that's deuced clever. Why, she's sold us both! Just wait till I see her."

"You won't see her!" said Tillsbury with glum conviction.

"But she agreed to place a copy of the formula in my hands this morning."

"Oh, yes; I suppose she gave you the old gag about having it locked up with other important documents in the safety deposit vault. Well, she won't be here."

As though to ratify his judgment a clerk entered from the outer office.

"Mr. Tillsbury?" he asked inquiringly. "Miss McCann left word that if she didn't arrive by half-past eleven this morning, to hand you the key to this desk. The papers you are waiting for are in it, I believe."

The two men looked at each other in silence. The Honorable Penrhyn was the first to speak:

"Might as well have it over with, old chap. For my part, I shall be glad to know the worst."

J. Bridgman Tillsbury paused with the key in the lock His ever-alert mind was busy with a new problem. The Honorable Penrhyn was, to be sure, a duffer at business, but he would undoubtedly refuse to be a party to a questionable promotion; his ingenuous questions would cause endless delays; his very ignorance would be an immovable obstacle to success. Of course, the whole situation was preposterous, absurd; he should never have allowed himself to be trapped into it; but "In for a penny, in for a pound" was the Tillsbury motto.

Humpo had already received a fair amount of publicity; already there was a considerable demand for the little powders that Carmelita had placed at their disposal. What did it matter about the formula! Alone, he could hope to handle it; with the Honorable Penrhyn as a conscientious incubus, the proposition must inevitably die of inactivity.

"See here, Penrhyn," said he, suddenly, "I'll buy you out."

"Now? Without seeing what you have?"

"Exactly! That's the kind of gambler I am. I'll give you the two thousand quid you paid for the half-interest."

The Honorable Penrhyn took a hasty farewell of his first and only business venture.

"I'll take it, old chap, though I shall feel like a robber. But, should the formula——"

"Never mind about that; that's my affair," said Tillsbury curtly, drawing a checkbook from his pocket and reaching for a pen.

The contents of the desk were beautifully neat, likewise beautifully few—a bundle of bills receipted, a list of druggists, a

long sealed envelope, a box, a bottle, a small vial, and a little pile of square papers such as are used for wrapping powders. Tillsbury opened the envelope first, On a folded sheet of snowy white paper was written the following:

HUMPO

Milk-Sugar—as much as will lie on a sixpence.
Vegetable coloring ..... 1 M
Alcohol ..... 1 M

The box, which bore the label of a well-known homeopathic chemist, contained sugar of milk; the vial, a vegetable coloring matter of pale green; the bottle, alcohol.

"Well, I *will* be ———!" exploded J. Bridgman Tillsbury.

"You probably *will* be!" said a cheerful voice from the doorway.

Somehow the things he would have liked to say to Carmelita flew out of the back of his head, literally put to rout by her audacity. He surveyed the lithe figure, in the nattiest of traveling suits, from head to foot. Then he said, in a tone that would have made most women squirm:

"Well! What do you want here?"

"Oh! So that's the way of it?" said Carmelita. "Why, somehow I *thought* you wouldn't be a good loser, 'Jimmy,' and I've come to condole with you. I just met Penny, and he told me——"

"That I'm now sole proprietor of your valuable formula?" growled Tillsbury.

"Yes, and something else. Have you seen this morning's issue of *The Truth-Teller?*"

"No." Tillsbury's tone was short and ugly.

"I think it'll interest you. My! but that Leblanchère is 'some sarcastic.' He doesn't mince words, once his mind's made up, does he?"

"What he says goes in London," admitted Tillsbury unwillingly.

"Dear me! I hope not. If so, it's a bad lookout for us—I mean *you*. Shall I read it?" And without waiting for permission, she read with perfect gravity:

"No swindle of recent date quite equals in brazen effrontery the claim of the promoters of a so-called medical preparation known as '*Humpo*.' It is a powder, made of milk-sugar and vegetable coloring matter, the product of Humpo, Limited, a concern doing business at Buncoh House, Bishopgate Street, Within. '*Humpo*' will (they claim) relieve and cure the effects of too much alcoholic indulgence, and it is guaranteed entirely to remove, if its use is persisted in, that 'next morning' feeling, which was made so familiar by Mr. George Ade in his 'Sultan of Sulu,' and with which many of the gilded youth of the West End—and many other portions of his Majesty's kingdom—are so frequently afflicted. Of course, these powders have no effect whatever, and as the cartons in which they are packed bear a label prescribing that they be taken in 'Whisky, Wine, Beer or Brandy,' the stimulating result is obviously obtained from the liquor, not the medicine. It is not only to expose the fraud that we venture to print the results of our analysis, but to warn the investing public against purchasing any shares in the stock flotation which the smug-faced Yankees who are manipulating this corporation contemplate making. '*Humpo*' has no merit as a medicine; its shares can not possibly have a lasting value as an investment. The venturesome promoters will do well if they keep out of the clutches of the gentlemen at Bow Street station, where people of their class rightfully belong."

"Stung!" said Tillsbury dejectedly. "That's surely a knock-out!"

"Really?" said Carmelita, with mock sympathy. "Oh, I hope not. Do you know, I thought a lot of Humpo. I looked on it as a mother does on her first-born. I wouldn't have had anything like this happen to it for the world."

"No, I suppose not," said Tillsbury; "that's the reason you dumped it on Penny and me."

"Now don't be sarcastic, Jimmy; that is *not* the reason I disposed of my holdings, at all," replied Carmelita. "Of course, you *were* a trifle fresh and showed signs of making yourself so exceedingly numerous that when chance obligingly tossed the cards into my lap, I wouldn't have been Terry McCann's girl if I hadn't played them! And—'there you are!' as Penny says."

"I can have you put in jail for this!" snarled Tillsbury.

"Can you?" said she coolly. "For what? Accepting your offer for Humpo?"

"For planning to fool the public!"

"Don't talk silly, Jimmy. I don't fool the public—it fools itself. As for the omnipotent Leblanchère and his so-called analysis, he has evidently not read the prospectus; for neither he nor any one else can analyze a high-potency homeopathic preparation, which is exactly what Humpo purports to be."

Tillsbury looked momentarily baffled; then he reread the formula, smiled wickedly, folded the paper, put it in his pocketbook and said grimly:

"Just so! But, like all other fool women,

for the sake of looking a bit smart, you've put yourself in writing. I suppose you realize, my lady, that, with this precious formula of yours, I've got you on the hip!"

Carmelita's tantalizing laugh rang out merrily.

"Have you? For daring to make a joke of a scientific principle, I suppose? Dear idiot! Can't you see that I take refuge behind the great Hahnemann himself? The *patient* is suffering from the effects of *alcohol;* I give him *alcohol* (it's not my fault that it evaporates) in infinitesimal doses. *Similia similibus curantur*, which, freely translated à la Terry McCann (heaven bless his memory!), means 'a hair from the dog that bit ye will cure ye!'"

"Carmelita!" said Tillsbury, his face relaxing into a sudden smile, "you're a wonder!"

"Ain't I just that, now?" said Carmelita in a brogue as sweet and thick as a bowl of cream. "I thought you'd be comin' to it. It breaks my heart to lave ye, Jimmy," she ran on joyfully; "we'd sure do the grand team-work; but me dochtor says I nade a change, and it's a trip to the Bosphorus I'll be afther takin'—f'r the good of me health."

She waved him a gay farewell from the door.

"Well, if this is a sample of what you can do when you're sick," said Tillsbury, with a regretful glance at his check-book, "I'd hate like the deuce to meet you when you were well!"

Out from Barbados

by

Robert Anderson Morton

"YES," said the wireless man, accepting a cigar from the Passenger and laying aside his receivers, "Jack Binns was lucky enough to have a hand in the first big wireless show. No knocking, you understand; because he had his nerve and stuck right on the job. Wireless was younger then and it made good newspaper copy."

The Passenger leaned back on the sofa and looked about the little room, from the rows of coated jars and polished instruments to the Hydrographic Office map that occupied four square feet of the limited wall space, and the lithographed figure of a chorus girl directly over the operating-table. Here it was cool and quiet and free from the glare of the afternoon sun; outside the tar was becoming soft in the flooring of the promenade deck.

"It was interesting to see how the public imagination tended to make a mystery out of wireless," ventured the Passenger. "To many it had the ear-marks of black art and the supernatural. And now after a few years we are growing used to it. The mystery is fading away."

"Fading? Perhaps."

The wireless man rested his feet on the radiator and gazed through the porthole, his eyes half closed. "Yes, I suppose so," he assented, "I suppose so. As you say, we're getting used to it, some of us, just as we're used to seeing a trolley-car pushed by something in a wire. Have you ever asked a real scientist what electricity *is?*"

The Passenger remained silent.

"Well, the answer you get isn't an answer. He'll tell you he can collect it with machinery and measure it and make it work, and that's all. Or he may give you some theories that put the problem further off than ever, and right here is where your science has got to stop. It's the same way with wireless. You can get so far and then you'll have to imagine the rest, and sometimes there's a lot to imagine. I've done my share of it, I can tell you—we have plenty of spare time for thinking on some of these long trips.

"It was back in 1904, not long after I took out my first ship, that I went aboard the S. S. *Parama* to relieve an operator who'd bungled some experiments with Central American whisky. We had a brand new set of wireless apparatus, the best made in those days, and I went out on the ship's run to Panama looking for long-distance records.

"Have you ever hit the Barbados? Well, take my word for it and don't. We caught last-minute orders to drop in and pick up fifteen hundred niggers for the Canal, and with the orders came a couple of tons of salt horse to grub them for a week. More niggers are raised in the Barbados than they can comfortably feed, so the floating population is sent free of charge to the Isthmus—for life.

"Then we had ten thousand and a few tons of cement and about eighty white employees of the Commission who'd made their wills and bid their last farewells to sorrowing friends and relatives. The mosquitoes and Yellow Jack and malaria prospered on the Zone in those days, and tourists fought shy of the place. There was one paid passenger on board, a young looking woman bound for San Francisco *via* the Isthmus and the Pacific steamers. Somebody said she had a complaint that wouldn't stand a long railroad trip.

"You can imagine the Barbados proposition wasn't especially welcome. It meant double work for officers and crew and an extra week at sea—a September week almost on the equator. It was a real nuisance for everybody aboard, including the Commission people, who'd miss the monthly pay envelopes, and the mail-clerk, whose vacation began at the end of the voyage. But orders are orders, and toward the equator we went, it getting hotter and hotter and the grub worse and worse as we plugged along. The *Parama* was some race-horse, too. One day we made as much as two hundred and eighty miles.

"You can't touch a trip like this for pure dulness; the heat makes one stupid in the daytime and more stupid at night. For the first few days we got the baseball scores and press despatches on the machine, but we soon lost the coast entirely and had to depend on getting stuff relayed from chance vessels in the neighborhood. And mind you, we were hiking it on a southeast slant that took us out of the Caribbean track of steamers and a long way off from nowhere.

"After losing Cape Hatteras the next wireless station was at San Juan, and when these last signals faded out we passed into a district where the word wireless hadn't been put into the vocabulary. I covered my apparatus with a cloth, because I couldn't bear to see it lying idle. One could sleep only fifteen hours a day, fuss at the table three times, and knock the ship, the weather, the grub, and the U. S. Government. It takes a little grievance soaked in tropical weather to start a real knockfest, especially among a lot of Government job-holders who think they're entitled to more favors and better handling than ordinary people. And the disgusting part of it was—I mean the knocking—that most of the crowd were worked-out or broken-down nags that only the Government, for want of better, would hire.

"Of course there were exceptions—a couple of big engineers who were patriotic enough to give up good money in the States to push along the Canal, and some young fellows fresh from school as their assistants. Then we had a few sickly looking stenographers who were going to risk a plot in the Colon cemetery for thirty a week and keep, some of them girls; and two or three trained nurses, also at double wages. So it wasn't what you'd call a good traveling crowd, not the kind that get together on a ship and plan sociable stunts to kill the time.

"But there was one party on board who stood head and shoulders over the rest, and that was 'Twenty-two,' the 'Frisco passenger. Have you ever noticed how somebody in a crowd is sure to stretch out bigger than the others, not in size maybe, but in ways of doing things that point out the leader? That's the way it was with Twenty-two. She had a word for everybody and a way with her in spite of her quietness—anybody could see her health was delicate—that made the pessimists sit up and take notice. I'd never heard real piano playing before—I don't mean ragtime, but the kind of music that wanders around and wakes up thoughts that most people don't know they've got. But she did the trick with the piano and with her eyes, too.

"No, you're wrong there. Hers were different from others—different even from a pair I know Down East. Soft and fine they were, and when they looked at you

they went on through and set you to thinking.

"'Jim,' says the Mate one day, 'I can't get those eyes out of my head.' Then came the Third Assistant and says, 'What do you make of Twenty-two, Sparks? Swenson had a look like that before the consumption took him.'

"'Got you hypnotized, too, has she?' I grinned; for Jones was a terror with the women passengers.

"'Hypnotized be hanged,' says he. 'That ain't hypnotism by a long shot.' And he went out, pulling his whiskers and solemn as a split drive-shaft.

"But though agreeable and kind to everybody, Twenty-two didn't try to mix with the others. She lived more or less with herself, minding her own business and reading out of a few books she carried in her suitcase, except, of course, when she played in the social hall or got the others interested in evening games. I met her when she strolled into the wireless-room one morning and sat on the couch, watching the flash of the spark and the handling of the instruments. While I explained the system she leaned back on the cushion and followed every motion I made; and when she went out she thanked me, with her eyes looking straight into mine, and said softly, 'Wonderful!' I've sometimes wondered if her lips spoke the word or whether it came from the look in her eyes.

"Well, somehow the days passed and Sunday came along. According to the rules it was up to the Captain to read the Bible and elevate the religious atmosphere of the ship unless we had a real preacher on board, which we hadn't. But the old man hated it like poison, and squirmed out of it by sticking on the bridge all Saturday night and leaving orders to be called at noon on Sunday—the services were scheduled for eleven A. M. There always happened to be a fog or dangerous passage or an important light to be sighted on Saturday nights. But we had the affair after all, for Twenty-two offered to do the job. It was the strangest Sunday meeting I'd ever attended. She started with a selection from the Bible—it was a new one to me—and then she dropped the book and smiled round at everybody and began to talk in a low gentle way.

"It wasn't one of those 'give me liberty or give me death' sermons. She didn't mention hell at all. She just talked about the soul and the spirit and a lot more that I couldn't stow away. Then she brought in music and harmony and said the best life was the life in the things unseen. 'Things unseen' was just what she said. What stuck to me close was the part about tuning one's soul, as we tune the wireless instruments, to the ether-waves, to the other vibrations that scientists don't know anything about.

"'The deaf man needs an ear-trumpet to hear the sound-waves in the air,' says she, 'because the ears are not sensitive enough to detect them without help. In the same way our minds are deaf to what the ether-waves are trying to tell us, because we take better care of our muscles than of our souls.'

"Mind you, this isn't a perfect copy, but the idea was the same. When she finished, the crowd filed out without saying much, and I had the same feeling that the inside of a big cathedral gives one. Of course, most of it had gone over our heads, but it was something unusual, and inspiring, too.

"Still, nobody would have thought much about it if it had ended there. But it didn't, for the very next day the Second Assistant fainted from the heat in the engine-room, fell down two flights of steps and landed on a pile of steam-pipes, and here's where Twenty-two took the limelight again.

"We got the man out in the air and stretched him on deck as limp as a corpse. He was certainly a sight with his face and neck covered with grease and white as death underneath. The thirty-dollar doctor we had on board couldn't think of anything but ice and whisky, and neither had any effect. Poor old Johnson lay there with his mouth half open and a bloody cut over his left eye the size of a quarter, though the doctor said his heart was still beating.

"She'd been asleep in her deck-chair when it happened—I mean Twenty-two—but now she pressed through the crowd and half kneeled by the man's side. She gazed at him for maybe a minute without saying a word. Then, with everybody looking on curiously, she put her right hand on his forehead a little over the cut and bent her head forward, sitting there like a statue.

"You could have heard a comet pass. Her lips were pressed tight and her face looked white and drawn. I wouldn't have moved for a thousand dollars. You can take it from me it was a queer sight out there in the blue water, water just as blue as this,

with the body stretched out on deck and the woman bending over it with her white hand on the rumpled hair. And at last, after the longest three minutes I ever held my breath, when Johnson gave a faint groan and moved his leg a little, nobody could speak a word. It would have sounded sacrilegious.

"At this Twenty-two stood up and leaned against the rail. Her face looked as though the life had been squeezed out of it, and I could see she was trembling like a leaf. Then, while the doctor felt for broken bones, she went off to her stateroom, leaving us standing there like a lot of idiots.

"Well, some said it was plain Spiritualism, others Christian Science, and so on from voodoo worship to ordinary witchcraft. One old lady said she'd heard of Hindus working stunts like that after seven months' fasting. But nobody really knew what had happened and they never did know, for after this Twenty-two kept pretty well to herself and even had most of her meals served in the stateroom. I don't think I saw her more than twice the rest of the trip until the last time when we—but we'll get to that.

"After a week we hit the Barbados and took aboard the worst looking gang of blacks I'd ever seen in my dreams—exactly fifteen hundred of them. All had trousers and some wore shirts, while a few aristocrats sported shoes. They jabbered English with a mixed Zanzibar-London accent, and fought for places at the water-barrel like a brood of guinea-pigs. Not that they were especially fierce, for they weren't, and their fights were mostly tongue-scraps and big gestures; but a more shiftless, ignorant, dirty, thieving crowd never raised the water-line of a steamship.

"At meal-time a high pressure fire-hose kept them in line long enough to dish out the salt horse, biscuit and black coffee. Between meals they crowded under the scanty awnings and chanted halleluiah choruses for hours at a time, occasionally stopping to fight and yell at one another about nothing. At first the white passengers found it interesting to look down from the saloon deck and laugh at the show, and somebody started a scramble for pennies. But the Captain put a stop to that.

"The nights were fearful. The heat and the odor of sweating bodies—there wasn't a breath of air except in the early morning when we got a light breeze from the west—made sleeping for more than a couple of hours at a time impossible. If the decks were almost too hot to touch, the engine-room was pure hell. They broke up the day into hour shifts and put extra fans by the boilers to keep the men working through their sixty minutes. You can imagine what it was like. At the end of the second day two oilers and five stokers, I think, were laid up for the trip, and it was hard to keep the rest on the job.

"In the saloon nobody wanted to eat much. We had plenty of ice and ice-water, but even the ice didn't seem very cold. The male passengers stuck close to the smoking-room and played hearts and casino and other games that didn't need much thought, between drinks, while the women tried to follow the breeze around the ship with their deck-chairs, all except Twenty-two who seemed to be under the weather, although she generally got down to the table once a day.

"'That woman's got a lot of pluck,' said the Steward, 'as frail as she is to be traveling alone and half sick.' And the rest felt the same way, although they didn't talk about it. The passengers acted half afraid of her, while below decks she was queen, for the crew had seen her wake up Johnson in time to save his life.

"On Wednesday morning with three days to go, two things happened. Twenty-two fainted in the social hall from the heat or something, and never came back to consciousness, so the doctor said afterward, and one of the passengers' kids pulled out the sounding-tubes of the fresh water tanks just in time to let a three minute squall blow in a few hundred gallons of sea-water.

"Yes, sir, it salted the whole stock of fresh water except some dregs, about four barrels in all, in the forward ballast-tank, and six cases of choice bottled beer.

"Oh, it was a beautiful mess! When the Captain gave orders to rush a message through to Colon I didn't have the nerve at first to tell him there wasn't a chance in two hundred of doing it. Mind you, Colon was nine hundred miles away, and in the static season the machine was only good for three hundred at a pinch. Then, too, Colon had a naval station that only kept half open in the Summer months, and you understand we were on a freak trip with nobody expecting us within three or four days. The only other station within a

radius of a thousand miles was an antiquated twenty-mile affair at Trinidad that couldn't hear a thunder-storm fifty feet away.

"But I got the juice and called Colon for an hour steady, only stopping to cool off the motor. Of course not a dot or a dash came back. Then I reported to the Captain.

"'What's the trouble?' says he, looking a hole through me.

"'Heavy static, sir, and nothing between us and Colon to relay for us.'

"He sat still for a minute; then rang for the first and second officers. To me he said, 'Keep at it—all night if necessary.'

"It was tough luck to fall down on the first piece of trouble we'd had since the wireless came on the boat. Everybody expected it to work like a charm, and there was some talk when it didn't. The passengers couldn't understand why it wasn't just as easy to wireless a thousand miles as a hundred, and as for the static, why wasn't the machine built to get around the static? But there were only a few kickers, for most of them had sense enough to know that even wireless had its limitations and that I was as anxious as anybody to get a message through. If there had been a ship or two between us and Colon the message could have been relayed from one to the other, but we seemed to be the only wireless station within hearing distance. However, I pounded the key until my wrist muscles ached.

"The hours passed with nothing doing in the wireless line. The Purser came up and sat with me for a few minutes and told me that the crew were getting ready for trouble with the blacks. Most of the water was put away for the engineers and firemen, and only a barrel or two remained for the fifteen hundred niggers. The saloon passengers were scheduled for a beer diet the next three days. Any prohibitionist would have chosen beer to the mildewed water that came out of the ballast-tanks. The engines, of course, ran on half distilled sea-water.

"'A little rain will fix things all right,' said the Purser. 'Otherwise the old man is going to run in for Cartagena and try to save a few hours. If the niggers get ugly,' he added, 'you'd better lock yourself up and make a couple of long distance records.'

"At supper we sampled ice-water—one of the coolers still held a few gallons—while the blacks got part of a barrel of the condemned liquid and spilled half of it in the rush. The Captain joked at the table, told some good stories, and made everybody feel easy, that is to say, everybody who didn't know what a devil of a fix we were in. But it quieted the passengers, and that's the important thing at sea.

"At midnight I got a call to the pilot-house where the officers were holding a convention.

"'Any hope of getting Colon to-night?' asked the old man.

"I had to tell him no. Nowadays, you understand, we wouldn't wink at six hundred miles or even a thousand, but the average working distance was then not more than two hundred, and less than that in the Summer static season, when the atmospheric discharges are most troublesome.

"'Is there a wireless at Cartagena?'

"'No, sir.'

"'Then Colon must get it and cable it,' and he gave me a message addressed to the Columbian Revenue Cutter *Taboga* stationed at Cartagena.

"You see the cutter had no wireless of her own and we would have to reach her by cable from the Colon wireless station. The message gave our latitude and longitude, course and speed, and asked for assistance. If I could get it through to Colon it would bring the cutter out to meet us and save perhaps twelve hours; otherwise we must take our chances in making Cartagena. In the kitchen they were trying to distill a tank of sea-water for drinking purposes, but what they got was about as bad as the original. I can tell you, we were in for trouble.

"It was a fearfully hot day, that Thursday, without a sign of a cloud in the sky, or a steamer. Four times an hour I sent out the message 'blind,' as we call it, and strained my ears to hear something besides the crackle of the static and the click of the battery contacts. We send an emergency message 'blind,' or broadcast, you know, with the hope that the right station may pick it up, or that some other station may take it and forward it to the final destination. Most stations have a larger radius for receiving than transmitting, so it was possible that Colon or somebody else might catch the message without being able to reach us with the transmitting apparatus and give the usual OK. It was just a case of trusting to luck when nothing else could be done.

"Twenty-two was still down and out, and

fore and aft the blacks were already suffering from thirst. The rotten water sent some of the poor devils into convulsions. You don't know what it means to have a thousand and a half human beings packed within a few feet of deck-space with the mercury sky-high and next to no water. I tried not to think of what would happen if they lost their bearings and started to stampede the ship.

"For more reasons than one my position was uncomfortable. I was expected to turn the trick, if I had to work miracles. When I think of the apparatus we used those days, the old microphone detector with its wobbly needle, the low resistance receivers, and the direct coupled tuning-coils, I wonder that I was ever able to hear even the static. Inductive tuners, crystal rectifiers, improved telephones, and other inventions that have made wireless more efficient and sure, hadn't yet arrived at the Patent Office. In fact, our set was among the first of any kind that had been installed on ships since practical work became possible. Never before had I realized how new and defective it was. And there were the officers, good fellows all of them, who'd treated me fine as silk, and who now looked to me to save the day.

"'For God's sake, Jim,' says the Mate, sticking his head in my door, 'get us out of this quick! We'll never stand two more of these days.'

"And I could only hammer the key a little harder and wish I had voice enough to reach to Panama.

"I must have sprung some gray hairs that night. As the time went by with no results my brain felt as though it was being tied up into knots. There was a faint hope, of course, that Colon might copy the message without my hearing him OK it, but the chance wasn't big enough to be comforting, for the Colon station was five times as powerful as ours and should certainly reach us if they picked us up.

"Once or twice I walked outside and watched the blacks on the end decks. There were no more halleluiah choruses, and except for an occasional cough and an uneasy moving of the huddled forms, everything was dead quiet. I noticed that all but one of the four companionways were roped up tight, that the fire-hose fastened to the high-pressure pumps was stretched out on deck with the brass nozles gleaming in the moonlight, and that two figures were outlined on the bridge, while two other officers paced the saloon deck. The sky was perfectly clear, and as we rolled slowly over the swells we seemed to be traveling in a vacuum, so still was the air. As I stood and looked around, the Third Officer, one of the two on watch, strolled up.

"'You'd better be hearing a message before long,' he says, looking out over the water.

"'Things are quiet enough now,' I answered.

"'So they are—now; but what about the next sixty hours? The pumps there are hooked to the boilers, but it'll take more hot water and steam than we've got to quiet them if they get loco and begin to move.'

"I went inside and started again, lively at first, then slower, for I'd about given up hoping, and worked the key automatically without caring much what happened.

"It was just four o'clock in the morning when I shut down to cool the apparatus. I switched on the receiving instruments as usual; then leaned back in my chair and half closed my eyes. Mind you, I wasn't sleepy, not a bit, but just discouraged and disgusted and tired from the wear of it. I tell you it was awful to sit there hour after hour waiting for something that never came!

"All the way through it had been a queer trip, with the change in orders, the niggers, the water trouble and the Johnson business. I wasn't so foolish as to think that Twenty-two had hoodooed the ship, but anybody could see that she had power or something that most people must get along without. The way she brought Johnson to his senses was like a chapter out of the Bible, and the talk about the 'things unseen' was an odd business. It was all beyond me. And even the rain had gone back on us when a few barrels of sky water would have made clear sailing. Yes, sir, a glorious expedition, that!

"Well, as I said, I was thinking of these and other things when I got a shock that almost stopped my heart.

"It seemed to come through the telephone receivers, a rapid 'OK, OK, OK,' and following it I distinctly heard my own call-letters together with an 'NR, NR, NR,' and about a dozen words that stuck fast in my mind as the dots and dashes came in. And I knew I wasn't dreaming, for at that very moment the doctor poked his head through my port and called out:

"'Twenty-two's gone!'

"But I hardly heard what he said, for the signals suddenly died out and I slammed over my transmitting switch and pounded 'NR' for all I was worth.

"Say, did you ever get close to heaven? The 'OK,' you see, told me my message had been received. 'NR' was the call of the receiving station. The tone of the spark was high and smooth, like the musical note you get from a high-frequency alternator, and I didn't recognize the call, but it was a ship's station, and a ship within a couple of hundred miles looked like a cozy corner in paradise. Here is what I had received:

MP, MP, MP;-NR, NR, NR;-OK, OK, OK; Long. 75-32 W., Lat. 19-44 N., midnight; bound for Ri——

"Here the signals had faded out, but I had caught the main points. You see it was just about like one of our regular 'OS' distance reports giving the midnight position of the ship. So I went back at him with my 'OK' and asked him who he was. But there was nothing doing; not another sound could I get but the everlasting static. And that's the trouble with long-distance work in Summer—you can't depend on it. Sometimes a station comes in like a streak and fades away in a second or two. Changes in air conditions and temperature deflect the waves, they say; so I didn't waste more time calling, but beat it at once for the pilot-house.

"The old man looked as if he wanted to hug me right there before the Quartermaster. Then he straightened up and said gruffly, 'Is she on your register?'

"In the excitement I had completely forgotten the Government wireless register. It was like this one, with the groups of call-letters running down the page and the corresponding ships opposite. I quickly found the 'N' column and went down the list—anxiously enough, I can tell you—and there about half way down the page I found 'NR,' and opposite 'NR'—*a vacant space!* 'NR,' said the U. S. Government, had not been assigned to a wireless station. For a few seconds I felt weak around my stomach; then I got a clue that sent my hopes sky-high.

"In the 'N' list, directly before 'NR,' were four vessels belonging to the Royal Mail Steamship Company. But I noticed that one of their ships, the *Trent*, was missing. Now, the wireless calls of the vessels of each company have the same initial letter, and the last letter is in most cases a prominent letter in the name of the ship. Surely the 'NR' was the *Trent;* she had been the last vessel of the company to be fitted up with wireless; and she had been equipped since the last edition of the register was published. It was ridiculously simple—it came to me like a flash; and when I explained it to the Captain he agreed with me. The *Trent* was on the regular Royal Mail course from Colon to Rio—it was 'Rio' that had faded out in the message—and at that moment she lay to the eastward of us close to two hundred miles.

"Have you ever noticed how a bit of news will go shooting around a ship, from the lookout aloft to the bottom of the fire-room, almost floating through the air, it gets about so fast? Not a soul but the Captain and the Quartermaster were in the pilot-house when I went in, but it wasn't two minutes before every blessed man and nigger aboard knew that something was up. The officers off watch piled out of their bunks, and a grand hubbub started fore and aft. One black, bolder than the others and evidently urged on from behind, climbed the ropes and pushed his surly face through the window:

"'Sah, the boys, sah—the boys wants to know, sah——'

"'Kick him out!' growled the old man. The Mate lifted his foot quietly, aimed it in a second, and, straightening his knee with a jerk, caught the black square in the face and sent him sprawling over the ropes, the blood starting from his nose and mouth. A half yell went up at this, but it stopped quick, for a two-inch stream of cold water hit the center of the crowd like a bullet and sent them scrambling down deck.

"'Mr. Smith, make the rope a dead-line and put a watch in the fire-room,' says the old man. He walked out to the end of the bridge and stood looking out over the water.

"It's easy to guess what he was thinking about. Here was the *Parama* almost three days east of Cartagena, out of water, with a gang of blacks that could take the ship in ten minutes and who wouldn't have sense enough to know that they'd be cutting their own throats by doing it; and there was the *Trent* offering the only possible assistance, almost two hundred miles to the eastward of us. We had the *Trent's* position, that was sure, and the *Trent* had ours; and by all the laws of navigation it was up to the

Trent to get to us quick. But—and here is the point—it all depended on the wireless message. If we kept on for Cartagena and took our chances getting there, the *Trent* would never be able to catch us, and would probably hunt around a day or two and then go on her way. If, on the other hand, we waited or steamed slowly in the direction of her coming, and she missed us through an error in the wireless, or never came at all —well, we'd rot.

"It was one of those questions that isn't answered in the rule-book and that every captain has to settle on his own responsibility. If he judged right there would be no thanks coming to him, and if unlucky, plenty of disgrace would fall his way. The old man stood there maybe five minutes without moving a muscle; then he half turned and said in a low voice, as if he was afraid to let himself hear it:

"'East by southeast!' And I saw the Quartermaster swing the wheel over and force the bow of the *Parama* around to the right.

"But the Captain wasn't the only person aboard who felt a ton or two of responsibility; for the fact that I had been unable to connect again with the *Trent* and that Colon still remained silent gave me a strange feeling that perhaps the whole thing had been a dream, and that we were going out to meet—nothing.

"It would have taken a load off my mind had I known that the Colon station lay in ruins after a terrific hurricane, although the *Trent's* silence worried me still more than the failure to connect with Colon. However, we should soon know. By three o'clock at the latest the *Trent* should be with us. The change of course was instantly noted by the blacks, and such an effect did it have upon them that within an hour we heard the low chant of the halleluiah chorus, fainter than before but cheerfully loud, as they hung to the rail or climbed on the booms for a clear view of the horizon. At noon we had a little service and watched Twenty-two slide to her last resting-place. Not many saw her go, for the crowd were too busy gazing forward.

"It hurts me even now to think of those next few hours. Over and over I ran those 'OS' figures in my mind, trying to picture the dots and dashes as they came in, and even writing them out on paper to see if they looked different that way. If I didn't go out of my head entirely it was because the officers knew just how I was feeling and did all they could to relieve me. For hours the boys took turns sitting in my room trying to talk cheerful, and patting me on the back.

"'You've done it, Jim,' says the Purser; 'we knew you'd do it, and nothing will be too good for you, old man.' Then he'd run out when some nigger imagined he saw something and set up a howl, and come back and say, 'It's all right, it's all right; we'll hit them in a jiffy. And you did it, Jim, you did it!'

"I can tell you there's no suffering that compares with what you can feel in your head. Three o'clock came, then eight bells, then one, two, three—hours apart they seemed, too—and then—it knocked me all in a heap—I heard the lookout yell as though he was crazy:

"'Smoke on starboard bow, sir, three points!'

"And it was real smoke—beautiful, black, sooty smoke—and it came from two funnels slanting back at an angle that gave the *Trent* the look of a yacht as she slipped through the water. Every man of us forgot that she was two hours behind time, and considerably off the course we had laid out for her. We could only look and look again as she swung a little to the west and came at us head on. A line of flags broke out from her signal halyards—'Do you require assistance?'

"'What?' snorted the old man. 'No, you blessed idiot, just a social call!'

"'Send a boat!' we signaled back.

"When the small boat came alongside an officer in British merchantman uniform climbed aboard and saluted the Captain.

"'I see you found us,' says the old man.

"'What can we do for you?' returned the officer shortly.

"'You got our wireless?' asked the old man, looking surprised.

"'I don't understand, sir. The *Trent* left Colon Wednesday night. Yesterday a fruiter signaled that Rio was under quarantine, and we cut in for Cartagena. Of course, we saw your reversed ensign.'

"'But the wireless!' says the old man, leaning against the rail. 'You got that.'

"'No, sir; we have no wireless aboard!'

"Well, the old man turned to look for me, but I had gone. You see, I figured that I'd have a little trouble explaining how I'd

happened to receive a message from a ship without a wireless outfit. And that's about all there was to it. The old man didn't report the business, or if he did he got around it somehow without raising a fuss, and I lay low for a couple of days and asked to be transferred just as soon as we got to Colon.

When I left the ship the old man looked at me with an odd expression as he shook hands and wished me luck. I heard later that he told the mate that I'd been under a big strain, or something like that. He was a good sport and I hated to leave him. He's got the *Sonora* now—the best ship on the line."

The Passenger flicked a cigar ash from his sleeve and gazed at the floor. From without came the shrill whistle of the mate calling to boat drill, and the scurrying of feet overhead.

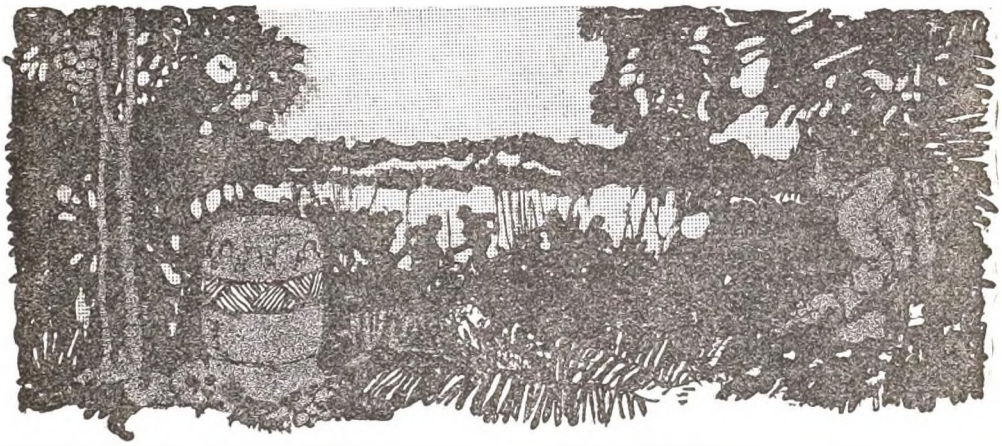
"Did you think," he asked thoughtfully, "that the person you called ——"

The wireless man wheeled about in his chair and tossed his cigar-stump through the port.

"Please," he interrupted, "please don't ask me for opinions!"

"Why?" asked the Passenger.

"Because," said the wireless man, reaching for the receivers, "they might think I was getting nervous!"



The Man-Eaters of M'Wembi

by Captain Fritz Duquesne

PIET DU TOIT saw the ending of the Boer War with the peace of Vereeniging, but there was no peace for him under English arms. His heart was burning like the live-coal of a slow match while the Union Jack dangled over his head, and he longed for a wilderness where he could live to his dying day without seeing so much as the print of an English foot.

He was a farmer of Lichtenburg, a grazing district lying in the west of the Transvaal, and it was easy for him to muster a little company of kinsmen and friends of like temper to trek with him out of the Transvaal a few days after the close of the war. There were twenty-six whites in his party, men, women and children, and about a hundred Kaffirs, most of whom had been attached by years of service and good treatment.

Du Toit had no definite choice of a spot to settle on. He planned in a general way to spy out the land amid and beyond the swamps of Mozambique and laid his course straight over the *veld* to Komateport at the railroad crossing between the Transvaal and the Portuguese territory. For some time his trek was heard from more or less frequently, but after passing the Portuguese border the news began to shrink to bare reports that the Boers had been seen by natives from time to time, still pressing on to the northeast through the wilderness to the vast swamps.

They were doggedly entering the most repellent region of the Dark Continent, a fearful expanse of fetid pools and loathsome mire, under the glare of the torrid sun, the breeding-ground of the crocodile and all manner of reptiles, insects and vermin, a perpetual fount of miasma and deadly fevers, but jealously held against intrusion by the fiercest and most bloodthirsty natives of Africa. All cunning and hate are lodged in these people, into whose native blood has come a touch of the Arab and of the trader of Madagascar. Their normal life is war; their chief amusement is murder; the savage with most blood on his hands is a hero, and may become a god when he dies.

It was presumed that the Boer trek had passed into the swamps, but no native had seen the entry and no news came out and back to Lichtenburg. After several months of vain waiting and growing anxiety, a search for the trail was begun with the help of native scouts. Some traces of the trek were found in the wilderness, marks of camping-grounds, splinters from the wagons in the thorn-bush, and broken utensils, but at the edge of the swamps the trackers were baffled. Nothing was learned by repeated excursions over every traversable route through the marshlands. Finally, in discouragement, the Portuguese Government was appealed to for help, and details of light horsemen were ordered to carry the search farther in every practicable direction.

The difficulties of penetrating the swamped heart of Mozambique are prodigious. It is necessary to make paths painfully, yard by yard, by driving crossed poles for a trestle into the mud or tying bamboos across from the mangrove roots, or by bending down the tough plants and interweaving their stems into coarse elephant grass and other fibers. In course of time these woven paths, bending and swaying under a passing load, are so thick set with the rank growth of weeds and splashes of mud that they have the firmness and look of earth walls or dams.

Every path leading into the marshes was traced for many miles by the searching parties, but no marks of Du Toit's trek were detected and no tidings of the missing party could be gathered from the natives. Yet every Africander persisted in the belief that the party was somewhere alive or that its fate could be learned. All African history has no record of a lost Boer; but, after hunting vainly for many weeks, the Portuguese Government was on the point of giving up the attempt, and it was evident that the Boers must renew the search for their countrymen or it would be abandoned.

I had gone to Lorenzo Marques to select land for the same purpose as Du Toit in a territory beyond the stretch of British dominion. The mysterious disappearance of the Boer trekkers was table-talk in the little kiosks on the street-corners. Within an hour after my arrival a Portuguese colonel, who was seated at one of the tables, rose to meet me as I entered a kiosk and greeted me as an old acquaintance. I sat down to share a bottle of wine with him, and, after a few minutes of polite inquiries and flowery talk, he urged me to enlist in the hunt for the missing party.

"Senhor," he said, "no one but a Boer can find them. The natives are liars and hostile—we are put off the track. Another glass of *vino tinto*, senhor, because to-morrow we may have fever and die, and the wine makes a man forget his troubles! *Senhor Capitan*, will you come with me?"

I turned to my friend the Colonel and said: "I will find them. If you will take with us a flying column of your brave little lancers we will scour the land from the Limpopo to Lake Nyassa!"

The Governor-General was persuaded to make one more trial, and my friend, Colonel Andreas, was put in command of a troop of four hundred men, with myself and a number of friendly natives as scouts. Few of the soldiers had any considerable experience in making their way off beaten tracks, and none of them had gone into the fearful marshes. Yet all were eager for the adventure and set off in high spirits.

A jollier cavalcade with nerves strung and arms ready, never rode out of old Lorenzo Marques. Every trooper was armed with a rifle, revolver, saber and lance, and made a dashing show in his trim suit of yellow holland and big, flapping, gray hat. Double bandoleers filled with cartridges were strapped over the breast and shoulders. Behind each rider trailed a pack-horse loaded with dried meat, ground meal and compressed vegetables.

On rode the long slender column, two abreast, past the yellow *caserne* on top of the hill overlooking the town, while a part-

ing salute was fired from the fort, which our men returned with the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Off we galloped with a mighty clatter of hoofs on the dusty road through the lines of cheering townspeople, who wished us good luck and called on the saints to keep us from harm, and we cared not a straw for the clusters of sullen-faced blacks that looked on and cursed us in their hearts as we rode away.

We pressed on steadily from sunrise till ten o'clock in the morning and then rested till two o'clock in the afternoon, when we mounted again and rode till nightfall.

On the second day the raw men showed signs of fatigue, and before the end of the third day the horses were fagged and plodded along with drooping heads. In the course of the fourth day men were staggering along on foot in a broken string behind the main column. Only the best riders and horses could keep the pace which our Colonel was setting in his anxiety to reach good water and pasture.

As days went on, the column thinned out more and more, stretching out for over a mile. Millions of insects hovered over our marching troop, drinking our sweat and settling in such swarms that every man's back looked as if it were coated with flies' wings. One by one the stragglers in the rear would cry for help and drop swooning from their saddles. The horses, too, were falling from exhaustion. At intervals from the surrounding bush we would hear the sharp crack of a rifle; or an arrow buzzing like a frightened humming-bird would reach its mark in one of our troop. It was idle for us to attempt pursuit. Before we could spur our tired horses to the cover, the lurking native would slip off into the thickets.

After a month of this traveling by forced marches, stopping only a few times to rest at a pool or stream, our horses were too fatigued to go farther. We knew that we were not far from the border of the swamps and the Colonel determined to make the entry on foot. He gave leave to any of the troopers who were disheartened to return to Lorenzo Marques, but not one would turn back without him. The pluck of the little mahogany-faced men was extraordinary in view of their sufferings.

In order to lighten the load of the marching men to the uttermost, the lances were broken up and thrown away and the troopers carried nothing in their packs but stinted rations for a week. The horses were shot and our men tramped off to the marshes. We expected that the natives with us would be able to keep us supplied with game, and all who were not needed to carry our tents and cooking outfit were sent out to hunt for meat; but it seemed that they were unwilling to take the risks of a hostile country, for the hunters almost always returned empty-handed. We were forced to cut our rations to eight ounces a day, and, at length, to a few morsels of food, for we had misjudged the distance that lay between us and the swamps.

Finally, after a wearisome tramp for two weeks, our famishing troop came upon a long declivity stretching for miles before us. The horizon, veiled in a blue haze, was blotted by a black jungle, the margin of the dreadful marshes of Mozambique. As we approached the swamps, the black grew to blue, the blue changed to a heavy dark green, and out of the shapeless mass came the heavy limbs and leaves of the mangrove-trees. Once amongst them the daylight above us was shut out.

After some search we found a newly-made path and followed its narrow way into the swamps. The footing was soft and spongy and the juices of rotting vegetation squirted up over our boot-legs at every step. Sometimes we would sink to our knees, stirring up putrid stenches that lay hidden under the rank growth. It was a Midsummer day in perhaps the hottest part of the world, but a chill came vaguely out of the darkness and crept over one's skin like the breath of some unseen reptile. While we advanced, hacking the vines with our sabers to clear our path, we could hear the wild animals scampering off through the undergrowth. When we struck lights to examine our compasses, the flashes were reflected in hundreds of eyes among the trees, eyes of animals we could not see, that sparkled green and blue and wavered silently in the enveloping gloom.

In the murk we could barely distinguish the bigger mangrove trunks coated with bark like the skin of toads reeking with slime. Owls screeched in our ears at midday and bats darted about, grazing our heads in their swoops. Monstrous things scurried over the tangle of roots at our feet, and snakes, crocodiles and reptiles innumerable swarmed in the stagnant, putrid, fever-

breeding waters of the fens. By the light of our torches at times we caught glimpses of pools through the reeds, covered with scum and pitted with bubbles like toad's eyes in bunches—eruptions of the ravenous decay.

So we toiled on painfully for hours. At last a streak of light showed ahead and then another, and by degrees darkness grew to day and we emerged from the dismal mangrove jungle into the dazzling light of the sun. Stretching for miles before us were open fields of rushes with yellow, flossy, plume-like heads. Tall flowering plants of metallic hues—red, blue, green, silver and black—mottled the yellow surface with chaotic coloring. Amid the intoxicating odors that they exhaled arose the foul effluvia of the swamps from which they grew. Birds, so small that they looked like insects, darted to and fro, drinking honey from the blazing throats of the flowers. Insects, so large that they looked like birds, buzzed, heavy-winged, in lazy legions ahead of us, and myriads of every hue, with the soft coloring of Eastern fabrics and the hard glints of bronze and steel, shimmered in the expanse above the reeds.

Beneath this fantastic garden lay the smoky waters of the marsh, the home of the reptiles that floundered off in sullen fear as we forced our way through the bushes.

After entering the swamps we were not obliged to go hungry. All creatures that lurk in the marshes make food for starving men. We shot and stabbed the crocodiles and cut off their tails to hang on skewers between the mangrove trunks. Setting fires below we roasted the flesh until we could break off flakes with our fingers. So we pressed on, in better spirits, into the heart of the swamps.

I was leading the troop when I saw ahead a company of armed natives blocking the way. The path was so narrow that our troop could not charge in force, and the screens of the swamp made an attack from them on the flanks and rear hard to resist. Still, it was impossible to retreat, and a bold front was the only resource. I leveled my rifle at the chief who headed the natives. He opened his arms, bearing his shield on the left and lifting his spear at full stretch in his right hand, so that his brawny, glistening body was fully exposed. His action meant: "I am a friend."

I lowered my rifle, and our troop was soon in friendly touch with the natives. The chief asked what we were seeking in the swamps and we told him that we were looking for the missing Boer trekkers. He told me that he had heard of their settlement in the country to the northwest beyond the swamps and would put us on the way to them. After resting for a few hours, the chief and his followers led us across the marshes by paths which we traveled for little more than a week until we came out into an open country where the kopjes were sticking up stiffly like the horns of a young koodoo.

We had hardly reached firm land when our soldiers fell sick. The only one of the company of unshaken spirit was the priest of the troop, a little gray-headed man who was constantly praying, with undimmed faith in God's help, while the men groaned and raved in the delirium of fever. We made hammocks of grass and bamboo poles, and natives of the country agreed to carry our sick men for a few of our cartridges.

Some of those who came to camp had on their fingers rings made out of Paul Kruger sovereigns and on their heads the big round felt hat that is worn by the Boers. All said that they had seen and spoken with the trekking party. The white men had gone on, some said north, some west, some did not know. The hats and rings had been presented to them in return for the kindness shown to the Boers. There was a mysterious vagueness in their talk, and we felt that they were hiding something from us.

From the day that we left the swamps a string of graves stretched behind us. One after another of the little troopers fell out of the ranks. The frightful heat of the sun parched their blood; the cold chill of night crept into their bones. All through the sleeping hours that brought no rest we heard the ravings of the sick, while the lions in the *bosch veld* around our camp were roaring above the hum of the insects and the droning chants of the natives.

At length we passed the ridge which was pointed out to us as the last to be crossed before reaching the well-watered country called M'Wembi, where the missing party was most likely to be found. We could look for miles over the land, but there was no curl of smoke in the air, nothing to show our approach to a settlement. Still we pressed on stubbornly, but with sinking hearts. Behind us the ridge was blurred in

the blue and gray gaze until it was no more than a cloud-bank on the horizon. We had no strength to go farther and were scarcely able to pitch our tents.

Few besides the padre and myself could give any care to the sick or stand watch over the camp. Staring blankly at one another, we wondered dully who would be the next to die. In our own misery we forgot our search. The lost Boers were nothing to us. We ceased to speak and sat about our camp-fires listlessly with haggard faces until we crept to the cover of our tents. With every passing day our troop dwindled away. Colonel Andreas had been prostrated by fever in the course of our march and was carried in a hammock to our halting-place, where he lay for days too sick to take any charge of the camp.

One morning he awoke early, and, in spite of his weakness, insisted on being taken outside his tent to see the condition of his men. He ordered the bugler, a little lad from Lisbon, with big round eyes, to sound the reveille. The boy took up the bugle pluckily and, going a little way from the tents, put it to his lips and blew a feeble G. With the first note he staggered, the bugle dropped from his nerveless hands and he fell like a log to the ground. I ran to his side and felt his pulse. It had ceased to beat. The boy was beyond recall.

The Colonel saw that his troop was at death's door and that the living were too sick to leave their beds. Our own native attendants were overcome like the soldiers, and we were obliged to rely on the neighboring natives to furnish us with food and give us a helping hand in the camp. They seemed to be friendly and willing to supply us with food in return for buttons and other trifles that caught their fancy, and we had no reason to suspect their suggestion to move to a hill where they told us we would find good water-springs and better air for our fever-stricken men. So, a day or two after the death of the bugler, we struck our tents and with the help of the natives our camp was soon shifted to the hillside.

The little priest had seemed possessed with supernatural strength and had inspired me with some of his spirit. Thus far I had been able to stand guard with him at night over the camp and I feared to think of the risk of our utter helplessness, for I saw that the natives were now fully informed of our weakness. We had refused them the arms they coveted, and it was plain that they were watching us greedily in spite of their show of friendliness. Still I forced myself to cheer up the Colonel a little and persuaded him to take to his hammock again with the assurance that I would call upon him whenever we needed his help. I was barely able to stand myself, but I took a big dose of quinine, and after resting during the afternoon in our new quarters I felt better at nightfall.

As usual I left my tent about midnight to relieve the watch which the priest was keeping. He was praying before the flickering camp-fire and I stood beside him for a moment silently. Suddenly a heart-shaking sound like the roar of lions, but with strange muffled tones, seemed to spring out of the earth beneath us. It rose and fell in swells, now loud and hoarse, now low and muttering. I fancied that my brain was reeling with a stroke of delirium and a cold sweat came over me. The little priest was still praying, but his head was bent to the ground and clutched in both hands.

Stooping over him, I whispered hoarsely: "Padre, did you hear that?"

He answered without lifting his head: "Yes, Captain, I heard a roaring. What was it?"

"It sounded like the roar of lions, though it came out of the ground. Didn't you think there was something very strange about it?"

The little priest looked up at me. "It is dreadful! We shall all go mad in this place if we do not die. I can not hold up longer."

I urged him to lie down to sleep while I stood watch. As he sank wearily on his bed of leaves I left his tent and, as I did so, again the roar rolled out of the darkness—mysterious, terrific. The moon had risen. I looked around and saw the white tents shining in its light. Not a flap of canvas stirred. The roar was heart-sickening, but the sick men were in a stupor insensible to fear. I had no one upon whom I could call for aid. I felt that I must go in search of relief while I had the strength to move.

I took a sextant from its box and went out a little way from camp to a clear space where I could get our bearings. As I was finding my stars, I saw a party of natives coming away from our tents, bearing a soldier in a hammock. I supposed that they were taking the body away to bury it. The experience was too common for me to ques-

tion what they were doing. Once more, after a little time, the mysterious roars arose, and then they stopped and the night was still.

At daybreak I heard the broken voice of the padre praying. When I entered his tent he upturned his sad yellow face with its plaintive eyes and asked me to pray with him. I pitied him and, although I can not pray, I knelt beside him. Tears trickled down his little withered face and his voice rose and fell in delirious cadences. Then almost beneath our feet a thundering roar seemed to shake the earth.

With a pitiful cry, the priest started up and ran wildly down the hillside. I hurried after him, but before I could reach him he had fallen to the ground and lay staring with the open eyes of a dead man at the sun. I remember vaguely that I called up the natives and told them to bury the padre, and I reached my tent somehow, uncertain whether I was sane or mad; whether it was a dream or horrid reality that was passing in my life.

After some hours of troubled sleep I felt able to sit up and made a rough cross to put on the grave of the true Christian soldier. But when I went to the spot where he fell, there was no grave, and the body was gone, no one knew where. I felt that I must be mad and turned back to my tent in a daze.

I lay there till nightfall, when I was aroused again by the strange roars. I took my arms and, half unknowing what I was doing, wandered off from the camp.

In a clump of bush not far away I heard a noise which grew more distinct as I approached. It was the peculiar weird chant of the natives. I crept through the bush and reached an open space where the natives were clustered. There, swung in a hammock, tied hand and foot, was one of our sick soldiers who I could see was still living, and around him danced half a hundred negroes. When the dance was over, the blacks took up the hammock and went off into the forest. I tried to follow, but my legs trembled and I fell to the ground.

Again the mysterious roars resounded through the darkness. In my weakness I lost consciousness, and when I woke it was daybreak. I crawled back on my hands and knees to the camp and gained the cover of my tent unseen by the natives. After a rest and a strong dose of quinine I regained a little strength. The strange dance in the bush preyed on my mind. I was not quite sure whether I had seen or imagined it. I dreaded the coming of night, but it came, and with it the frightful roars that were maddening me.

Except for this sound there was a silence as of death on the camp. I stepped out into the moonlight and stood in the shadow of a mimosa. A moving object caught my eye. A troop of natives in single file crept into camp with the sinuous stealth of a python in the grass. The leader opened the flap of a tent and entered with three followers. A moment later the four carried out a helpless sick man, and the band slid away noiselessly with its captive.

I followed at a little distance, raging at heart, but knowing that an alarm would excite a raid that would kill us all hopelessly. As we advanced into the forest, the roars grew fiercer and clearer. Soon the natives halted. Torches were lighted and the troop danced around their victim as before. Then, taking up the body, they carried it to a heap of boulders, from whence came a mighty roar, and hurled it into the midst of the rocks.

The roaring died away and the wild laughter of the blacks rang out shrilly, In a moment the band hastened away toward our camp, leaving their smoldering torches among the rocks. Mystified, I crept to the place where I had seen the body thrown. A peculiar low growl greeted me as I reached the rocks. I seized one of the torches and shook it into life, drawing my revolver for instant use.

A dark blot amid the boulders disclosed an opening to my straining eyes. Holding the torch at arm's length, I fell on my knees and peered into the hole. Down among the jagged rocks of a vast den, white with the bones of animals, I saw the green, phosphorescent eyes of a pack of lions. A horrible stench arose from the pit. I threw in the torch so that the light would be nearer my target should I wish to fire. Immediately the dry wood in the den blazed up and lighted the interior, showing me at least a dozen lions, old and young, on the rock floor littered with scraps of clothing and bones. As the fire spread, the lions slunk away from the prey that they were devouring and disappeared into the black recesses of the cave.

It was a maddening sight, and I could hardly suppress a scream of horror as I ran back into the dark woods and groped through the underbrush toward the camp.

I felt that we were powerless to escape these fiends and their idols, the man-eaters of M'Wembi. Of all the troop I was the only one who had any strength for a desperate fight. Almost distracted, I crept back to my hammock, thinking of revenge one minute, and again that I might be the next victim to be fed to the beasts in the den.

When the sudden tropic dawn rose in the east and threw shadows across the clearing my resolution hardened. If anything was to be done to save us it must be done at once, and I must try the best chance. I took a dose of quinine and, before it began to numb my brain, I sat down to think. Lake Nyassa was to be reached only by a long and weary march. Did I have enough strength to carry me through? On the lake shore I should probably find some Europeans or friendly natives who would be persuaded to return with me and rescue the survivors of the troop. Whether I could bear the march or not, I made up my mind to try. I could better die seeking for aid than waiting in the tent for the merciless savages to throw me to the lions.

That night I was on the point of starting for the lake, when, far down to the southwest, I saw half a dozen fires like the sparks of a glowworm in the dark. Had some heavenly hand held out hope it could not have given me more cheer, for I knew that the fires were kindled by white men, as the natives in the district made none after sunset. My mind was made up. Using the lights as guiding stars I set out to reach the distant camp. All night I walked or crawled through the *dorn bosch*, but with daylight the fires vanished. There was nothing to do but rest, for I was not sure of the direction of the movement of the campers.

A few hours later, gray columns of smoke rose perhaps five miles to the south. Hungry and thirsting and bleeding from thorn-scratches, I set out toward the smoke as fast as I could in my fatigued condition. Two hours' walk brought me in view of the unmistakable Boer *laager*, a square of white-topped wagons around which horses were hitched. Broad-shouldered bearded men, heavily armed and booted, sat around the fires. I cried with joy and, taking my hat in one hand and my rifle in the other, I waved them and staggered on as the campers rushed forward to meet me. It was a party of Boers searching for the same lost *voortrekkers*.

I told them in a few broken sentences my incredible story. Jan Van Vigl, the leader, listened to me intently and then, turning to his companions, exclaimed: "The man is mad!"

All looked at me with pity.

"Brother," I pleaded, "believe or not, I am telling the truth."

The big Africander beckoned to a Kaffir and said: "Bring him water; he is suffering."

The Kaffir brought me a drink which gave me fresh vigor and I told my story again and begged them to hurry to the camp of the Portuguese and save the last of the troop.

My earnestness and better command of myself impressed them. Word was given to *inspan* and, ten minutes later, oxen were dragging the groaning wagons in a long line across the country. I was placed on a horse and led the way. So eager was I to reach the camp that before long I had the whole cavalcade galloping behind me, leaving the wagons to crawl along in the rear.

When we came in sight of the camp on the distant hillside the sun was setting. My companions told me that they could see nothing moving around the camp except a few natives. They had begun to put faith in what I had told them and Vigl decided that he would go to the camp with me and lay out a plan of action before the natives learned of the arrival of the Boer *commando*. We reached the tent under cover of the night, and Van Vigl for the first time heard the mysterious roaring that came out of the earth.

"My God!" he cried, "that's the roar of lions, but it is unearthly!"

"You are right," I muttered. "It came from hell."

Again the roar broke on our ears.

Van Vigl stood up, mystified, and started to leave the tent. I placed a restraining hand on his arm.

"One false step will spoil everything," I said. "The voice you hear comes from the string of caves running under our camp, which the lions of the district have taken for their dens. The natives have made them man-eaters, and now they are roaring in their hunger for one of those helpless men in the tents. Already a dozen, perhaps more, have been fed to them. Come with me and I will show you the mouth of the den."

We left the tents and made our way

through the bush to the opening in the rocks. "When did you say they feed a man to these devils?" Jan asked. I looked at the stars and saw it was about an hour from midnight.

"In an hour, or perhaps two," I answered.

Without a word Van Vigl turned on his heel and walked away. I followed him down hill for some distance.

"What shall we do?"

"We shall do what we always do—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth! Return to the tent, and when you hear an owl screech twice come back to the cave."

I returned to the camp, armed myself and filled my bandoleer with all the cartridges it would hold. After an impatient wait I heard the signal and made my way to the mouth of the den. As I passed through the bush a black figure rose before me.

"We are here," said Van Vigl. "If they come to-night the lions will have more than their fill."

We waited and watched the stars shift in the sky. An hour passed, when the brushing of men passing through the bush caught our ears. In the opening a troop of men was carrying a body bound tight in a hammock. They halted before the cave and, a moment later, the torches illuminated the night, and they danced around their victim. Then, when the slow whirl ceased, two of them raised the body and carried it toward the mouth of the pit.

A roar of horrid welcome came from the depths of the den, cut by the crack of a rifle driving a bullet into the heart of the black nearest the hole. With a groan he dropped the hammock and fell dead. The natives hurled their torches to the ground and tried to escape. The bushes were riven with flashes as a merciless hail of bullets poured from the guns of the Boers. On every side dry grass and brush set on fire by the torches blazed up, showing the savages against the livid background.

Frantic with the pelt of the bullets and the raging flames that leaped from the grass around their bodies, they rushed in their madness toward the only break in the ring of riflemen, unmindful that it was the mouth of the pit, or seeking any cover from the fire. In a moment we saw them plunging headlong into the depths of the den and heard the roaring rise to the pitch of fury as the waiting lions bounded on their prey.

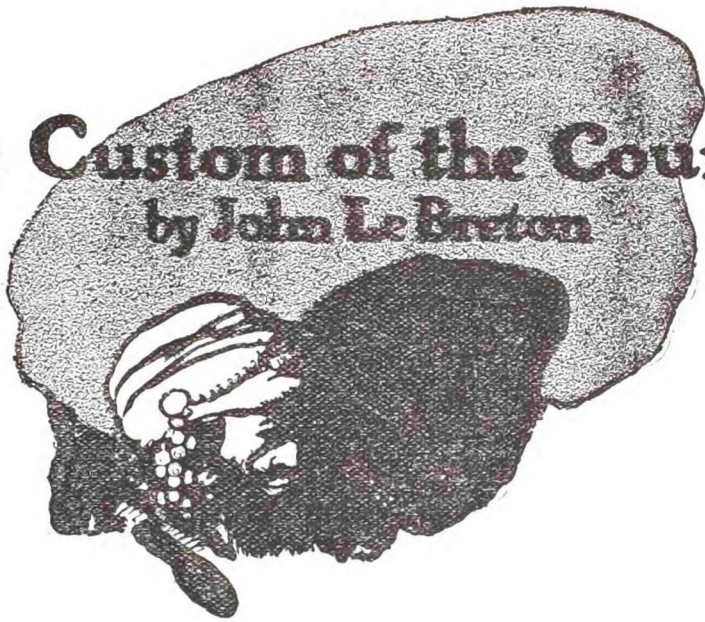
When the last man fell with a screech, we rushed forward and dragged the unconscious soldier from the burning grass. Without further delay we hurried back to the camp. The natives, hearing our shots, had fled, and the sick soldiers who were able to stir crawled from their tents in wonder to greet us.

The next day we returned to the den and filled the mouth with lighted bundles of bushes and dry grass to scare back the lions. When the fire burned out we entered and found the brutes suffocated by the smoke in the farthest recesses of the caves. Scattered about on the stony floor were fragments of human skeletons, and rags and patches of clothing and leather, and we saw the tattered felt *schoen* of the Boers mingled with the uniform of the Portuguese soldiers. Rings and trinkets, which Van Vigl's party recognized as belonging to the *voortrekkers*, made the horrid identifications beyond question.

There could be no possible doubt that the adventurous party of Piet Du Toit had fallen sick like our own and had been hurled, one by one, into the den by the fiendish natives of M'Wembi. Thanks to the coming of Van Vigl and his rescuing party in the nick of time, our Colonel and the remnant of his troop were saved and, with the constant guard of the Boers, most of us survived to see again Lorenzo Marques, though sadly changed from the gay cavalcade which had ridden out so boldly to search for the lost Africanders.

The Custom of the Country

by John Le Breton



H. KISORY MOHAN TAGORE, Maharaja of Brinaipur, was dining with his two British guests. Lieutenant the Hon. William Marsden and Captain Todd of the I. M. S. were such men as he delighted to entertain. His Highness of Brinaipur had spent some time at the Chief's College at Lahore, he had put in a couple of years in the Imperial Cadet Corps at Dehra Dun, and finally he had gone "Home" with a British guardian angel to be made much of for a London season. He was sincerely proud of his position in the British Empire. Fate had not made him an Englishman, but the Indian Government had done its best to rectify the mistake.

The table with its silver and glass and glistening white damask might have been lifted out of some English mansion by an obliging jinn and set down in the East. Overhead were just such huge, old-fashioned luster chandeliers as adorn Government House at Poonah and Bombay. There were panels painted by European artists of name and fame. Also there were gilt-framed mirrors in astonishing profusion, chiming French clocks, and unpardonable brackets.

Marsden drank of the excellent champagne with which his glass had just been filled, and leisurely surveyed his surroundings. He looked across the table at Todd with an expression which the other man met with purposed blankness.

"It's just like Home," said Marsden; "look around you, and you might think you were at Home. Eh, Todd?"

The Maharaja nodded slowly and graciously, and the diamond brooch clasping the folds of his turban threw out gorgeous sparkles.

"More than pleased," he murmured. "And the shooting? Is that so good as at Home?"

"Better," said Marsden; "we'll give you best there. Best I've had."

"Best I've had," agreed Todd. "Awfully good of you, Maharaja Sahib, to include me in the invitation."

The Maharaja smiled. He knew that it was good of him, and he knew that his goodness was appreciated. Marsden he had met in England as well as in Bombay. Todd had come to Brinaipur only as a friend to whom Marsden had been at liberty to extend the invitation.

Marsden had taken rather more than enough champagne, and his peculiarly British sense of humor was dangerously alert, while his British solidity and reserve had altogether deserted him. At the best of times he was not subtle. Now, it was only

too obvious that he had discovered his host's weak point and was determined to "draw" him. Todd eyed him with real anxiety, and talked of England and pheasant-shooting until his invention gave out.

Then Marsden began again:

"But for one thing, Sahib, you might be entertaining us in genuine English fashion. We miss the society of the ladies."

"Some of my friends bring their wives. Verree pleasant. You are not married, or should have been gratified—delighted," responded his Highness affably.

Todd's foot reached out under the table and made an ungentle effort to bring his compatriot to order, but the wine was in and the wit was out. Marsden winked knowingly—winked as though the Maharaja could neither see nor understand.

"But you are not a bachelor," he said jocosely. "We're disappointed at not meeting the ladies of your household."

The Maharaja's usual smile acquired an unusual rigidity. He said that the ladies of his family were unused to society and knew nothing of the duties of entertaining. Very casually he added that, unlike his brother of Burdwan, he was one of the old school.

"Of course, of course," interrupted Todd hastily.

"Don't see it at all," argued Marsden with the stubborn directness of the half-intoxicated man. "At Home the Maharaja expected to see his hostess when he was invited to a house. Must have been introduced to scores of Englishwomen. *They* didn't shut themselves up when he was in their homes, as if they were so many little plaster Samuels. In England a cat may look at the King—and at the Queen. Surprised, Maharaja Sahib, on my honor, I am, to find you so unprogressive."

"Custom of the country," growled Todd. "Every country has its own customs."

"The Maharaja is, to all intents and purposes, a Britisher," Marsden persisted. "He has adopted our ways, our customs, in practically everything. What's the good of hanging on to one solitary shred of a worn-out custom—eh? And a deuced silly custom at that!"

"Shut up!" growled Todd, reddening with ill-suppressed annoyance.

"Go on," laughed Marsden with unruffled amiability. "Why should I shut up? The Maharaja understands me—don't you, Maharaja Sahib? No offense."

"The contraree," returned His Highness. "Now, shall we say billiards, Captain?"

Todd rose quickly, glad of the excuse to get away from the discussion—and the wine.

"Good idea," he said.

Marsden laughed irritatingly. He stood up and looked at the stubby little potentate. His broad, good-tempered face took on an expression of stupid cunning, and his small eyes twinkled under their half-closed lids.

"Nice way to put a man off," he drawled. "But mind you, I'm of the same opinion still. If I happen to meet the Mem-sahib I shall introduce my humble self to her notice. No billiards for me, thanks. I'm tired out. I'm going to have a lie down for half an hour. 'S'cuse me, won't you, Maharaja Sahib? Hope you'll take Todd down a peg or two—fancies he can play, old Todd does, because he once fluked a break of fifty-seven."

"A nice couch in the billiard-room. Will you not come?" inquired the Maharaja ceremoniously.

"This is good enough for me, thanks."

Marsden threw himself upon a broad scarlet-leather sofa near the balcony windows and stretched himself for a nap.

Todd bent over him before he followed their host from the room.

"Sleep yourself sensible, for heaven's sake!" said he in an undertone.

The click and the slide and the running of billiard-balls went on for an uninterrupted hour, accompanied by a pleasant murmur of conversation. Suddenly Todd dropped his cue and looked up in consternation. The palace was plunged into an uproar. A burst of shrill cries from the women's quarters heralded the disturbance, and then came a confusion of men's voices—shouts and short barking orders—as though some sharp conflict were in progress.

The Maharaja went out, abruptly, and he glanced into the dining-room as he passed. A few moments later he entered the great, bare, marble-paved anteroom of the women's quarters and found Marsden the very active care of a struggling knot of men-servants. A withered old woman, huddled into a corner, was screaming frenzied directions for the attack, but as soon as she set eyes upon the lord of the house she called to him three words and thereafter was silent.

Marsden shook off some of his assailants, and the rest dropped away from him. He

had by no means recovered his normal condition and was not at all ashamed of himself. In fact, he was distinctly annoyed.

"Introduced m'self to a lady," he said in aggrieved tones, "and shook hands with her. Then all this! 'Pon my word!"

The old woman in the corner cried out again, and the Maharaja's glance went swiftly from her to his guest, who stood, sullen and flushed, amid his late antagonists, and there it lingered for an instant.

There was no more noise, and the excited crowd seemed to disperse like shapes of smoke before a puff of wind. Marsden found himself on the way to the billiard-room, walking a little in advance of his host. He was, on the whole, not ill-pleased with his adventure, and he was very certain of being able to laugh it off.

"'Fraid those yelling lunatics made the lady think I was a burglar instead of a guest," he said, looking over his shoulder with a smile. "Sorry, Maharaja Sahib."

"I also," said the Maharaja's soft voice, from the rear. "A bad job, and what is done can not be undone. This way. Our friend is waiting for us."

The Englishmen were lodged in the Guests' Bungalow, a cool and spacious building set among the perfumed wonders of the inner palace-gardens. The Maharaja strolled over with them when they retired for the night, and smoked a farewell cigar in their company. His departure was unhurried and his manner was courteous and imperturbable as though no unpleasant incident had marred the evening. But when he had gone his guests looked at each other searchingly.

"Got over it in no time," declared Marsden. "Knew that he would. We're exercising an educational influence up here, old man. Very likely the Mem-sahibs will dine with us to-morrow. Lovely little creature, the one I saw."

But Todd had no such optimistic visions. He was both angry and apprehensive, and he did not disguise his feelings. He said that Marsden had behaved like a fool.

"As for our host," he said dryly, "let us hope that he is as satisfied as he seems."

Marsden, being in no humor to suffer fault-finding, was retorting suitably when it occurred to him quite clearly, and for the first time, that his conduct was indefensible. Naturally, he began to make excuses.

"And what's more, the girl was a mere kid," he grumbled; "I just mentioned my name and accounted for myself and then shook hands in the most respectful manner. That's all. Now what possible trouble can come of that?"

Todd shrugged his shoulders and went off to bed.

Feeling remarkably fit in the morning, and elated with anticipations of another day of glorious shooting, Marsden suddenly arranged to clear the air entirely by offering the Maharaja an unreserved apology. The precise form which it was to take was not arrived at without difficulty, because the free-born Briton must preserve a certain tone of superiority even when he is in the wrong; and, on the other hand, there was Todd to pass as censor.

The would-be penitent went in to breakfast, fresh and ruddy, carrying his pet gun and a selection of oily rags. He beamed impartially upon the prawn, curry and crisped *papris*, and upon Todd, whose expression was even more portentous than it had been the night before.

"It's all right, old chap," he announced cheerfully; "right as rain. Wait till the Gollywog comes and you'll see. I shall do the thing handsomely—take off my turban, if you like.

Todd pointed out into the bush gardens at the slowly receding back-view of the Maharaja's confidential attendant, the bearer of regrettable news. A member of the reigning family had deceased during the night. His Highness would be unable to rejoin his friends until after the funeral, but he begged as a personal favor that they would adhere to the program he had arranged for them.

"And much I should like to oblige him," remarked Marsden, "though if it would show more respect to stay indoors and snarl at each other, I'm willing. However, I'm nobody. Do we go, or not?"

"Go," said Todd gloomily. "We may be in the way here."

So far as the Englishmen were concerned, the day's proceeding lacked zest. The sport was excellent, but gradually Marsden's good spirits were damped down by the persistent moodiness of his companion. Marsden looked him over with elaborate attention as they jogged back at eventide, a truly imperial "bag" to their credit.

"Todd, dear," he said, "confide in me. Is it sulks, or is it liver? Alternatively, if

you really believe that his Highness has some little surprise up his sleeve for me, don't mind saying so. We won't go home till morning, but we can get urgently recalled by then, if you say the word. Don't let me be the cause of bringing your auburn hairs in sorrow to the grave."

"*Yout!*" jerked out Todd scornfully; and he rode on, glum as ever.

Trying to fathom the mystery of Todd's heaviness of spirit, Marsden stumbled upon a brutal little idea, and once he had come to it, there was no putting it away. Out of the comfortable unconcern of his mind, it suddenly jutted up and leered at him, so that he caught his breath as if in physical pain. His hand tightened unconsciously upon the reins and his horse was brought to a standstill. It was only for a moment, though, and he went forward again, muttering disgustedly at his own folly. He stared the brutal little idea squarely in its evil face and he told it with needless profanity that the Maharaja was an easy-going, good-natured old sort, not to be confounded with any crawling, blanked, black rot of similar criminal and savage royal ancestry.

They dined at intolerable length and with oppressive ceremony. The champagne did not exhilarate as it had done the night before, but it stimulated vile fancies. Later, when darkness had fallen and they sat in the veranda, Marsden eyed Todd almost appealingly as he sucked at his cheroot. Never had he known the need of good comradeship as he did now. He felt wretchedly depressed and friendless. He wanted congenial society very badly, and some one to assure him that there was nothing to worry over, nothing at all.

Very hot and still the night was, still, with a breathless hush that cradled every puny sound and gave it giant value to listeners acutely alert. The patter of naked feet adown the marble way that skirted the rear of the bungalow and led to the palace was clearly audible, but it awakened no particular interest—until it failed to cease. Scores of unseen human beings were passing; hundreds passed, and hundreds were coming in nerve-racking continuity. It was undeniably curious. Marsden said that it was curious, and his opinion remained undisputed.

It was like mumbling waters, it was like the padding of wild beasts over man-made flooring—it was like nothing at all under heaven or upon earth that those two men had ever heard before.

Marsden thought of the chosen shooting outfit he had brought to Brinaipur and he rose quickly. He fancied he would feel more at ease if he knew that it was ready to hand. He was compelled to force the barrier of Todd's silence.

"If that mob is going to look us up, we'd better be ready," he said.

Tood pulled his cigar from between his lips with a perceptibly unsteady hand.

"Funeral," said he irritably.

Marsden sat down again. The naked feet were returning now, and they did not patter any more, but marched with a slow, smothered thudding of endless monotony. Marsden had a queer illusion that they were trampling over his heart with that horrible, soft, elastic tread, trampling out his breath with millions of measured steps. He tried to help himself to some whisky and somehow managed to smash the glass; and he did not care enough to persevere in the attempt.

Sharply, like the rattle of far-away artillery, broke out the harsh, tuneless noise of native drums, beaten with the open hand. It crackled in the distance, grew loud and menacing in approach, and went its way, throbbing fiercely into the night. A low crying trailed after it, a single, heart-broken wail of enormous despair. It was as if some little wandering ghost, straying up from the palace, hovered about the comfortable light of the bungalow ere it followed at the stern bidding of the drums into the waste places of the beyond.

It wavered piteously; and instantly it was drowned in a great volume of mourning voices that swelled and spread and rose higher and higher until the baffling skies seemed to hurl it back upon the earth. Voices unnumbered took up the story of grief and traversed all the heights and depths of unavailing regret, with shrieking, with frenzied rebellion, with long, dull moanings.

Then came silence—sudden, tense, more terrible than any sound that had preceded it. Todd's cigar lay at his feet, with his heel upon the smoldering end, and his head was turned away from the light. Marsden was leaning forward, his nostrils twitching, and his pallid face glistening with sweat. He knew that the corpse was being borne past. He could have sworn that the rank, heavy odor of marigold flowers came to him, and the sound of mourners beating their breasts.

Of royal procedure he knew nothing, but he had seen the dead of the common folk, flower-decked and carried in gilded chairs, jolting limply this way and that like pitiful, broken puppets.

Why did imagination insist that it was a little, slender child's body, with garlands purposely massed about its drooping neck, that was going down to the burning-ghat? Perhaps just such a little creature as he had seen at the palace. Strange it was how he could not rid himself of the memory of her wide eyes, wild with fright, and the touch of her timid hand. Perhaps— Oh, it was madness to think of that as stark reality—really and truly madness! Only Todd was evidently thinking the same thing—so Todd must be mad, too.

Presently Marsden wiped his clammy forehead and stood up. "All over, old man," he said loudly. "Bit depressing, wasn't it? Come and have a peg."

Todd neither spoke nor moved.

"Come on, I say! All flesh is grass. Let us be jolly while we can," and turning back into the dining-room, he began to sing:

" *'Where are you going to, my pretty maid, my pretty——'* "

"Good God!" said Todd, jumping up.

They glared at each other, gripped by emotion that stayed further speech. Then Marsden burst into a roar of outrageous laughter and dropped into a lounging-chair, face downward.

Todd looked on irresolutely, but if he had any merciful thought of offering consolation he was able to put it away. He went out blindly and gropingly into the darkness, his head uplifted and his mouth open as if he needed air.

How it was that he came to the burning-ghat Todd never knew. Unseen himself, he stood in the shadows and waited. The little, whispering flames were flickering up through the broad and ample pyre, and the mourners wailed without ceasing.

Time passed, yea, time was merged into eternity—or so it seemed to the waiting Marsden. He retraced his way through countless ages and undid very many deeds, and inserted others in the record of the life that had been. The Maharaja he slew, not once but a score of times, and always the thing was good to do and whetted his lust to accomplish it yet again. He smelled loathingly the scent of marigold flowers, and his soul grew weak under the stress of its own accusations.

He heard voices, and tried to pull himself together. Todd was bringing in the Maharaja.

"So sorree to be away. Yess—the youngest lady of my house. Veree good, veree sweet, loved by all. It is sad—yess," he looked full into Marsden's face and dropped his words slowly, "but it had to be."

That snapped the leash of self-control, and the big, fair man with the dazed eyes wrenched himself out of his tortured lethargy and flung himself forward, groaning with rage and pain. Both hands were clenched high in the air above the stubby potentate's turbaned head as though to fall like hammers and batter him to the earth. The Maharaja's feet were agile in retreat, though the Englishman never reached him, but fell, and lay like a log upon the floor.

At dawn Marsden went by the palace in a litter, on his way back to a more complete civilization. His Highness of Brinaipur perfectly understood that it was necessary for the invalid to travel during the coolest period of the day. He was waiting to render his departing guests all due courtesies, even at the unconscionable hour. He looked between the curtains at the young man who lay there silently and with shut eyes, and he murmured sympathetically. Marsden was not a pretty sight. Todd, who stood on guard, saw blood trickling down the unshaven chin, from a bitten lip.

"A-ah! a touch of the sun," sighed the Maharaja.

"Yes—a touch of the sun," said Todd, giving the signal to proceed. "Again all thanks, Maharaja Sahib, and our salaams."

When Marsden was much older and wiser and had acquired qualities which, added to natural qualities, go to make up the "really good sort", Todd took occasion to describe to him the final scene of the obsequies at Brinaipur. Speaking as a medical man, he said that it had not caused him any particular horror when the body of the dead writhed up of itself, in a glare like that of noonday, because he understood that the first fierce heat, contracting the muscles, is known to produce that effect. It was then he discovered that the Maharaja had been bereaved of an aged relative of the male sex, and not of a youthful wife.

31 New Inn

By R. Austin Freeman

author of "The Red Thumb-Mark"

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERIOUS PATIENT

THE hour of nine was approaching—the blessed hour of release when the casual patient ceases from troubling (or is expected to do so) and the weary practitioner may put on his slippers and turn down the surgery gas.

The fact was set forth with needless emphasis by the little American clock on the mantel-shelf, which tick-tacked frantically, as though it were eager to get the day over and be done with it; indeed, the approaching hour might have been ninety-nine from the to-do the little clock made about the matter.

The minute-hand was creeping up to the goal and the little clock had just given a kind of preliminary cough to announce its intention of striking the hour, when the bell on the door of the outer surgery rang to announce the arrival of a laggard visitor. A moment later the office-boy thrust his head in at my door and informed me that a gentleman wished to see me.

They were all gentlemen in Kennington Lane—unless they were ladies or children. Sweeps, milkmen, bricklayers, costermongers, all were impartially invested with rank and title by the democratic office-boy, and I was not, therefore, surprised or disappointed when the open door gave entrance to a man in the garb of a cabman or coachman.

As he closed the door behind him, he drew from his coat pocket a note, which he handed to me without remark. It was not addressed to me, but to my principal—to the doctor, that is to say, of whose practise I was taking charge in his absence.

"You understand, I suppose," I said, as I prepared to open the envelope, "that I am not Dr. Pike? He is out of town at present, and I am looking after his patients."

"It's of no consequence," the man replied. "You'll do just as well as him, I expect."

On this I opened the note and read the contents, which were quite brief and, at first sight, in no way remarkable.

DEAR SIR:

Could you come at once and see my brother? The bearer of this will give you further particulars and convey you to the house. Yours truly,

J. MORGAN.

There was no address on the paper and no date, and the name of the writer was, of course, unknown to me.

"This note speaks of some further particulars," I said to the messenger. "What are the particulars referred to?"

"Why, sir, the fact is," he replied, "it's a most ridic'lous affair altogether. The sick gentleman don't seem to me to be quite right in his head; at any rate, he's got some very peculiar ideas. He's been ailing now for some time, and the master, Mr. Morgan, has tried everything he knew to get him to see a doctor. But he wouldn't. However, at last it seems he gave way, but only on one condition. He said the doctor was to come from a distance and was not to be told who he was or where he lived or anything about him; and he made the master promise to keep to these conditions before he would let him send for advice. Do you think you could come and see him on them conditions, sir?"

I considered the question for a while before replying. We doctors all know the kind of idiot who is possessed with an insane dislike and distrust of the members of our profession and we like to have as little to do with him as possible. If this had been my own practise I would have declined the case off-hand; but I could not lightly refuse work that would bring profit to my principal.

As I turned the matter over in my mind I half-unconsciously scrutinized my visitor—rather to his embarrassment—and I liked his appearance as little as I liked his message. He kept his hat on, which I resented, and he stood near the door where the light was dim, for the illumination was concentrated on the table and the patient's chair; but I could see that he had a sly, unprepossessing face and a greasy red mustache that seemed out of character with his livery, though this was mere prejudice. Moreover, his voice was disagreeable, having that dull, snuffling quality that, to the medical ear, suggests a nasal polypus. Altogether I was unpleasantly impressed, but decided, nevertheless, to undertake the case.

"I suppose," I answered at length, "it is no affair of mine who the sick man is or where he lives; but how do you propose to manage the business? Am I to be blindfolded like the visitor to the bandits' cave?"

"No, sir," he replied with a forced smile and with evident relief at my agreement. "I have a carriage waiting to take you."

"Very well," I rejoined, opening the door to let him out, "I will be with you in a minute."

I slipped into a bag a small supply of emergency drugs and a few diagnostic instruments, turned down the gas and passed out through the surgery. The carriage was standing by the curb and I viewed it with mingled curiosity and disfavor; it was a kind of large brougham, such as is used by some commercial travelers, the usual glass windows being replaced by wooden shutters intended to conceal the piles of sample-boxes, and the doors capable of being locked from outside.

As I emerged, the coachman unlocked the door and held it open.

"How long will the journey take?" I asked, pausing with my foot on the step.

"Nigh upon half an hour," was the reply.

I glanced at my watch and, reflecting gloomily that my brief hour of leisure would be entirely absorbed by this visit, stepped into the uninviting vehicle. Instantly the coachman slammed the door and turned the key, leaving me in total darkness.

As the carriage rattled along, now over the macadam of quiet side-streets and now over the granite of the larger thoroughfares, I meditated on the oddity of this experience and on the possible issues of the case. For one moment a suspicion arose in my mind that this might be a trick to lure me to some thieves' den where I might be robbed and possibly murdered; but I immediately dismissed this idea, reflecting that so elaborate a plan would not have been devised for so unremunerative a quarry as an impecunious general practitioner.

CHAPTER II

I MEET MR. MORGAN

MY REFLECTIONS were at length brought to an end by the carriage slowing down and passing under an archway—as I could tell by the hollow sound—where it presently stopped. Then I distinguished the clang of heavy wooden gates closed behind me, and a moment later the carriage door was unlocked and opened. I stepped out into a covered way that seemed to lead down to a stable; but it was all in darkness

and I had no time to make any detailed observations, for the carriage had drawn up opposite a side door which was open, and in which stood an elderly woman holding a candle.

"Is that the doctor?" she inquired, shading the candle with her hand and peering at me with screwed-up eyes. Then, with evident relief: "I am glad you have come, sir. Will you please to step in?"

I followed her across a dark passage into a large room almost destitute of furniture, where she set down the candle on a chest of drawers and turned to depart.

"The master will see you in a moment," she said. "I will go and tell him you are here."

With that she left me in the twilight of the solitary candle to gaze curiously at the bare and dismal apartment with its three rickety chairs, its unswept floor, its fast-closed shutters and the dark drapery of cobwebs that hung from the ceiling to commemorate a long and illustrious dynasty of spiders.

Presently the door opened and a shadowy figure appeared, standing close by the threshold.

"Mr. Morgan, I presume?" said I, advancing toward the stranger as he remained standing by the doorway.

"Quite right, sir," he answered, and as he spoke I started, for his voice had the same thick, snuffling quality that I had already noticed in that of the coachman. The coincidence was certainly an odd one, and it caused me to look at the stranger narrowly. He appeared somewhat shorter than his servant, but then he had a pronounced stoop, whereas the coachman was stiff and upright in his carriage; then the coachman had short hair of a light brown and a reddish mustache, whereas this man appeared, so far as I could see in the gloom, to have a shock head of black hair and a voluminous black beard. Moreover he wore spectacles. "Quite right, sir," said this individual, "and I thought I had better give you an outline of the case before you go up to the patient. My brother is, as my man has probably told you, very peculiar in some of his ideas, whence these rather foolish proceedings, for which I trust you will not hold me responsible, though I feel obliged to carry out his wishes. He returned a week or two ago from New York and, being then in rather indifferent health, he asked me to put him up for a time, as he had no settled home of his own. From that time he has gradually become worse and has really caused me a good deal of anxiety, for until now I have been quite unable to prevail on him to seek medical advice. And even now he has only consented subject to the ridiculous conditions that my man has probably explained to you."

"What is the nature of his illness?" I asked. "Does he complain of any definite symptoms?"

"No," was the reply. "Indeed, he makes very few complaints of any kind, although he is obviously ill, but the fact is that he is hardly ever more than half awake. He lies in a kind of dreamy stupor from morning to night."

This struck me as excessively odd and by no means in agreement with the patient's energetic refusal to see a doctor.

"But does he never rouse completely?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," Mr. Morgan answered quickly; "he rouses occasionally and is then quite rational and, as you may have gathered, rather obstinate. But perhaps you had better see for yourself what his condition is. Follow me, please; the stairs are rather dark."

The stairs were very dark and were, moreover, without any covering of carpet, so that our footsteps resounded on the bare boards as though we were in an empty house. I stumbled up after my guide, feeling my way by the hand-rail, and on the first floor followed him into a room similar in size to the one below and very barely furnished, though less squalid than the other. A single candle at the farther end threw its feeble light on a figure in the bed, leaving the rest of the room in a dim twilight.

"Here is the doctor, Henry," Mr. Morgan called out as we entered, and, receiving no answer, he added: "He seems to be dozing as usual."

I stepped forward to look at my patient while Mr. Morgan remained at the other end of the room, pacing noiselessly backward and forward in the semi-obscurity. By the light of the candle I saw an elderly man with good features and an intelligent and even attractive face, but dreadfully emaciated, bloodless and yellow. He lay with half-closed eyes and seemed to be in a dreamy, somnolent state, although not actually asleep. I advanced to the bedside

and addressed him somewhat loudly by name, but the only response was a slight lifting of the eyelids which, after a brief, drowsy glance at me, slowly subsided to their former position.

I now proceeded to feel his pulse, grasping his wrist with intentional bruskness in the hope of rousing him from his stupor. The beats were slow and feeble and slightly irregular, giving clear evidence, if any were wanted, of his generally lowered vitality. My attention was next directed to the patient's eyes, which I examined closely with the aid of the candle, raising the lids somewhat roughly so as to expose the whole of the iris. He submitted without resistance to my rather ungentle handling, and showed no signs of discomfort even when I brought the flame of the candle to within a couple of inches of his eyes.

His extreme tolerance of light, however, was in no way surprising when one came to examine the pupils, for they were contracted to such a degree as to present only the minutest point of black upon the gray iris.

But the excessive contraction of the pupils was not the only singular feature in the sick man's eyes. As he lay on his back, the right iris sagged down slightly toward its center, showing a distinctly concave surface and, whenever any slight movement of the eyeball took place, a perceptible undulatory movement could be detected in it.

The patient had, in fact, what is known as a tremulous iris, a condition that is seen in cases where the crystalline lens has been extracted for the cure of cataract, or where it has become accidentally displaced, leaving the iris unsupported. Now, in the present case the complete condition of the iris made it clear that the ordinary extraction operation had not been performed, nor was I able, on the closest inspection with the aid of a lens, to find any signs of the less common "needle operation." The inference was that the patient had suffered from the accident known as dislocation of the lens, and this led to the further inference that he was almost or completely blind in the right eye.

This conclusion was, indeed, to some extent negatived by a deep indentation on the bridge of the nose, evidently produced by spectacles habitually worn, for if only one eye were useful, a monocle would answer the purpose. Yet this objection was of little weight, for many men, under the circumstances, would elect to wear spectacles rather than submit to the inconvenience and disfigurement of the single eyeglass.

As to the nature of the patient's illness, only one opinion seemed possible; it was a clear case of opium or morphia poisoning. To this conclusion all his symptoms seemed to point plainly enough. His coated tongue, which he protruded slowly and tremulously in response to a command bawled in his ear; his yellow skin and ghastly expression; his contracted pupils and the stupor from which he could be barely roused by the roughest handling, and which yet did not amount to actual insensibility—these formed a distinct and coherent group of symptoms, not only pointing plainly to the nature of the drug, but also suggesting a very formidable dose.

The only question that remained was: How and by whom that dose had been administered. The closest scrutiny of his arms and legs failed to reveal a single mark such as would be made by a hypodermic needle, and there was, of course, nothing to show or suggest whether the drug had been taken voluntarily by the patient himself or administered by some one else.

And then there remained the possibility that I might, after all, be mistaken in my diagnosis—a reflection that, in view of the obviously serious condition of the patient, I found eminently disturbing. As I pocketed my stethoscope and took a last look at my patient I realized that my position was one of extraordinary difficulty and perplexity. On the one hand my suspicions inclined me to extreme reticence, while, on the other, it was evidently my duty to give any information that might prove serviceable to the patient.

CHAPTER III

FOUL PLAY?

"WELL, Doctor, what do you think of my brother?" Mr. Morgan asked as I joined him at the darkened end of the room. His manner, in asking the question, struck me as anxious and eager, but of course there was nothing remarkable in this.

"I think rather badly of him, Mr. Morgan," I replied. "He is certainly in a very low state."

"But you are able to form an opinion as to the nature of the disease?" he asked, still in a tone of suppressed eagerness.

"I can not give a very definite opinion at present,'' I replied guardedly. "The symptoms are decidedly obscure and might equally well indicate several different affections. They might be due to congestion of the brain and, in the absence of any other explanation, I am inclined to adopt that view. The most probable alternative is some narcotic drug such as opium, if it were possible for him to obtain access to it without your knowledge—but I suppose it is not?"

"I should say decidedly not," he replied. "You see, my brother is not very often left alone, and he never leaves the room, so I don't see how he could obtain anything. My housekeeper is absolutely trustworthy."

"Is he often as drowsy as he seems now?"

"Oh, very often. In fact, that is his usual condition. He rouses now and again and is quite lucid and natural for perhaps half an hour, and then he dozes off again and remains asleep for hours on end. You don't think this can be a case of sleeping-sickness, I suppose?"

"I think not," I answered, making a mental note, nevertheless, to look up the symptoms of this rare and curious disease as soon as I reached home. "Besides, he has not been in Africa, has he?"

"I can't say where he has been," was the reply. "He has just come from New York, but where he was before going there I have no idea."

"Well," I said, "we will give him some medicine and attend to his general condition, and I think I had better see him again very shortly. Meanwhile you must watch him closely, and perhaps you may have something to report to me at my next visit."

I then gave him some general directions as to the care of the patient, to which he listened attentively, and I once more suggested that I ought to see the sick man again quite soon.

"Very well, Doctor," Mr. Morgan replied, "I will send for you again in a day or two if he does not get better; and now if you will allow me to pay your fee, I will go and order the carriage while you write the prescription."

He handed me the fee and, having indicated some writing materials on a table near the bed, wished me good-evening and left the room.

As soon as I was left alone, I drew from my bag the hypodermic syringe with its little magazine of drugs that I always carried with me on my rounds. Charging the syringe with a full dose of atropin, I approached the patient once more and, slipping up the sleeve of his night-shirt, injected the dose under the skin of his forearm. The prick of the needle roused him for a moment and he gazed at me with dull curiosity, mumbling some indistinguishable words. Then he relapsed once more into silence and apathy while I made haste to put the syringe back into its receptacle. I had just finished writing the prescription (a mixture of permanganate of potash to destroy any morphia that might yet remain in the patient's stomach) and was watching the motionless figure on the bed, when the housekeeper looked in at the door.

"The carriage is ready, doctor," said she, whereupon I rose and followed her downstairs.

The vehicle was drawn up in the covered way, as I perceived by the glimmer of the housekeeper's candle, which also enabled me dimly to discern the coachman standing close by in the shadow. I entered the carriage, the door was banged to and locked, and I then heard the heavy bolts of the gates withdrawn and the loud creaking of hinges. Immediately after, the carriage passed out and started off at a brisk pace, which was never relaxed until we reached our destination.

My reflections during the return journey were the reverse of pleasant, for I could not rid myself of the conviction that I was being involved in some very suspicious proceedings. And yet it was possible that I might be entirely mistaken—that the case might in reality be one of some brain affection accompanied by compression such as slow hemorrhage, abscess, tumor or simple congestion. Again, the patient might be a confirmed opium-eater, unknown to his brother. The cunning of these unfortunates is proverbial, and it would be quite possible for him to feign profound stupor so long as he was watched and then, when left alone for a few minutes, to nip out of bed and help himself from some secret store of the drug.

Still I did not believe this to be the true explanation. In spite of all the various possibilities, my suspicions came back to Mr. Morgan and refused to be

dispelled. All the circumstances of the case itself were suspicious; so was the strange and sinister resemblance between the coachman and his employer; and so, most of all, was the fact that Mr. Morgan had told me a deliberate lie.

For he had lied, beyond all doubt. His statement as to the almost continuous stupor was absolutely irreconcilable with his other statement as to his brother's wilfulness and obstinacy; and even more irreconcilable with the deep and comparatively fresh marks of the spectacles on the patient's nose. The man had certainly worn spectacles within twenty-four hours, which he would hardly have done if he had been in a state bordering on coma.

My reflections were, for the moment, interrupted by the stopping of the carriage. The door was unlocked and thrown open and I emerged from my dark and stuffy prison.

"You seem to have a good fresh horse," I remarked, as a pretext for having another look at the coachman.

"Ay," he answered, "he can go, he can. Good-night, sir."

He slammed the carriage door, mounted the box and drove off as if to avoid further conversation; and as I again compared his voice with that of his master, and his features with those I had seen so imperfectly in the darkened rooms, I was still inclined to entertain my suspicion that the coachman and Mr. Morgan were one and the same person.

Over my frugal supper I found myself taking up anew the thread of my meditations, and afterward, as I smoked my last pipe by the expiring surgery fire, the strange and sinister features of the case continued to obtrude themselves on my notice. Especially was I puzzled as to what course of action I ought to follow. Should I maintain the professional secrecy to which I was tacitly committed, or ought I to convey a hint to the police?

Suddenly, and with a singular feeling of relief, I bethought me of my old friend and fellow student, John Thorndyke, now an eminent authority on medical jurisprudence. Thorndyke was a barrister in extensive special practise and so would be able to tell me at once what was my duty from a legal point of view, and, as he was also a doctor of medicine, he would understand the exigencies of medical practise. If I could only find time to call at the Temple and put the case before him, all my doubts and difficulties would be resolved.

Anxiously I opened my visiting-list to see what kind of day's work was in store for me on the morrow. It was not a heavy day, but I was doubtful whether it would allow of my going so far from my district, until my eye caught, near the foot of the page, the name of Burton. Now Mr. Burton lived in one of the old houses on the east side of Bouverie Street—less than five minutes' walk from Thorndyke's chambers in King's Bench Walk, and he was, moreover, a "chronic" who could safely be left for the last. When I had done with Mr. Burton, I could look in on my friend with a good chance of catching him on his return from the hospital.

Having thus arranged my program, I rose, in greatly improved spirits, and knocked out my pipe just as the little clock banged out the hour of midnight.

CHAPTER IV

I CONSULT THORNDYKE

"AND so," said Thorndyke, eying me critically as we dropped into our respective easy chairs by the fire with the little tea-table between us, "you are back once more on the old trail?"

"Yes," I answered, with a laugh, "'the old trail, the long trail, the trail that is always new.'"

"And leads nowhere," added Thorndyke grimly.

I laughed again—not very heartily, for there was an uncomfortable element of truth in my friend's remark, to which my own experience bore only too complete testimony. The medical practitioner whose lack of means forces him to subsist by taking temporary charge of other men's practises is likely to find that the passing years bring him little but gray hairs and a wealth of disagreeable experience.

"You will have to drop it, Jervis, you will, indeed," Thorndyke resumed after a pause. "This casual employment is preposterous for a man of your class and professional attainments. Besides, are you not engaged to be married, and to a most charming girl?"

"Juliet has just been exhorting me in

similar terms—except as to the last particular," I replied. "She threatens to buy a practise and put me in at a small salary and batten on the proceeds. Moreover, she seems to imply that my internal charge of pride, vanity and egotism is equal to about four hundred pounds to the square inch and is rapidly approaching bursting-point. I am not sure that she is not right, too."

"Her point of view is eminently reasonable, at any rate," said Thorndyke. "But as to buying a practise, before you commit yourself to any such thing I would ask you to consider the suggestion that I have more than once made—that you join me here as my junior. We worked together with excellent results in the 'Red Thumbmark' case, as the newspapers called it, and we could do as well in many another. Of course, if you prefer general practise, well and good; only remember that I should be glad to have you as my junior, and that in that capacity and with your abilities you would have an opening for something like a career."

"My dear Thorndyke," I answered, not without emotion, "I am more rejoiced at your offer and more grateful than I can tell you, and I should like to go into the matter this very moment. But I must not, for I have only a very short time now before I must go back to my work, and I have not yet touched upon the main object of my visit."

"I supposed that you had come to see me," remarked Thorndyke.

"So I did. I came to consult you professionally. The fact is, I am in a dilemma, and I want you to tell me what you think I ought to do."

Thorndyke paused in the act of refilling my cup and glanced at me anxiously.

"It is nothing that affects me personally at all," I continued. "But perhaps I had better give you an account of the whole affair from the beginning."

Accordingly I proceeded to relate in detail the circumstances connected with my visit to the mysterious patient of the preceding evening, to all of which Thorndyke listened with close attention and evident interest.

"A very remarkable story, Jervis," he said, as I concluded my narrative. "In fact, quite a fine mystery of the good, old-fashioned Adelphi drama type. I particularly like the locked carriage. You have obviously formed certain hypotheses on the subject?"

"Yes; but I have come to you to hear yours."

"Well," said Thorndyke, "I expect mine and yours are pretty much alike, for there are two obvious alternative explanations of the affair."

"As, for instance——"

"That Mr. Morgan's account of his brother's illness may be perfectly true and straightforward. The patient may be an opium-eater or morphinomaniac hitherto unsuspected. The secrecy and reticence attributed to him are quite consistent with such a supposition. On the other hand, Mr. J. Morgan's story may be untrue—which is certainly more probable—and he may be administering morphia for his own ends.

"The objection to this view is that morphia is a very unusual and inconvenient poison, except in a single fatal dose, on account of the rapidity with which tolerance of the drug is established. Nevertheless we must not forget that slow morphia poisoning might prove eminently suitable in certain cases. The prolonged use of morphia in large doses enfeebles the will, confuses the judgment and debilitates the body, and so might be adopted by a poisoner whose aim was to get some instrument or document executed, such as a will or assignment, after which, death might, if necessary, be brought about by other means. Did it seem to you as if Mr. Morgan was sounding you as to your willingness to give a death-certificate?"

"He said nothing to that effect, but the matter was in my mind, which was one reason for my extreme reticence."

"Yes, you showed excellent judgment in circumstances of considerable difficulty," said Thorndyke, "and, if our friend is up to mischief, he has not made a happy selection in his doctor. Just consider what would have happened—assuming the man to be bent on murder—if some blundering, cocksure idiot had rushed in, jumped to a diagnosis, called the case, let us say, an erratic form of Addison's disease, and predicted a fatal termination. Thenceforward the murderer's course would be clear; he could compass his victim's death at any moment, secure of getting a death-certificate. As it is, he will have to move cautiously for the present—always assuming that we are not doing him a deep injustice."

"Yes," I answered, "we may take it that nothing fatal will happen just at present, umless some more easy-going practitioner is called in. But the question that is agitating me is, What ought I to do? Should I,

for instance, report the case to the police?"

"I should say certainly not," replied Thorndyke. "In the first place, you can give no address, nor even the slightest clue to the whereabouts of the house, and, in the second, you have nothing definite to report. You certainly could not swear an information and, if you made any statement, you might find, after all, that you had committed a gross and ridiculous breach of professional confidence. No, if you hear no more from Mr. J. Morgan, you must watch the reports of inquests carefully and attend if necessary. If Mr. Morgan sends for you again, you ought undoubtedly to fix the position of the house. That is your clear duty for many and obvious reasons, and especially in view of your finding it necessary to communicate with the coroner or the police."

"That is all very well," I exclaimed, "but will you kindly tell me, my dear Thorndyke, how a man, boxed up in a pitch-dark carriage, is going to locate any place to which he may be conveyed?"

"I don't think the task presents any difficulty," he replied. "You would be prepared to take a little trouble, I suppose?"

"Certainly," I rejoined. "I will do my utmost to carry out any plan you may suggest."

"Very well, then. Can you spare me a few minutes?"

"It must be only a few," I answered, "for I ought to be getting back to my work."

"I won't detain you more than five minutes," said Thorndyke. "I will just run up to the workshop and get Polton to prepare what you will want, and when I have shown you how to get to work I will let you go."

He hurried away, leaving the door open, and returned in less than a couple of minutes.

"Come into the office," said he, and I followed him into the adjoining room—a rather small but light apartment of which the walls were lined with labeled deed-boxes. A massive safe stood in one corner and, in another, close to a window, was a great roll-top table surmounted by a nest of over a hundred labeled drawers. From one of the latter he drew a paper-covered pocket note-book and, sitting down at the table, began to rule the pages each into three columns, two quite narrow and one broad.

He was just finishing the last page when there came a very gentle tap at the door.

"Is that you, Polton? Come in," said my friend.

The dry, shrewd-looking, little elderly man entered and I was at once struck by the incongruity of his workman's apron and rolled-up sleeves with his refined and intellectual face.

"Will this do?" he asked, holding out a little thin board about seven inches by five, to one corner of which a pocket compass had been fixed with shellac.

"The very thing, Polton, thank you.

"What a wonderful old fellow that is, Jervis!" my friend observed, as his assistant retired with a friendly smile at me. "He took in the idea instantly and he seems to have produced the finished article by magic, as the conjurors bring forth bowls of goldfish at a moment's notice. And now as to the use of this appliance. Can you read a compass?"

"Oh, yes," I replied. "I used to sail a small yacht at one time."

"Good, then you will have no difficulty, though I expect the compass needle will jig about a good deal in the carriage. Here is a pocket reading-lamp, which you can hook on to the carriage lining. This note-book can be fixed to the board with an india-rubber band—so. You observe that the thoughtful Polton has stuck a piece of thread on the glass of the compass to serve as a lubber's line. Now this is how you will proceed: As soon as you are locked in the carriage, light your lamp—better have a book with you in case the light is seen—get out your watch and put the board on your knee. Then enter in one narrow column of your note-book the time; in the other, the direction shown by the compass and, in the broad column, any particulars, including the number of steps the horse makes in a minute, Thus:—"

He opened the note-book and made one or two sample entries in pencil as follows:

9:40—S. E. Start from home.
9:41—S. W. Granite blocks.
9:43—S. W. Wood pavement. Hoofs 104.
9:47—W. by S. Granite crossing. Macadam.

"And so on. You follow the process, Jervis?"

"Perfectly," I answered. "It is quite clear and simple, though, I must say, highly ingenious. But I must really go now."

"Good-by, then," said Thorndyke, slipping a well-sharpened pencil through the

rubber band that fixed the note-book to the board. Let me know how you get on, and come and see me again as soon as you can, in any case."

He handed me the board and the lamp, and when I had slipped them into my pocket we shook hands and I hurried away, a little uneasy at having left my charge so long.

CHAPTER V

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

A COUPLE of days passed without my receiving any fresh summons from Mr. Morgan, a circumstance that occasioned me some little disappointment, for I was now eager to put into practise Thorndyke's ingenious plan for discovering the whereabouts of the house of mystery. When the evening of the third day was well advanced and Mr. Morgan still made no sign, I began to think that I had seen the last of my mysterious patient and that the elaborate preparations for tracking him to his hiding-place had been made in vain.

It was therefore with a certain sense of relief and gratification that I received, at about ten minutes to nine, the office-boy's laconic announcement of "Mr. Morgan's carriage," followed by the inevitable "Wants you to go and see him at once."

The two remaining patients were of the male sex—an important time-factor in medical practise—and, as they were both cases of simple and common ailments, I was able to dispatch their business in about ten minutes.

Then, bidding the boy close up the surgery, I put on my overcoat, slipped the little board and the lamp into the pocket, tucked a newspaper under my arm and went out.

The coachman was standing by the horse's head and touched his hat as he came forward to open the door.

"I have fortified myself for the long drive, you see," I remarked, exhibiting the newspaper as I stepped into the carriage.

"But you can't read in the dark," said he.

"No, but I have a lamp," I replied, producing it and striking a match.

"Oh, I see," said the coachman, adding, as I hooked the lamp on to the back cushion, "I suppose you found it rather a dull ride last time?" Then, without waiting for a reply, he slammed and locked the door and mounted the box.

I laid the board on my knee, looked at my watch and made the first entry.

9:05—S .W. Start from home. Horse 13 hands.

As on the previous occasion, the carriage was driven at a smart and very regular pace, but as I watched the compass I became more and more astonished at the extraordinarily indirect manner in which it proceeded. For the compass needle, though it oscillated continually with the vibration, yet remained steady enough to show the main direction quite plainly, and I was able to see that our course zigzagged in a way that was difficult to account for.

Once we must have passed close to the river, for I heard a steamer's whistle—apparently a tug's—quite near at hand, and several times we passed over bridges or archways. All these meanderings I entered carefully in my note-book, and mightily busy the occupation kept me; for I had hardly time to scribble down one entry before the compass needle would swing round sharply, showing that we had, once more, turned a corner.

At length the carriage slowed down and turned into the covered way, whereupon, having briefly noted the fact and the direction, I smuggled the board and the note-book—now nearly half filled with hastily scrawled memoranda—into my pocket; and when the door was unlocked and thrown open, I was deep in the contents of the evening paper.

I was received, as before, by the housekeeper, who, in response to my inquiry as to the patient's condition, informed me that he had seemed somewhat better. "As, indeed, he ought to," she added, "with all the care and watching he gets from the master. But you'll see that for yourself, sir, and, if you will wait here, I will go and tell Mr. Morgan you have come."

An interval of about five minutes elapsed before she returned to usher me up the dark staircase to the sick-room, and, on entering, I perceived Mr. Morgan, stooping over the figure on the bed. He rose, on seeing me, and came to meet me with his hand extended.

"I had to send for you again, you see, Doctor," he said. "The fact is, he is not quite so well this evening, which is extremely disappointing, for he had begun to improve so much that I hoped recovery had

fairly set in. He has been much brighter and more wakeful the last two days, but this afternoon he sank into one of his dozes and has seemed to be getting more and more heavy ever since."

"He has taken his medicine?" I asked.

"Quite regularly," replied Mr. Morgan, indicating with a gesture the half-empty bottle on the table by the bedside.

"And as to food?"

"Naturally he takes very little; and, of course, when these attacks of drowsiness come on, he is without food for rather long periods."

I stepped over to the bed, leaving Mr. Morgan in the shadow, as before, and looked down at the patient. His aspect was, if anything, more ghastly and corpse-like than before; he lay quite motionless and relaxed, the only sign of life being the slight rise and fall of his chest and the soft gurgling snore at each shallow breath. At the first glance I should have said that he was dying, and indeed, with my previous knowledge of the case, I viewed him with no little anxiety, even now.

He opened his eyes, however, when I shouted in his ear, and even put out his tongue when asked in similar stentorian tones, but I could get no answer to any of my questions—not even the half-articulate mumble I had managed to elicit on the previous occasion. His stupor was evidently more profound now than then and, whatever might be the cause of his symptoms, he was certainly in a condition of extreme danger. Of that I had no doubt.

"I am afraid you don't find him any better to-night," remarked Mr. Morgan as I joined him at the other end of the room.

"No," I answered. "His condition appears to me to be very critical. I should say it is very doubtful whether he will rouse at all."

"You don't mean that you think he is dying?" Mr. Morgan spoke in tones of very unmistakable anxiety—even of terror.

"I think he might die at any moment," I replied.

"Good God!" exclaimed Morgan. "You horrify me!"

He evidently spoke the truth, for his appearance and manner denoted the most extreme agitation.

"I really think," he continued, "—at least I hope that you take an unnecessarily serious view of his condition. He has been like this before, you know."

"Possibly," I answered. "But there comes a last time, and it may have come now."

"Have you been able to form any more definite opinion as to the nature of this dreadful complaint?" he asked.

I hesitated for a moment and he continued:

"As to your suggestion that his symptoms might be due to drugs, I think we may consider that disposed of. He has been watched, practically without cessation, since you came last and, moreover, I have myself turned out the room and examined the bed, and not a trace of any drug was to be found. Have you considered the question of sleeping-sickness?"

I looked at the man narrowly before answering, and distrusted him more than ever. Still, my concern was with the patient and his present needs; I was, after all, a doctor, not a detective, and the circumstances called for straightforward speech and action on my part.

"His symptoms are not those of sleeping-sickness," I replied. "They are brain symptoms and are, in my opinion, due to morphia poisoning."

CHAPTER VI

MR. MORGAN'S SPECTACLES

"BUT, my dear sir," he exclaimed, "the thing is impossible! Haven't I just told you that he has been watched continuously?"

"I can judge only by the appearances I find," I answered. Then, seeing that he was about to offer fresh objections, I continued: "Don't let us waste precious time in discussion, or your brother may be dead before we have reached a conclusion. If you will get some strong coffee made, I will take the other necessary measures, and perhaps we may manage to pull him round."

The decision of my manner cowed him; besides which he was manifestly alarmed. Replying stiffly that I "must do as I thought best," he hurried from the room, leaving me to carry out my part of the cure. And as soon as he was gone I set to work without further loss of time.

Having injected a full dose of atropin, I took down from the mantelshelf the bottle containing the mixture that I had prescribed—a solution of potassium permanganate. The patient's lethargic condition

made me fear that he might be unable to swallow, so that I could not take the risk of pouring the medicine into his mouth for fear of suffocating him. A stomach-tube would have solved the difficulty, but of course I had none with me.

I had, however, a mouth-speculum, which also acted as a gag, and, having propped the patient's mouth open with this, I hastily slipped off one of the rubber tubes from my stethoscope and inserted into one end of it a vulcanite ear-speculum to act as a funnel. Then, introducing the other end of the tube into the gullet, I cautiously poured a small quantity of the medicine into the extemporized funnel.

To my great relief, a movement of the throat showed that the swallowing reflex still existed, and, thus encouraged, I poured down the tube as much of the fluid as I thought it wise to administer at one time.

I had just withdrawn the tube and was looking round for some means of cleansing it when Mr. Morgan returned and, contrary to his usual practise, came close up to the bed. He glanced anxiously from the prostrate figure to the tube that I was holding and then announced that the coffee was being prepared. As he spoke, I was able, for the first time, to look him fairly in the face by the light of the candle.

Now it is a curious fact—though one that most persons must have observed—that there sometimes occurs a considerable interval between the reception of a visual impression and its transfer to the consciousness. A thing may be seen, as it were, unconsciously, and the impression consigned, apparently, to instant oblivion, and yet the picture may be subsequently revived by memory with such completeness that its details can be studied as though the object were still actually visible. Something of that kind must have happened to me now, for, preoccupied as I was by the condition of the patient, the professional habit of rapid and close observation caused me to direct a searching glance at the man before me. It was only a brief glance, for Mr. Morgan, perhaps embarrassed by my intent regard of him, almost immediately withdrew into the shadow, but it revealed two facts of which I took no conscious note at the time, but which came back to me later and gave me much food for speculation.

One fact thus observed was that Mr. Morgan's eyes were of a bluish-gray, like those of his brother, and were surmounted by light-colored eyebrows, entirely incongruous with his black hair and beard.

But the second fact was much more curious. As he stood, with his head slightly turned, I was able to look through one glass of his spectacles at the wall beyond. On the wall was a framed print, and the edge of the frame, seen through the spectacle-glass, appeared unaltered and free from distortion, as though seen through plain window-glass; and yet the reflections of the candle-flame in the spectacles showed the flame inverted, clearly proving that the glasses were concave on one surface at least.

These two apparently irreconcilable appearances, when I subsequently recalled them, puzzled me completely, and it was not until some time afterward that the explanation of the mystery came to me.

For the moment, however, the sick man occupied my attention to the exclusion of all else. As the atropin took effect he became somewhat less lethargic, for when I spoke loudly in his ear and shook him gently by the arm he opened his eyes and looked dreamily into my face; but the instant he was left undisturbed, he relapsed into his former condition. Presently the housekeeper arrived with a jug of strong black coffee, which I proceeded to administer in spoonfuls, giving the patient a vigorous shake-up between whiles and talking loudly into his ear.

Under this treatment he revived considerably and began to mumble and mutter in reply to my questions, at which point Mr. Morgan suggested that he should continue the treatment while I wrote a prescription.

"It seems as if you were right, after all, Doctor," he conceded, as he took his place by the bedside, "but it is a complete mystery to me. I shall have to watch him more closely than ever, that is evident."

His relief at the improvement of his brother's condition was most manifest and, as the invalid continued to revive apace, I thought it now safe to take my departure.

"I am sorry to have kept you so long," he said, "but I think the patient will be all right now. If you will take charge of him for a moment, I will go and call the coachman; and perhaps, as it is getting late, you could make up the prescription yourself and send the medicine back with the carriage."

To this request I assented and, as he left

the room, I renewed my assaults upon the unresisting invalid.

In about five minutes the housekeeper made her appearance to tell me that the carriage was waiting and that she would stay with the patient until the master returned.

"If you take my candle, you will be able to find your way down, sir," she said.

To this I agreed and took my departure, candle in hand, leaving her shaking the patient's hand with pantomimic cordiality and squalling into his ear shrill exhortations to "wake up and pull himself together."

As soon as I was shut in the carriage, I lighted my lamp and drew forth the little board and note-book, but the notes that I jotted down on the return journey were much less complete than before, for the horse, excelling his previous performances, rattled along at a pace that rendered writing almost impossible, and indeed more than once he broke into a gallop.

The incidents of that evening made me resolve to seek the advice of Thorndyke on the morrow and place the note-book in his hands, if the thing could possibly be done, and with this comforting resolution I went to bed. But

> The best-laid schemes o' mice and men
> Gang aft a-gley,

and my schemes, in this respect, went "a-gley" with a vengeance. In the course of the following morning a veritable avalanche of urgent messages descended on the surgery, piling up a visiting-list at which I stood aghast.

Later on, it appeared that a strike in the building trade had been followed immediately by a general failure of health on the part of the bricklayers who were members of the benefit clubs, accompanied by symptoms of the most alarming and unclassical character, ranging from "sciatica of the blade-bones," which consigned one horny-handed sufferer to an armchair by the kitchen fire, to "windy spavins," which reduced another to a like piteous plight. Moreover, the sufferings of these unfortunates were viewed with callous skepticism by their fellow members (not in the building trade) who called aloud for detailed reports from the medical officer.

And, as if this were not enough, a local milkman, having secretly indulged in an attack of scarlatina, proceeded to shed microbes into the milk-cans, with the result that a brisk epidemic swept over the neighborhood.

From these causes I was kept hard at work from early morning to late at night, with never an interval for repose or reflection. Not only was I unable to call upon Thorndyke, but the incessant round of visits, consultations and reports kept my mind so preoccupied that the affairs of my mysterious patient almost faded from my recollection. Now and again, indeed, I would give a passing thought to the silent figure in the dingy house, and, as the days passed and the carriage came no more, I would wonder whether I ought not to communicate my deepening suspicions to the police. But, as I have said, my time was spent in an unceasing rush of work and the matter was allowed to lapse.

CHAPTER VII

JEFFREY BLACKMORE'S WILL

THE hurry and turmoil continued without abatement during the three weeks that remained before my employer was due to return. Long harassing days spent in tramping the dingy streets of Kennington, or scrambling up and down narrow stairways, alternated with nights made hideous by the intolerable jangle of the night-bell, until I was worn out with fatigue. Nor was the labor made more grateful by the incessant rebuffs that fall to the lot of the "substitute," or by the reflection that for all this additional toil and anxiety I should reap not a farthing of profit.

As I trudged through the dreary thoroughfares of this superannuated suburb with its once rustic villas and its faded gardens, my thoughts would turn enviously to the chambers in King's Bench Walk and I would once again register a vow that this should be my last term of servitude.

From all of which it will be readily understood that when one morning there appeared opposite our house a four-wheeled cab laden with trunks and portmanteaux I hurried out with uncommon cordiality to greet my returning principal. He was not likely to grumble at the length of the visiting-list, for he was, as he once told me, a glutton for work, and a full day-book makes a full ledger. And, in fact, when he ran his eye down the crowded pages of my list he

chuckled aloud and expressed himself as more than eager to get to work at once.

In this I was so far from thwarting him that by two o'clock I had fairly transferred my charge to him and closed my connection with the practise, and half-an-hour later found myself strolling across Waterloo Bridge with the sensations of a newly-liberated convict and a check for twenty-five guineas in my pocket. My objective was the Temple, for I was now eager to hear more of Thorndyke's proposal, and wished, also, to consult him as to where in his neighborhood I might find lodgings in which I could put up for a few days.

The "oak" of my friend's chambers stood open and when I plied the knocker the inner door was opened by Polton.

"Why, it's Dr. Jervis," said he, peering up at me in his quick, birdlike manner. "The Doctor is out just now, but I am sure he wouldn't like to miss you. Will you come in and wait? He will be in very shortly."

I entered and found two strangers seated by the fire, one an elderly, professional-looking man—a lawyer as I guessed; the other a man of about twenty-five, fresh-faced, sunburnt and decidedly prepossessing in appearance. As I entered, the latter rose and made a place for me by the fire, for the day was chilly, though it was late Spring.

"You are one of Thorndyke's colleagues, I gather," said the elder man after we had exchanged a few remarks on the weather. "Since I have known him I have acquired a new interest in and respect for doctors. He is a most remarkable man, sir, a positive encyclopedia of out-of-the-way and unexpected knowledge."

"His acquirements certainly cover a very wide area," I agreed.

"Yes, and the way in which he brings his knowledge to bear on intricate cases is perfectly astonishing," my new acquaintance continued. "I seldom abandon an obscure case or let it go into court until I have taken his opinion. An ordinary counsel looks at things from the same point of view as I do myself and has the same kind of knowledge, if rather more of it, but Thorndyke views things from a radically different standpoint and brings a new and totally different kind of knowledge into the case. He is a lawyer and a scientific specialist in one, and the combination of the two types of culture in one mind, let me tell you emphatically, is an altogether different thing from the same two types in separate minds."

"I can well believe that," I said and was about to illustrate my opinion when a key was heard in the latch and the subject of our discourse entered the room.

"Why, Jervis," he exclaimed cheerily, "I thought you had given me the slip again. Where have you been?"

"Up to my eyes in work," I replied. "But I am free—my engagement is finished."

"Good!" said he. "And how are you, Mr. Marchmont?"

"Well, not so young as I was at your age," answered the solicitor with a smile. "I have brought a client of mine to see you," he continued—"Mr. Stephen Blackmore."

Thorndyke shook hands with the younger man and hoped that he might be of service to him.

"Shall I take a walk and look in a little later?" I suggested.

"Oh, no," answered Thorndyke. "We can talk over our business in the office."

"For my part," said Mr. Blackmore, "I see no necessity for Dr. Jervis to go away. We have nothing to tell that is not public property."

"If Mr. Marchmont agrees to that," said Thorndyke, "I shall have the advantage of being able to consult with my colleague if necessary."

"I leave the matter in your hands, Doctor," said the solicitor. "Your friend is no doubt used to keeping his own counsel."

"He is used to keeping mine, as a matter of fact," replied Thorndyke. "He was with me in the Hornby case, you may remember, Marchmont, and a most trusty colleague I found him; so, with your permission, we will consider your case with the aid of a cup of tea." He pressed an electric bell three times, in response to which signal Polton presently appeared with a teapot and, having set out the tea-service with great precision and gravity, retired silently to his lair on the floor above.

"Now," said Mr. Marchmont, "let me explain at the outset that ours is a forlorn hope. We have no expectations whatever."

"Blessed are they who expect nothing," murmured Thorndyke.

"Quite so—by the way, what delicious tea you brew in these chambers! Well, as to our little affair. Legally speaking, we have no case—not the ghost of one. Yet I

have advised my client to take your opinion on the matter, on the chance that you may perceive some point that we have overlooked. The circumstances, briefly stated, are these: My client, who is an orphan, had two uncles, John Blackmore, and Jeffrey, his younger brother. Some two years ago —to be exact, on the twenty-third of July, 1898—Jeffrey executed a will by which he made my client his executor and sole legatee. He had a pension from the Foreign Office, on which he lived, and he possessed personal property to the extent of about two thousand pounds.

"Early last year he left the rooms in Jermyn Street, where he had lived for some years, stored his furniture and went to Nice, where he remained until November. In that month, it appears, he returned to England and at once took chambers in New Inn, which he furnished with some of the things from his old rooms. He never communicated with any of his friends, so that the fact of his being in residence at the Inn only became known to them when he died.

"This was all very strange and different from his customary conduct, as was also the fact that he seems to have had no one to cook for him or look after his rooms.

"About a fortnight ago he was found dead in his chambers—under slightly peculiar circumstances, and a more recent will was then discovered, dated the ninth of December, 1899. Now no change had taken place in the circumstances of the testator to account for the new will, nor was there any material change in the disposition of the property. The entire personalty, with the exception of fifty pounds, was bequeathed to my client, but the separate items were specified, and the testator's brother, John Blackmore, was named as the executor and residuary legatee."

"I see," said Thorndyke. "So that your client's interest in the will would appear to be practically unaffected by the change."

"There it is!" exclaimed the solicitor, slapping the table to add emphasis to his words. "Apparently his interest is unaffected; but actually the change in the form of the will affects him in the most vital manner."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have said that no change had taken place in the testator's circumstances at the time the new will was executed. But only two days before his death, his sister, Mrs. Edmund Wilson, died and, on her will being proved, it appears that she had bequeathed to him her entire personalty, estimated at nearly thirty thousand pounds."

Thorndyke gave a low whistle.

"You see the point," continued Mr. Marchmont. "By the original will this great sum would have accrued to my client, whereas by the second will it goes to the residuary legatee, Mr. John Blackmore; and this, it appears to us, could not have been in accordance with the wishes and intentions of Mr. Jeffrey, who evidently desired his nephew to inherit his property."

"The will is perfectly regular?" inquired Thorndyke.

"Perfectly. Not a flaw in it."

"There seem to be some curious features in the case," said Thorndyke. "Perhaps we had better have a narrative of the whole affair from the beginning."

He fetched from the office a small notebook and a blotting-pad which he laid on his knee as he reseated himself.

"Now let us have the facts in their order," said he.

CHAPTER VIII

THORNDYKE TAKES EVIDENCE

"WELL," said Mr. Marchmont, "we will begin with the death of Mr. Jeffrey Blackmore. It seems that about eleven o'clock in the morning of the twenty-seventh of March, that is, about a fortnight ago, a builder's man was ascending a ladder to examine a gutter on one of the houses in New Inn when, on passing a window that was open at the top, he looked in and perceived a gentleman lying on the bed. The gentleman was fully dressed and had apparently lain down to rest, but, looking again, the workman was struck by the remarkable pallor of the face and by the entire absence of movement. On coming down, he reported the matter to the porter at the lodge.

"Now the porter had already that morning knocked at Mr. Blackmore's door to hand him the receipt for the rent and, receiving no answer, had concluded that the tenant was absent. When he received the workman's report, therefore, he went to the door of the chambers, which were on

the second floor, and knocked loudly and repeatedly, but there was still no answer.

"Considering the circumstances highly suspicious, he sent for a constable, and when the latter arrived the workman was directed to enter the chambers by the window and open the door from the inside. This was done, and the porter and the constable, going into the bedroom, found Mr. Blackmore lying upon the bed, dressed in his ordinary clothes, and quite dead."

"How long had he been dead?" a ed Thorndyke.

"Less than twenty-four hours, for the porter saw him on the previous day. He came to the Inn about half-past six in a four-wheeled cab."

"Was any one with him?"

"That the porter can not say. The glass window of the cab was drawn up and he saw Mr. Blackmore's face through it only by the light of the lamp outside the lodge as the cab passed through the archway. There was a dense fog at the time—you may remember that very foggy day about a fortnight ago?"

"I do," replied Thorndyke. "Was that the last time the porter saw Mr. Blackmore?"

"No. The deceased came to the lodge at eight o'clock and paid the rent."

"By a check?" asked Thorndyke.

"Yes, a crossed check. That was the last time the porter saw him."

"You said, I think, that the circumstances of his death were suspicious."

"No, I said 'peculiar,' not 'suspicious;' it was a clear case of suicide. The constable reported to his inspector, who came to the chambers at once and brought the divisional surgeon with him. On examining the body they found a hypodermic syringe grasped in the right hand, and at the post-mortem a puncture was found in the right thigh. The needle had evidently entered vertically and deeply instead of being merely passed through the skin, which was explained by the fact that it had been driven in through the clothing.

"The syringe contained a few drops of a concentrated solution of strophanthin, and there were found on the dressing-table two empty tubes labeled 'Hypodermic Tabloids; Strophanthin 1-500 grain,' and a tiny glass mortar and pestle containing crystals of strophanthin. It was concluded that the entire contents of both tubes, each of which was proved to have contained twenty tabloids, had been dissolved to charge the syringe. The post-mortem showed, naturally, that death was due to poisoning by strophanthin.

"It was also proved that the deceased had been in the habit of taking morphia, which was confirmed by the finding in the chamber of a large bottle half full of morphia pills, each containing half a grain."

"The verdict was suicide, of course?" said Thorndyke.

"Yes. The theory of the doctors was that the deceased had taken morphia habitually and that, in a fit of depression caused by reaction from the drug, he had taken his life by means of the more rapidly acting poison."

"A very reasonable explanation," agreed Thorndyke. "And now to return to the will. Had your Uncle Jeffrey any expectations from his sister, Mr. Blackmore?"

"I can't say with certainty," replied Blackmore. "I knew very little of my aunt's affairs, and I don't think my uncle knew much more, for he was under the impression that she had only a life interest in her late husband's property."

"Did she die suddenly?" asked Thorndyke.

"No," replied Blackmore. "She died of cancer."

Thorndyke made an entry on his notebook and, turning to the solicitor, said:

"The will, you say, is perfectly regular. Has the signature been examined by an expert?"

"As a matter of form," replied Mr. Marchmont, "I got the head cashier of the deceased's bank to step round and compare the signatures of the two wills. There were, in fact, certain trifling differences; but these are probably to be explained by the drug habit, expecially as a similar change was to be observed in the checks that have been paid in during the last few months. In any case the matter is of no moment, owing to the circumstances under which the will was executed."

"Which were——?"

"That on the morning of the ninth of December Mr. Jeffrey Blackmore came into the lodge and asked the porter and his son, a house-painter, who happened to be in the lodge at the time, to witness his signature. 'This is my will,' said he, producing the document, 'and perhaps you had better glance through it, though that is not neces-

sary.' The porter and his son accordingly read through the will and then witnessed the signature and so were able to swear to the document at the inquest."

"Ah, then that disposes of the will," said Thorndyke, "and even of the question of undue influence. Now, as to your Uncle Jeffrey, Mr. Blackmore. What kind of man was he?"

"A quiet, studious, gentle-mannered man," answered Blackmore, "very nervous, about fifty-five years of age, and not very robust. He was of medium height—about five feet seven—fair, slightly gray, clean shaven, rather spare, had gray eyes, wore spectacles and stooped slightly as he walked."

"And is now deceased," added Mr. Marchmont dryly, as Thorndyke noted down these apparently irrelevant particulars.

"How came he to be a civil-service pensioner at fifty-five?" asked Thorndyke.

"He had a bad fall from a horse, which left him, for a time, a complete wreck. Moreover, his eyesight, which was never very good, became much worse. In fact, he practically lost the sight of one eye altogether—it was the right one, I think—and as this had been his good eye, he felt the loss very much."

"You mentioned that he was a studious man. Of what nature were the subjects that occupied him?"

"He was an Oriental scholar of some position, I believe. He had been attached to the legations at Bagdad and Tokyo and had given a good deal of attention to Oriental languages and literature. He was also much interested in Babylonian and Assyrian archeology and assisted, for a time, in the excavations at Birs Nimroud."

"I see," said Thorndyke; "a man of considerable attainments. And now as to your Uncle John?"

"I can't tell you much about him," answered Blackmore. "Until I saw him at the inquest I had not met him since I was a boy, but he is as great a contrast to Uncle Jeffrey in character as in appearance."

"The two brothers were very unlike in exterior, then?"

"Well, perhaps I am exaggerating the difference. They were of much the same height, though John was a shade taller, and their features were, I suppose, not unlike; and their coloring was similar, but, you see, John is a healthy man with good eyesight and a brisk, upright carriage and he wears a large beard and mustache. He is rather stout, too, as I noticed when I met him at the inquest. As to his character, I am afraid he has not been a great credit to his family. He started in life as a manufacturing chemist, but of late years he has been connected with what they call, I think, a bucket-shop, though he describes himself as a stock broker."

"I see—an outside broker. Was he on good terms with his brother?"

"Not very, I think. At any rate, they saw very little of each other."

"And what were his relations with your aunt?"

"Not friendly at all. I think Uncle John had done something shady—let Mr. Wilson in, in some way, over a bogus investment, but I don't know the details."

"Would you like a description of the lady, Thorndyke?" asked Mr. Marchmont with genial sarcasm.

"Not just now, thanks," answered Thorndyke with a quiet smile, "but I will note down her full name."

"Julia Elizabeth Wilson."

"Thank you. There is just one more point—what were your uncle's habits and manner of life at New Inn?"

"According to the porter's evidence at the inquest," said Mr. Blackmore, "he lived in a very secluded manner. He had no one to look after his rooms, but did everything for himself, and no one is known to have visited the chambers. He was seldom seen about the Inn and the porter thinks that he must have spent most of his time indoors or else he must have been away a good deal—he can not say which."

"By the way, what has happened to the chambers since your uncle's death?"

"I understand that the porter has been instructed by the executor to let them."

"Thank you, Mr. Blackmore. I think that is all I have to ask at present. If anything fresh occurs to me, I will communicate with you through Mr. Marchmont."

The two men rose and prepared to depart.

"I am afraid there is little to hope for," said the solicitor as he shook my friend's hand, "but I thought it worth while to give you a chance of working a miracle."

"You would like to set aside the second will, of course?" said Thorndyke.

"Naturally; and a more unlikely case I never met with."

"It is not promising, I must admit. However, I will digest the material and let you have my views after due reflection."

The lawyer and his client took their departure, and Thorndyke, with a thoughtful and abstracted air, separated the written sheets from his note-book, made two perforations in the margins by means of a punch, and inserted them into a small Stolzenburg file, on the outside of which he wrote, "Jeffrey Blackmore's Will."

"There," said he, depositing the little folio in a drawer labeled "B,"—"there is the nucleus of the body of data on which our investigations must be based; and I am afraid it will not receive any great additions, though there are some very singular features in the case, as you doubtless observed."

"I observed that the will seemed as simple and secure as a will could be made," I answered, "and I should suppose the setting of it aside to be a wild impossibility."

"Perhaps you are right," rejoined Thorndyke, "but time will show. Meanwhile I understand that you are a gentleman at large now; what are your plans?"

"My immediate purpose is to find lodgings for a week or so, and I came to you for guidance as to their selection."

"You had better let me put you up for the night, at any rate. Your old bedroom is at your service and you can pursue your quest in the morning, if you wish to. Give me a note and I will send Polton with it to bring up your things in a cab."

"It is exceedingly good of you, Thorndyke, but I hardly like to——"

"Now don't raise obstacles, my dear fellow," urged Thorndyke. "Say yes, and let us have a long chat to-night over old times."

I was glad enough to be persuaded to so pleasant an arrangement, so I wrote a few lines on one of my cards, which was forthwith dispatched by the faithful Polton.

CHAPTER IX

THE CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTION

"WE HAVE an hour and a half to dispose of before dinner," said Thorndyke, looking at his watch. "What say you, my dear Jervis—shall we wander over the breezy uplands of Fleet Street or shall we seek the leafy shades of New Inn? I incline to New Inn, if that sylvan retreat commends itself to you."

"Very well," said I, "let it be New Inn. I suppose you want to nose around the scene of the tragedy, though what you expect to find is a mystery to me."

"A man of science," replied Thorndyke, "expects nothing. He collects facts and keeps an open mind. As for me, I am a mere legal snapper-up of unconsidered trifles of evidence. When I have accumulated a few facts I arrange them and reason from them. It is a capital error to decide beforehand what data are to be sought for."

"But surely," said I, as we emerged from the doorway and turned up toward Mitre Court, "you can not see any possible grounds for disputing that will?"

"I don't," he answered, "or I should have said so; but I am engaged to look into the case and I shall do so, as I said just now, with an open mind. Moreover, the circumstances of the case are so singular, so full of strange coincidences and improbabilities, that they call for the closest and most searching examination."

"I hadn't observed anything so very abnormal in the case," I said. "Of course, I can see that the second will was unnecessary—that a codicil would have answered all purposes; that, as things have turned out, it does not seem to carry out the wishes of the testator; but then, if he had lived, Jeffrey Blackmore would probably have made a new will."

"Which would not have suited Brother John. But have you considered the significance of the order in which the events occurred and the strange coincidences in the dates?"

"I am afraid I missed that point," I replied. "How do the dates run?"

"The second will," replied Thorndyke, "was made on the ninth of December, 1899; Mrs. Wilson died of cancer on the twenty-fourth of March, 1900; Jeffrey Blackmore was seen alive on the twenty-sixth of March, thus establishing the fact that he survived Mrs. Wilson, and his body was found on the twenty-seventh of March. Does that group of dates suggest nothing to you?"

I reflected for awhile and then had to confess that it suggested nothing at all.

"Then make a note of it and consider it at your leisure," said Thorndyke; "or I will write out the dates for you later, for here we are at our destination."

It was a chilly day, and a cold wind blew through the archway leading into New Inn. Halting at the half-door of the lodge we perceived a stout, purple-faced man crouching over the fire, coughing violently. He held up his hand to intimate that he was fully occupied for the moment, so we waited for his paroxysm to subside.

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Thorndyke sympathetically, "you ought not to be sitting in this drafty lodge with your delicate chest. You should make them fit a glass door with a pigeonhole."

"Bless you," said the porter, wiping his eyes, "I daren't make any complaints. There's plenty of younger men ready to take the job. But it's terrible work for me in the Winter, especially when the fogs are about."

"It must be," rejoined Thorndyke, and then, rather to my surprise, he proceeded to inquire with deep interest into the sufferer's symptoms and the history of the attack, receiving in reply a wealth of detail and discursive reminiscence delivered with the utmost gusto. To all of this I listened a little impatiently, for chronic bronchitis is not, medically speaking, an entertaining complaint, and consultations out of business hours are an abomination to doctors. Something of this perhaps appeared in my manner, for the man broke off suddenly with an apology:

"But I mustn't detain you gentlemen talking about my health. It can't interest you, though it's serious enough for me."

"I am sure it is," said Thorndyke, "and I hope we may be able to do something for you. I am a medical man and so is my friend. We came to ask if you had any chambers to let."

"Yes, we've got three sets empty."

"Not furnished, I suppose?"

"Yes, one set is furnished. It is the one," he added, lowering his voice, "that the gentleman committed suicide in—but you wouldn't mind that, being a doctor?"

"Oh, no," laughed Thorndyke, "the disease is not catching. What is the rent?"

"Twenty-three pounds, but the furniture would have to be taken at a valuation. There isn't much of it."

"May I see the rooms?"

"Certainly. Here's the key; I've only just had it back from the police. There's no need for me to come with gentlemen like you; it's such a drag up all those stairs. The gas hasn't been cut off because the tenancy has not expired. It's Number 31, second floor."

We made our way across the Inn to the doorway of Number 31, the ground floor of which was occupied by solicitors' offices. The dusk was just closing in and a man was lighting a lamp on the first-floor landing as we came up the stairs.

"Who occupies the chambers on the third floor?" Thorndyke asked him as we turned on to the next flight.

"The third floor has been empty for about three months," was the reply.

"We are looking at the chambers on the second floor," said Thorndyke. "Are they pretty quiet?"

"Quiet!" exclaimed the man. "Lord bless you! the place is like a deaf and dumb cemetery. There's the solicitors on the ground floor and the architects on the first floor. They both clear out at about six, and then the 'ouse is as empty as a blown hegg. I don't wonder poor Mr. Blackmore made away with hisself; he must 'ave found it awful dull."

"So," said Thorndyke, as the man's footsteps echoed down the stairs, "when Jeffrey Blackmore came home that last evening the house was empty."

He inserted the key into the door, above which was painted in white letters the deceased man's name, and we entered, my companion striking a wax vesta and lighting the gas in the sitting-room.

"Spare and simple," remarked Thorndyke, looking round critically, "but well enough for a solitary bachelor. A cupboard of a kitchen—never used, apparently, and a small bedroom opening out of the sitting-room. Why, the bed hasn't been made since the catastrophe! There is the impression of the body! Rather gruesome for a new tenant, eh?"

He wandered round the sitting-room, looking at the various objects it contained as though he would question them as to what they had witnessed. The apartment was bare and rather comfortless and its appointments were all old and worn. A small glass-fronted bookcase held a number of solid-looking volumes—proceedings of the Asiatic Society and works on Oriental literature for the most part; and a half-dozen framed photographs of buildings and objects of archeological interest formed the only attempts at wall decoration.

Before one of these latter Thorndyke

halted and, having regarded it for a few moments with close attention, uttered an exclamation.

"Here is a very strange thing, Jervis," said he.

I stepped across the room and looked over his shoulder at an oblong frame enclosing a photograph of an inscription in the weird and cabalistic arrow-head character.

"Yes," I agreed; "the cuneiform writing is surely the most uncanny-looking script that was ever invented. I wonder if poor Blackmore was able to read this stuff; I suppose he was, or it wouldn't be here."

"I should say there is no doubt that he was able to read the cuneiform character; and that is just what constitutes the strangeness of this," and Thorndyke pointed, as he spoke, to the framed photograph on the wall.

"I don't follow you at all," I said. "It would seem to me much more odd if a man were to hang upon his wall an inscription that he could *not* read."

"No doubt," replied Thorndyke. "But you will agree with me that it would be still more odd if a man should hang upon his wall an inscription that he *could* read—and hang it *upside-down!*"

"You don't mean to say that this is upside-down!" I exclaimed.

"I do indeed," he replied.

"But how can you tell that? I didn't know that Oriental scholarship was included in your long list of accomplishments."

Thorndyke chuckled. "It isn't," he replied; "but I have read with very keen interest the wonderful history of the decipherment of the cuneiform characters, and I happen to remember one or two of the main facts. This particular inscription is in the Persian cuneiform, a much more simple form of the script than the Babylonian or Assyrian; in fact, I suspect that this is the famous inscription from the gateway at Persepolis—the first to be deciphered, which would account for its presence here in a frame.

"Now this script reads, like our own writing, from left to right, and the rule is that all the wedge-shaped characters point to the right or downward, while the arrow-head forms are open toward the right. But if you examine this inscription you will see that the wedges point upward and to the left, and that the arrow-head characters are open toward the left. Obviously the photograph is upside-down."

"But this is really mysterious!" I exclaimed. "What do you suppose can be the explanation? Do you think poor Blackmore's eyesight was failing him, or were his mental faculties decaying?"

"I think," replied Thorndyke, "we may perhaps get a suggestion from the back of the frame. Let us see." He disengaged the frame from the two nails on which it hung and, turning it round, glanced for a moment at the back, which he then presented toward me with a quaint, half-quizzical smile. A label on the backing-paper bore the words: "J. Budge, Frame-maker and Gilder, Gt. Anne St., W. C."

"Well?" I said, when I had read the label without gathering from it anything fresh.

"The label, you observe, is the right way up."

"So it is," I rejoined hastily, a little annoyed that I had not been quicker to observe so obvious a fact. "I see your point. You mean that the frame-maker hung the thing upside-down and Blackmore never noticed the mistake."

"No, I don't think that is the explanation," replied Thorndyke. "You will notice that the label is an old one; it must have been on some years, to judge by its dingy appearance, whereas the two mirror-plates look to me comparatively new. But we can soon put that matter to the test, for the label was evidently stuck on when the frame was new, and if the plates were screwed on at the same time, the wood which they cover will be clean and new-looking."

He drew from his pocket a "combination" knife containing, among other implements, a screw-driver, with which he carefully extracted the screws from one of the little brass plates by which the frame had been suspended from the nails.

"You see," he said, when he had removed the plate and carried the photograph over to the gas-jet, "the wood covered by the plate is as dirty and time-stained as the rest of the frame. The plates have been put on recently."

"And what are we to infer from that?"

"Well, since there are no other marks of plates or rings upon the frame, we may safely infer that the photograph was never hung up until it came to these rooms."

"Yes, I suppose we may. But what is

the suggestion that this photograph makes to you? I know you have something in mind that bears upon the case you are investigating. What is it?"

"Come, come, Jervis," said Thorndyke, playfully, "I am not going to wet-nurse you in this fashion! You are a man of ingenuity and far from lacking in the scientific imagination; you must work out the rest of the train of deduction by yourself."

"That is how you always tantalize me!" I complained. "You take out the stopper from your bottle of wisdom and present the mouth to my nose; and then, when I have taken a hearty sniff and got my appetite fairly whetted, you clap in the stopper again and leave me, metaphorically speaking, with my tongue hanging out."

Thorndyke chuckled as he replaced the little brass plate and inserted the screws.

"You must learn to take out the stopper for yourself," said he; "then you will be able to slake your divine thirst to your satisfaction. Shall we take a look round the bedroom?"

CHAPTER X

WE RENT 31 NEW INN

HE HUNG the photograph upon its nails and we passed on to the little chamber, glancing once more at the depression on the narrow bed, which seemed to make the tragedy so real.

"The syringe and the rest of the lethal appliances and material have been removed, I see," remarked Thorndyke. "I suppose the police or the coroner's officers have kept them."

He looked keenly about the bare, comfortless apartment, taking mental notes, apparently, of its general aspect and the few details it presented.

"Jeffrey Blackmore would seem to have been a man of few needs," he observed presently. "I have never seen a bedroom in which less attention seemed to be given to the comfort of the occupant."

He pulled at the drawer of the dressing-table, disclosing a solitary hair-brush; peeped into a cupboard, where an overcoat surmounted by a felt hat hung from a peg like an attenuated suicide; he even picked up and examined the cracked and shrunken cake of soap on the washstand, and he was just replacing this in its dish when his attention was apparently attracted by something in the dark corner close by. As he knelt on the floor to make a close scrutiny, I came over and stooped beside him. I found the object of his regard to be a number of tiny fragments of glass, which had the appearance of having been trodden upon and then scattered by a kick of the foot.

"What have you found?" I asked.

"That is what I am asking myself," he replied. "As far as I can judge from the appearance of these fragments, they appear to be the remains of a small watch-glass. But we can examine them more thoroughly at our leisure."

He gathered up the little splintered pieces with infinite care and bestowed them in the envelope of a letter which he drew from his pocket.

"And now," he said as he rose and dusted his knees, "we had better go back to the lodge, or the porter will begin to think that there has been another tragedy in New Inn."

We passed out into the sitting-room, where Thorndyke once more halted before the inverted photograph.

"Yes," he said, surveying it thoughtfully, "we have picked up a trifle of fact which may mean nothing, or, on the other hand, may be of critical importance."

He paused for a few moments and then said suddenly:

"Jervis, how should you like to be the new tenant of these rooms?"

"It is the one thing necessary for my complete happiness," I replied with a grin.

"I am not joking," said he. "Seriously, these chambers might be very convenient for you, especially in some new circumstances that I, and I hope you also, have in contemplation. But in any case, I should like to examine the premises at my leisure, and I suppose you would not mind appearing as the tenant if I undertake all liabilities?"

"Certainly not," I answered.

"Then let us go down and see what arrangements we can make."

He turned out the gas and we made our way back to the lodge.

"What do you think of the rooms, sir?" asked the porter as I handed him back the key.

"I think they would suit me," I replied, "if the furniture could be had on reasonable terms."

"Oh, that will be all right," said the porter.

"The executor—deceased's brother—has written to me saying that the things are to be got rid of for what they will fetch, but as quickly as possible. He wants those chambers off his hands, so, as I am his agent, I shall instruct the valuer to price them low."

"Can my friend have immediate possession?" asked Thorndyke.

"You can have possession as soon as the valuer has seen the effects," said the porter. "The man from the broker's shop down Wych Street will look them over for us."

"I would suggest that we fetch him up at once," said Thorndyke. "Then you can pay over the price agreed on and move your things in without delay—that is, if our friend here has no objection."

"Oh, I have no objection," said the porter. "If you like to pay the purchase-money for the furniture and give me a letter agreeing to take on the tenancy, and a reference, you can have the key at once and sign the regular agreement later."

In a very short time this easy-going arrangement was carried out. The furniture broker was decoyed to the Inn and, having received his instructions from the porter, accompanied us to the vacant chambers.

"Now, gentlemen," said he, looking round disparagingly at the barely furnished rooms, "you tell me what things you are going to take and I will make my estimate."

"We are going to take everything—stock, lock and barrel," said Thorndyke.

"What! clothes and all?" exclaimed the man, grinning.

"Clothes, hats, boots—everything. We can throw out what we don't want afterward, but my friend wishes to have immediate possession of the rooms."

"I understand," said the broker, and without more ado he produced a couple of sheets of foolscap and fell to work on the inventory.

"This gentleman didn't waste much money on clothes," he remarked presently after examining the contents of a cupboard and a chest of drawers. "Why, there's only two suits all told!"

"He doesn't seem to have embarrassed himself with an excessive number of hats or boots either," said Thorndyke. "But I believe he spent most of his time indoors."

"That might account for it," rejoined the broker, and he proceeded to add to his list the meager account of clothing.

The inventory was soon completed and the prices affixed to the items, when it appeared that the value of the entire contents of the rooms amounted to no more than eighteen pounds, twelve shillings. This sum, at Thorndyke's request, I paid to the porter, handing him my recently-acquired check for twenty-five guineas and directing him to drop the change into the letter-box of the chambers.

"That is a good thing done," remarked Thorndyke, as we took our way back toward the Strand. "I will give you a check this evening and you might let me have the key for the present. I will send Polton down with a trunk this evening, to keep up appearances. And now we will go and have some dinner."

"To come back," said Thorndyke, when Polton had set before us our simple meal, with a bottle of sound claret, "to the new arrangement I proposed the other day: You know that Polton gives me a great deal of help in my work, especially by making appliances and photographs and carrying out chemical processes under my directions. But still, clever as he is and wonderfully well-informed, he is not a scientific man, properly speaking, and of course his education and social training do not allow of his taking my place excepting in a quite subordinate capacity. Now there are times when I am greatly pushed for the want of a colleague of my own class, and it occurred to me that you might like to join me as my junior or assistant. We know that we can rub along together in a friendly way, and I know enough of your abilities and accomplishments to feel sure that your help would be of value to me. What do you think of the proposal?"

To exchange the precarious, disagreeable and uninteresting life of a regular "locum" with its miserable pay and utter lack of future prospects, for the freedom and interest of the life thus held out to me with its chances of advancement and success, was to rise at a bound out of the abyss into which misfortune had plunged me, and to cut myself free from the millstone of poverty which had held me down so long. Moreover, with the salary that Thorndyke offered and the position that I should occupy as junior to a famous expert, I could marry without the need of becoming pecuniarily indebted to my wife; a circumstance which I was sure she would regard with as much satisfaction as I

did. Hence I accepted joyfully, much to Thorndyke's gratification, and, the few details of our engagement being settled, we filled our glasses and drank to our joint success.

CHAPTER XI

THE EMPTY HOUSE

"BY THE way, Jervis," said my new principal—or colleague, as he preferred to style himself—when, our dinner over and our chairs drawn up to the fire, we were filling our pipes in preparation for a gossip, "you never told me the end of that odd adventure of yours."

"I went to the house once again," I answered, "and followed your directions to the letter, though how much skill and intelligence I displayed in following them you will be able to judge when you have seen the note-book; it is in my trunk up-stairs with your lamp and compass."

"And what became of the patient?"

"Ah," I replied, "that is what I have often wondered. I don't like to think about it."

"Tell me what happened at the second visit," said Thorndyke.

I gave him a circumstantial description of all that I had seen and all that had happened on that occasion, recalling every detail that I could remember, even to the momentary glimpse I had had of Mr. J. Morgan, as he stood in the light of the candle. To all of this my friend listened with rapt attention and asked me so many questions about my first visit that I practically gave him the whole story over again from the beginning.

"It was a fishy business," commented Thorndyke as I concluded, "but of course you could do nothing. You had not enough facts to swear an information on. But it would be interesting to plot the route and see where this extremely cautious gentleman resides. I suggest that we do so forthwith."

To this I assented with enthusiasm and, having fetched the note-book from my room, we soon had it spread before us on the table. Thorndyke ran his eye over the various entries, noting the details with an approving smile.

"You seem to the manner born, Jervis," said he with a chuckle, as he came to the end of the first route. "That is quite an artistic touch—'Passenger station to left.' How did you know there was a station?"

"I heard the guard's whistle and the starting of a train—evidently a long and heavy one, for the engine skidded badly."

"Good!" said Thorndyke. "Have you looked these notes over?"

"No," I answered. "I put the book away when I came in and have never looked at it since."

"It is a quaint document. You seem to be rich in railway bridges in those parts, and the route was certainly none of the most direct. However, we will plot it out and see whither it leads us."

He retired to the laboratory and presently returned with a T-square, a military protractor, a pair of dividers and a large drawing-board, upon which was pinned a sheet of paper.

"I see," said he, "that the horse kept up a remarkably even pace, so we can take the time as representing distance. Let us say that one inch equals one minute—that will give us a fair scale. Now you read out the notes and I will plot the route."

I read out the entries from the note-book—a specimen page of which I present for the reader's inspection—and Thorndyke laid off the lines of direction with the protractor, taking out the distance with the dividers from a scale of equal parts on the back of the instrument.

9.05.	S. W.	Start from house. Horse 13 hands.
9.05.30	S. E. by E.	Macadam. Hoofs 110.
9.06	N. E. by N.	Granite.
9.06.25	S. E.	Macadam.
9.07.20	N.	Macadam.
9.08.	N. E.	Under bridge. Hoofs 120.
9.08.30	N. E.	Cross granite road. Tram-lines.
9.09.35	N. N. W.	Still macadam. Hoofs 120.
9.10.30	W. by S.	Still macadam. Hoofs 120.
9.11.30	W. by S.	Cross granite road. Tram-lines. Then under bridge.
9.12	S. S. E.	Macadam.
9.12.15	E. N. E.	Macadam.
9.12.30	E. N. E.	Under bridge. Hoofs 116.
9.12.45	S. S. E.	Granite road. Tram-lines.
9.14	E. N. E.	Macadam.

As the work proceeded a smile of quiet amazement spread over his keen, attentive face, and at each new reference to a railway bridge he chuckled softly.

"What! again?" he laughed, as I recorded the passage of the eighth bridge. "Why, it's like a game of croquet! Ah, here we are

at last! '9.38—Slow down; enter arched gateway to left; Stop; Wooden gates closed.' Just look at your route, Jervis."

He held up the board with a quizzical smile, when I perceived with astonishment that the middle of the paper was occupied by a single line that zigzagged, crossed and recrossed in the most intricate manner, and terminated at no great distance from its commencement.

"Now," said Thorndyke, "let us get the map and see if we can give to each of these marvelous and erratic lines 'a local habitation and a name.' You started from Lower Kennington Lane, I think?"

"Yes; from this point," indicating the spot with a pencil.

"Then," said Thorndyke, after a careful comparison of the map with the plotted route, "I think we may take it that your gateway was on the north side of Upper Kennington Lane, some three hundred yards from Vauxhall Station. The heavy train that you heard starting was no doubt one of the Southwestern expresses. You see that, rough as was the method of tracing the route, it is quite enough to enable us to identify all the places on the map. The tram-lines and railway bridges are invaluable."

He wrote by the side of the strange crooked lines the names of the streets that its different parts represented and, on comparing the amended sketch with the ordnance map, I saw that the correspondence was near enough to preclude all doubt.

"To-morrow morning," observed Thorndyke, "I shall have an hour or two to spare, and I propose that we take a stroll through Upper Kennington Lane and gaze upon this abode of mystery. This chart has fairly aroused the trailing instinct—although, of course, the affair is no business of mine."

The following morning, after an early breakfast, we pocketed the chart and the note-book and, issuing forth into the Strand, chartered a passing hansom to convey us to Vauxhall Station.

"There should be no difficulty in locating the house," remarked Thorndyke presently, as we bowled along the Albert Embankment. "It is evidently about three hundred yards from the station, and I see you have noted a patch of newly laid macadam about half way."

"That new macadam will be pretty well smoothed down by now," I objected.

"Not so very completely," answered Thorndyke. "It is only three weeks, and there has beeen no wet weather lately."

A few minutes later the cab drew up at the station and, having alighted and paid the driver, we made our way to the bridge that spans the junction of Harleyford Road and Upper Kennington Lane.

"From here to the house," said Thorndyke, "is three hundred yards—say four hundred and twenty paces, and at about two hundred paces we ought to pass a patch of new road-metal. Now, are you ready? If we keep step we shall average our stride."

We started together at a good pace, stepping out with military regularity, and counting aloud as we went. As we told out the hundred and ninety-fourth pace I observed Thorndyke nod toward the roadway a little ahead and, looking at it attentively as we approached, it was easy to see, by the regularity of the surface and lighter color, that it had recently been remetaled.

Having counted out the four hundred and twenty paces, we halted, and Thorndyke turned to me with a smile of triumph.

"Not a bad estimate, Jervis," said he. "That will be your house if I am not much mistaken." He pointed to a narrow turning a dozen yards ahead, apparently the entrance to a yard and closed by a pair of massive wooden gates.

"Yes," I answered, "there is no doubt that this is the place. But, by Jove!" I added, as we drew nearer, "the nest is empty. Do you see?" I pointed to a small bill that was stuck on the gate announcing, "These premises, including stabling and workshops, to be let," and giving the name and address of an auctioneer in Upper Kennington Lane as the agent.

"Here is a new and startling development," said Thorndyke, "which leads one to wonder still more what has happened to your patient. Now the question is, should we make a few inquiries of the auctioneer or should we get the keys and have a look at the inside of the house? I think we will do both, and the latter first, if Messrs Ryman Brothers will trust us with the keys."

We made our way to the auctioneer's office, and were, without demur, given permission to inspect the premises.

"You will find the place in a very dirty and neglected condition," said the clerk, as he handed us a couple of keys with a wooden

label attached. "The house has not been cleaned yet, but is just as it was left when we took out the furniture."

"Was Mr. Morgan sold up then?" inquired Thorndyke.

"Oh, no. But he had to leave rather unexpectedly, and he asked us to dispose of his effects for him."

"He had not been in the house very long, had he?"

"No. Less than six months, I should say."

"Do you know where he has moved to?"

"I don't. He said he should be traveling for a time and he paid us a half-year's rent in advance to be quit. The larger key is that of the wicket in the front gate."

Thorndyke took the keys and we returned together to the house which, with its closed window-shutters, had a very gloomy and desolate aspect. We let ourselves in at the wicket, when I perceived, half-way down the entry, the side door at which I had been admitted by the unknown woman.

"We will look at the bedroom first," said Thorndyke, as we stood in the dark and musty-smelling hall. "That is, if you can remember which room it was."

"It was on the first floor," said I, "and the door was just at the head of the stairs."

We ascended the two flights and as we reached the landing I halted.

"This was the door," I said, and was about to turn the handle when Thorndyke caught me by the arm.

"One moment, Jervis," said he. "What do you make of this?"

He pointed to four screw-holes, neatly filled with putty, near the bottom of the door, and two others on the jamb opposite them.

"Evidently," I answered, "there has been a bolt there, though it seems a queer place to fix one."

"Not at all," rejoined Thorndyke. "If you look up you will see that there was another at the top of the door and, as the lock is in the middle, they must have been highly effective. But there are one or two other things that strike one. First, you will notice that the bolts have been fixed on pretty recently, for the paint that they covered is of the same grimy tint as that on the rest of the door. Next, they have been taken off, which, seeing that they could hardly have been worth the trouble of removal, seems to suggest that the person who fixed them considered that their presence might appear remarkable, while the screw-holes would be less conspicuous.

"They are on the *outside* of the door—an unusual situation for bolts; and if you look closely you can see a slight indentation in the wood of the jamb, made by the sharp edges of the socket-plate, as though at some time a forcible attempt had been made to drag the door open when it was bolted."

"There was a second door, I remember," said I. "Let us see if that was guarded in a similar manner."

We strode through the empty room, awakening dismal echoes as we trod the bare boards, and flung open the other door. At top and bottom similar groups of screw-holes showed that this also had been made secure, the bolts in all cases being of a very substantial size.

"I am afraid these fastenings have a very sinister significance," said Thorndyke gravely, "for I suppose we can have no doubt as to their object or by whom they were fixed."

"No, I suppose not," I answered; "but if the man was really imprisoned, could he not have smashed the window and called for help?"

"The window looks out on the yard, as you see. And I expect it was secured, too."

He drew the massive old-fashioned shutters out of their recess and closed them.

"Yes; here we are!" He pointed to four groups of screw-holes at the corners of the shutters and, lighting a match, narrowly examined the insides of the recesses into which the shutters folded.

"The nature of the fastening is quite evident," said he. "An iron bar passed right across at the top and bottom and was secured by a staple and padlock. You can see the mark the bar made in the recess when the shutters were folded. By heaven, Jervis," he exclaimed as he flung the shutters open again, "this was a diabolical affair, and I would give a good round sum to lay my hand on Mr. J. Morgan!"

CHAPTER XII

IN A LITTLE HEAP OF RUBBISH

"IT IS A thousand pities we were unable to look round before they moved out the furniture," I remarked. "We might then have found some clue to the scoundrel's identity."

"Yes," replied Thorndyke, gazing round

ruefully at the bare walls, "there isn't much information to be gathered here, I am afraid. I see they have swept up the litter under the grate; we may as well turn it over, though it is not likely that we shall find anything of much interest."

He raked out the little heap of rubbish with the crook of his stick and spread it out on the hearth. It certainly looked unpromising enough, being just such a rubbish-heap as may be swept up in any untidy room during a move. But Thorndyke went through it systematically, examining each item attentively, even to the local tradesmen's bills and empty paper bags, before laying them aside. One of the latter he folded up neatly and laid on the mantelshelf before resuming his investigations.

"Here is something that may give us a hint," said he presently. He held up a battered pair of spectacles of which only one hooked side-bar remained, while both the glasses were badly cracked.

"Left eye a concave cylindrical lens," he continued, peering through the glasses at the window; "right eye plain glass—these must have belonged to your patient, Jervis. You said the tremulous iris was in the right eye, I think?"

"Yes," I replied, "these are his spectacles, no doubt."

"The frames, you notice, are peculiar," he continued. "The shape was invented by Stopford of Moorfields and is made, I believe, by only one optician—Cuxton and Parry of New Bond Street."

"What should you say that is?" I asked, picking up a small object from the rubbish. It was a tiny stick of bamboo furnished with a sheath formed of a shorter length of the same material, which fitted it closely, yet slid easily up and down the little cane.

"Ha!" exclaimed Thorndyke, taking the object eagerly from my hand. "This is really interesting. Have you never seen one of these before? It is a Japanese pocket brush or pencil, and very beautiful little instruments they are, with the most exquisitely delicate and flexible points. They are used principally for writing or drawing with Chinese or, as it is usually called, Indian ink. The bamboo, in this one, is cracked at the end and the hair has fallen out, but the sliding sheath, which protected the point, remains to show what it has been."

He laid the brush-stick on the mantel-shelf and once more turned to the rubbish-heap.

"Now here is a very suggestive thing," he said presently, holding out to me a small wide-mouthed bottle. "Observe the flies sticking to the inside, and the name on the label—'Fox, Russell Street, Covent Garden.' You were right, Jervis, in your surmise; Mr. Morgan and the coachman were one and the same person."

"I don't see how you arrive at that, all the same," I remarked.

"This," said Thorndyke, tapping the bottle with his finger, "contained—and still contains a small quantity of—a kind of cement. Mr. Fox is a dealer in the materials for making-up, theatrical or otherwise. Now your really artistic make-up does not put on an oakum wig nor does he tie on a false beard with strings as if it were a baby's feeder. If he dons a false mustache or beard, the thing is properly made and securely fixed on, and then the ends are finished with ends of loose hair, which are cemented to the skin and afterward trimmed with scissors. This is the kind of cement that is used for that purpose."

He laid the bottle beside his other treasure-trove and returned to his search. But, with the exception of a screw and a trouser-button, he met with no further reward for his industry. At length he rose and, kicking the discarded rubbish back under the grate, gathered up his gleanings and wrapped them in his handkerchief, having first tried the screw in one of the holes in the door, from which he had picked out the putty, and found that it fitted perfectly.

"A poor collection," was his comment, as he pocketed the small parcel of miscellaneous rubbish, "and yet not so poor as I had feared. Perhaps, if we question them closely enough, these unconsidered trifles may be made to tell us something worth hearing, after all. We may as well look through the house and yard before we go."

We did so, but met with nothing that even Thorndyke's inquisitive eye could view with interest and, having returned the keys to the agent, betook ourselves back to the Temple.

CHAPTER XIII

A CHANGE IN SIGNATURE

ON OUR return to Thorndyke's chambers I was inducted forthwith into my new duties, for an inquest of some importance was pending and my friend had been

commissioned to examine the body and make a full report upon certain suspected matters.

I entered on the work with a pleasure and revived enthusiasm that tended to drive my recent experiences from my mind. Now and again, indeed, I gave a passing thought to the house in Kennington Lane and its mysterious occupants, but even then it was only the recollection of a strange experience that was past and done with.

Thorndyke, too, I supposed to have dismissed the subject from his mind, in spite of the strong feeling that he had shown and his implied determination to unravel the mystery. But on this point I was mistaken, as was proved to me by an incident that occurred on the fourth day of my residence and which I found, at the time, not a little startling.

We were sitting at breakfast, each of us glancing over the morning's letters, when Thorndyke said rather suddenly:

"Have you a good memory for faces, Jervis?"

"Yes," I answered, "I think I have, rather. Why do you ask?"

"Because I have a photograph here of a man whom I think you may have met. Just look at it and tell me if you remember the face."

He drew a cabinet-size photograph from an envelope that had come by the morning's post and passed it to me.

"I have certainly seen this face somewhere," said I, taking the portrait over to the window to examine it more thoroughly, "but I can not at the moment remember where."

"Try," said Thorndyke. "If you have seen the face before, you should be able to recall the person."

I looked intently at the photograph, and the more I looked, the more familiar did the face appear. Suddenly the identity of the man flashed into my mind and I exclaimed in a tone of astonishment:

"By heaven, Thorndyke, it is the mysterious patient of Kennington Lane!"

"I believe you are right," was the quiet reply, "and I am glad you were able to recognize him. The identification may be of value."

I need not say that the production of this photograph filled me with amazement and that I was seething with curiosity as to how Thorndyke had obtained it; but, as he replaced it impassively in its envelope without volunteering any explanation, I judged it best to ask no questions.

Nevertheless, I pondered upon the matter with undiminished wonder and once again realized that my friend was a man whose powers, alike of observation and inference, were of no ordinary kind. I had myself seen all that he had seen and, indeed, much more. I had examined the little handful of rubbish that he had gathered up so carefully and I would have flung it back under the grate without a qualm. Not a single glimmer of light had I perceived in the cloud of mystery, nor even a hint of the direction in which to seek enlightenment.

And yet Thorndyke had, in some incomprehensible manner, contrived to piece together facts that I had not even observed, and that very completely; for it was evident that he had already, in these few days, narrowed the field of inquiry down to a very small area and must be in possession of the leading facts of the case.

As to the other case—that of Jeffrey Blackmore's will—I had had occasional proofs that he was still engaged upon it, though with what object I could not imagine, for the will seemed to me as incontestable as a will could be. My astonishment may therefore be imagined when, on the very evening of the day on which he had shown me the photograph of my patient, Thorndyke remarked coolly, as we rose from the dinner-table:

"I have nearly finished with the Blackmore case. In fact, I shall write to Marchmont this evening and advise hin to enter a caveat at once."

"Why," I exclaimed, "you don't mean to say that you have found a flaw in the second will, after all!"

"A flaw!" repeated Thorndyke. "My dear Jervis, that will is a forgery from beginning to end! Of that I have no doubt whatever. I am only waiting for the final, conclusive verification to institute criminal proceedings."

"You amaze me!" I declared. "I had imagined that your investigations were—well——"

"A demonstration of activity to justify the fee, eh?" suggested Thorndyke with a mischievous smile.

I laughed a little shamefacedly, for my astute friend had, as usual, shot his bolt very near the mark.

"I haven't shown you the signatures, have I?" he continued. "They are rather interesting and suggestive. I persuaded the bank people to let me photograph the last year's checks in a consecutive series, so as to exhibit the change which was admitted to have occurred in the character of the signature. We pinned the checks to a board in batches, each check overlapping the one below so as to show the signature only and to save space, and the dates were written on a slip of paper at the side. I photographed them full size, a batch at a time, with a tele-photo lens."

"Why a tele-photo?" I asked.

"To enable me to get a full-sized image without bringing the checks close up to the camera," he replied. "If I had used an ordinary lens, the checks could hardly have been much more than a foot from the camera and then the signatures on the margin of the plate would certainly have undergone some distortion from the effects of perspective—even if the lens itself were free from all optical defects. As it is, the photographs are quite reliable, and the enlargements that Polton has made—magnified three diameters—show the characters perfectly."

He brought out from a drawer a number of whole-plate photographs which he laid on the table end to end. Each one contained four of the enlarged signatures and, thus exhibited in series in the order of their dates, it was easy to compare their characters. Further to facilitate the comparison, the signatures of the two wills—also enlarged—had each a card to itself and could thus be laid by the side of any one of the series.

"You will remember," said Thorndyke, "Marchmont referred to a change in the character of Jeffrey Blackmore's signature?"

I nodded.

"It was a very slight change and, though noticed at the bank, it was not considered to be of any moment. Now if you will cast your eye over the series, you will be able to distinguish the differences. They are very small indeed; the later signatures are a little stiffer, a little more shaky, and the B and the K are both appreciably different from those in the earlier signatures. But there is another fact which emerges when the whole series is seen together, and it is so striking and significant a fact that I am astonished at its having occasioned no inquiry."

"Indeed!" said I, stooping to examine the photographs with increased interest. "What is that?"

"It is a very simple matter and very obvious, but yet, as I have said, very significant. It is this: the change in the characters of the signatures is not a gradual or insidious change, nor is it progressive. It occurs at a certain definite point and then continues without increase or variation. Look carefully at the check dated twenty-ninth of September and you will see that the signature is in what we may call the 'old manner,' whereas the next check, dated the eighteenth of October, is in the new manner.

"Now if you will run your eye through the signatures previous to the twenty-ninth of September, you will observe that none of them shows any sign of change whatever; they are all in the 'old manner;' while the signatures subsequent to the twenty-ninth of September, from the eighteenth of October onwards, are, without exception, in the 'new manner.'

"The alteration, slight and trivial as it is, is to be seen in every one of them; and you will also notice that it does not increase as time goes on; it is not a progressive change; the signature on the last check—the one that was drawn on the twenty-sixth of March to pay the rent—does not differ from the 'old manner' any more than that dated the eighteenth of October. A rather striking and important fact."

"Yes; and the signatures of the two wills?"

"The first will is signed in the 'old manner,' as you can see for yourself, while the signature of the second will has the characters of what we have called the 'new manner.' It is identical in style with the signatures subsequent to the twenty-ninth of September."

"Yes, I see that it is as you say," I agreed, when I had carefully made the comparison, "and it is certainly very curious and interesting. But what I do not see is the bearing of all this. The second will was signed in the presence of witnesses and that seems to dispose of the whole matter."

"It does," Thorndyke admitted; "but we must not let our data overlap. It is wise always to consider each separate fact on its own merits and work it out to a finish without allowing ourselves to be disturbed or our attention diverted by any seeming incompatibilities with other facts. Then,

when we have each datum as complete as we can get it, we may put them all together and consider their relations to one another. It is surprising to see how the incompatibilities become eliminated if we work in this way—how the most (apparently) irreconcilable facts fall into agreement with one another."

"As an academic rule for conducting investigations," I replied, "your principle is, no doubt, entirely excellent. But when you seek to prove by indirect and collateral evidence that Jeffrey Blackmore did not sign a will which two respectable men have sworn they saw him sign, why, I am inclined to think that——"

"That, in the words of the late Captain Bunsby, 'the bearing of these observations lies in their application.' "

"Precisely," I agreed, and we both laughed.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME BITS OF GLASS

"HOWEVER," I resumed presently, "as you are advising Marchmont to dispute the will, I presume you have some substantial grounds for action, though I can not conceive what they may be."

"You have all the facts that I had to start with and on which I formed the opinion that the will was probably a forgery. Of course I have more data now, for, as 'money makes money,' so knowledge begets knowledge, and I put my original capital out to interest. Shall we tabulate the facts that are in our joint possession and see what they suggest?"

"Yes, do," I replied, "for I am hopelessly in the dark."

Thorndyke produced a note-book from a drawer and, uncapping his fountain pen, wrote down the leading facts, reading each aloud as soon as it was written.

1. The second will was unnecessary, since a codicil would have answered the purpose.

2. The evident intention of the testator was to leave the bulk of his property to Stephen Blackmore.

3. The second will did not, under existing circumstances, give effect to this intention, while the first will did.

4. The signature of the second will differs slightly from that of the first and also from the testator's ordinary signature.

"And as to the very curious group of dates:—

5. Mrs. Wilson made her will at the end of 1897, without acquainting Jeffrey Blackmore, who seems to have been unaware of the existence of this will.

6. His own second will was dated the ninth of December, 1899.

7. Mrs. Wilson died of cancer on the twenty-fourth of March, 1900.

8. Jeffrey Blackmore was last seen alive on the twenty-sixth of March, 1900, *i. e.*, two days after Mrs. Wilson's death.

9. His body was discovered on the twenty-seventh of March, three days after Mrs. Wilson's death.

10. The change in the character of his signature occurred abruptly between the twenty-ninth of September and the eighteenth of October.

"You will find that collection of facts repays careful study, Jervis, especially when considered in relation to the last of our data, which is:

11. We found, in Blackmore's chambers, a framed inscription hung on the wall upside down."

He passed the book to me and I pored over it intently, focusing my attention upon the various items with all the power of my will. But, struggle as I would, no general conclusion could be made to emerge from the mass of apparently disconnected facts.

"Well," said Thorndyke presently, after watching with grave interest my unavailing efforts, "what do you make of it?"

"Nothing!" I exclaimed desperately, slapping the book down upon the table. "Of course I can see that there are some queer features in the case, but you say the will is a forgery. Now I can find nothing in these facts to give the slightest color to such a supposition. You will think me an unmitigated donkey, I have no doubt, but I can't help that." My failure, it will be observed, had put me somewhat out of humor, and, observing this, Thorndyke hastened to reply:

"Not in the least, my dear fellow; you merely lack experience. Wait until you have seen the trained legal intelligence brought to bear on these facts—which you will do, I feel little doubt, very soon after Marchmont gets my letter. You will have a better opinion of yourself then. By the way, here is another little problem for you. What was the object of which these are parts?"

He pushed across the table a little card-

board box, having first removed the lid. In it were a number of very small pieces of broken glass, some of which had been cemented together by their edges.

"These, I suppose, are the pieces of glass that you picked up in poor Blackmore's bedroom," I said, looking at them with considerable curiosity.

"Yes," replied Thorndyke. "You see that Polton has been endeavoring to reconstitute the object, whatever it was; but he has not been very successful, for the fragments were too small and irregular and the collection too incomplete. However, here is a specimen, built up of six small pieces, which exhibits the general character of the object fairly well."

He picked out the little irregular-shaped object and handed it to me, and I could not but admire the neatness with which Polton had joined the little fragments together.

"It was not a lens," I pronounced, holding it up before my eyes and moving it to and fro as I looked through it.

"No, it was not a lens," Thorndyke agreed. "And so can not have been a spectacle glass. But the surface was curved—one side convex and the other concave—and the little piece that remains of the original edge seems to have been ground to fit a bezel or frame. I should say that these are portions of a small watch-glass."

"That is Polton's opinion," said Thorndyke. "And I think you are both wrong."

"What do you think it is?" I asked.

"I am submitting the problem for solution by my learned brother," he replied with an exasperating smile.

"You had better be careful!" I exclaimed, clapping the lid on to the box and pushing it across to him. "If I am tried beyond endurance, I may be tempted to set a booby-trap to catch a medical jurist. And where will your reputation be then?"

Thorndyke's smile broadened, and he broke into an appreciative chuckle.

"Your suggestion has certainly extensive possibilities in the way of farce," he admitted "and I tremble at your threat. But I must write my letter to Marchmont and we will go out and lay the mine in the Fleet Street post-box. I should like to be in his office when it explodes."

"I expect, for that matter," said I, "the explosion will soon be felt pretty distinctly in these chambers."

"I expect so, too," replied Thorndyke. "And that reminds me that I shall be out all day to-morrow, so, if Marchmont calls and seems at all urgent, you might invite him to look in after dinner and talk the case over."

I promised to do so and hoped sincerely that the solicitor would accept the invitation; for I, at any rate, was on tenter-hooks of curiosity to hear my colleague's views on Jeffrey Blackmore's will.

CHAPTER XV

A CALL FROM THE LAWYERS

MY FRIEND'S expectations in respect to Mr. Marchmont were fully realized, for on the following morning, within an hour of his departure from the chambers, the knocker was plied with more than usual emphasis and, on my opening the door, I discovered the solicitor in company with a somewhat older gentleman. Mr. Marchmont appeared rather out of humor, while his companion was obviously in a state of extreme irritation.

"Howdy-do, Dr. Jervis?" said Marchmont, as he entered at my invitation. "Your colleague, I suppose, is not in just now?"

"No, and he will not be returning until the evening."

"Hm; I'm sorry. We wished to see him rather particularly. This is my partner, Mr. Winwood."

The latter gentleman bowed stiffly, and Marchmont continued:

"We have had a letter from Mr. Thorndyke, and it is, I may say, a rather curious letter—in fact, a very singular letter indeed."

"It is the letter of a madman!" burst in Mr. Winwood.

"No, no, Winwood, don't say that; but it is really rather incomprehensible. It relates to the will of the late Jeffrey Blackmore—you know the main facts of the case—and we can not reconcile it with those facts."

"This is the letter," exclaimed Mr. Winwood, dragging the document from his wallet and slapping it down on the table. "If you are acquainted with the case, sir, just read that and let us hear what *you* think."

I took up the letter and read:

DEAR MR. MARCHMONT,

Jeffrey Blackmore, decd.: I have gone into this case with some care and have now no doubt that the second will is a forgery. I therefore suggest that,

pending the commencement of criminal proceedings, you lose no time in entering a caveat, and I will furnish you with particulars in due course.

Yours truly,
F. C. MARCHMONT, ESQ. JOHN THORNDYKE.

"Well!" exclaimed Mr. Winwood, glaring ferociously at me, "what do you think of the learned counsel's opinion?"

"I knew that Thorndyke was writing to you to this effect," I replied, "but I must frankly confess that I can make nothing of it. Have you acted on his advice?"

"Certainly not!" shouted the irascible lawyer. "Do you suppose we wish to make ourselves the laughing-stock of the courts? The thing is impossible—ridiculously impossible!"

"It can't be that, you know," said I a little stiffly, for I was somewhat nettled by Mr. Winwood's manner, "or Thorndyke would not have written this letter. You had better see him and let him give you the particulars, as he suggests. Could you look in this evening after dinner—say at eight o'clock?"

"It is very inconvenient," grumbled Mr. Winwood; "we should have to dine in town."

"Yes, but it will be the best plan," said Marchmont. "We can bring Mr. Stephen Blackmore with us and hear what Dr. Thorndyke has done. Of course, if what he says is correct, Mr. Stephen's position is totally changed."

"Bah!" exclaimed Winwood, "he has found a mare's-nest, I tell you. However, I suppose we must come, and we will bring Mr. Stephen by all means. The oracle's explanation should be worth hearing—to a man of leisure, at any rate."

With this the two lawyers took their departure, leaving me to meditate upon my colleague's astonishing statement, which I did, considerably to the prejudice of other employment. That Thorndyke would be able to justify the opinion he had given I had no doubt whatever; yet there was no denying that the thing was, upon the face of it, as Mr. Winwood had said, "ridiculously impossible."

When Thorndyke returned, I acquainted him with the visit of the two lawyers, and also with the sentiments they had expressed, whereat he smiled with quiet amusement.

"I thought that letter would bring Marchmont to our door before long," said he. "As to Winwood, I have never met him, so he promises to give us what the variety artists would call an 'extra turn.' And what do you think of the affair yourself?"

"I have given it up," I answered, "and feel as if I had taken an overdose of *Cannabis Indica*."

Thorndyke laughed. "Come and dine," said he, "and let us crack a bottle, that our hearts may not turn to water under the frown of the disdainful Winwood."

He rang the bell for Polton, and when that ingenious person made his appearance, said:

"I expect that a man named Walker will call presently, Polton. If he does, take him to your room and detain him till I send for him."

We now betook ourselves to a certain old-world tavern in Fleet Street at which it was our custom occasionally to dine and where on the present occasion certain little extra touches gave a more than unusually festive character to our repast. Thorndyke was in excellent spirits, under the influence of which—and a bottle—he discoursed brilliantly on the evidence of the persistence of ancient racial types in modern populations, until the clock of the Law Courts, chiming three-quarters, warned us to return home.

CHAPTER XVI

SOME SINGULAR FACTS

WE HAD not been back in the chambers more than a few minutes when the little brass knocker announced the arrival of our visitors. Thorndyke himself admitted them and then closed the oak.

"We felt that we must come round and hear a few particulars from you," said Mr. Marchmont, whose manner was now somewhat flurried and uneasy. "We could not quite understand your letter."

"Quite so," said Thorndyke. "The conclusion was a rathe unexpected one."

"I should say, rather," exclaimed Mr. Winwood with some heat, "that the conclusion was a palpably ridiculous one."

"That," replied Thorndyke suavely, "can perhaps be better determined after examining all the facts that led up to it."

"No doubt, sir," retorted Mr. Winwood, growing suddenly red and wrathful, "but I speak as a solicitor who was practising in the law when you were an infant in arms!

You say that this will is a forgery. I would remind you, sir, that it was executed in broad daylight in the presence of two unimpeachable witnesses, who have not only sworn to their signatures but, one of whom—the house-painter—obligingly left four greasy finger-prints on the document, for subsequent identification, if necessary!"

"After the excellent custom of the Chinese," observed Thorndyke. "Have you verified those finger-prints?"

"No, sir, I have not," replied Mr. Winwood. "Have you?"

"No. The fact is, they are of no interest to me, as I am not disputing the witnesses' signatures."

At this, Mr. Winwood fairly danced with irritation.

"Marchmont," he exclaimed fiercely, "this is a mere hoax! This gentleman has brought us here to make fools of us——"

"Pray, my dear Winwood," said Marchmont, "control your temper. No doubt he——"

"But, confound it!" roared Winwood, "you yourself have heard him say that the will is a forgery, but that he doesn't dispute the signatures, which," concluded Winwood, banging his fist down upon the table, "is —— nonsense!"

"May I suggest," interposed Stephen Blackmore, "that we came here to listen to Dr. Thorndyke's explanation of his letter? Perhaps it would be better to postpone any comments until we have heard it."

"Undoubtedly, undoubtedly," said Marchmont. "Let me beg you, Winwood, to listen patiently and refrain from interruption until we have our learned friend's exposition of his opinion."

"Oh, very well," replied Winwood sulkily. "I'll say no more."

He sank into a chair with the manner of a man who shuts himself up and turns the key, and so remained throughout most of the subsequent proceedings, stony and impassive like a seated effigy at the portal of some Egyptian tomb. The other men also seated themselves, as did I, too, and Thorndyke, having laid on the table a small heap of documents, began without preamble.

"There are two ways in which I might lay the case before you," said he. "I might state my theory of the sequence of events and furnish the verification afterward, or I might retrace the actual course of my investigations and give you the facts in the order in which I obtained them myself, with the inferences from them. Which will you have first—the theory or the investigation?"

"Oh, —— the theory!" growled Mr. Winwood, and shut himself up again with a snap.

"Perhaps it would be better," said Marchmont, "if we heard the whole argument from the beginning."

"I think," agreed Thorndyke, "that that method will enable you to grasp the evidence more easily. Now, when you and Mr. Stephen placed the outline of the case before me, there were certain curious features in it which attracted my attention, as they had, no doubt, attracted yours. In the first place, there was the strange circumstance that the second will should have been made at all, its provisions being, under the conditions then existing, practically identical with the first, so that the trifling alteration could have been met easily by a codicil. There was also the fact that the second will—making John Blackmore the residuary legatee—was obviously less in accordance with the intentions of the testator, so far as they may be judged, than the first one.

"The next thing that arrested my attention was the mode of death of Mrs. Wilson. She died of cancer. Now cancer is one of the few diseases of which the fatal termination can be predicted with certainty months before its occurrence, and its date fixed, in suitable cases, with considerable accuracy.

"And now observe the remarkable series of coincidences that are brought into light when we consider this peculiarity of the disease. Mrs. Wilson died on the twenty-fourth of March, 1900, having made her will two years previously. Mr. Jeffrey's second will was signed on the ninth of December, 1899—at a time, that is to say, when the existence of cancer must have been known to Mrs. Wilson's doctor, and might have been known to Mr. Jeffrey himself or any person interested. Yet it is practically certain that Mr. Jeffrey had no intention of bequeathing the bulk of his property to his brother John, as he did by executing this second will.

"Next, you will observe that the remarkable change in Mr. Jeffrey's habits coincides with the same events; for he came over from Nice, where he had been residing for a

year—having stored his furniture meanwhile—and took up his residence at New Inn in September, 1899, at a time when the nature of Mrs. Wilson's complaint must almost certainly have been known. At the same time, as I shall presently demonstrate to you, a distinct and quite sudden change took place in the character of his signature.

"I would next draw your attention to the singularly opportune date of his death, in reference to this will. Mrs. Wilson died upon the twenty-fourth of March. Mr. Jeffrey was found dead upon the twenty-seventh of March, and he was seen alive upon the twenty-sixth. If he had died only four days sooner, Mrs. Wilson's property would not have devolved upon him at all. If he had lived a few days longer, it is probable that he would have made a new will in his nephew's favor. Circumstances, therefore, conspired in the most singular manner in favor of Mr. John Blackmore.

"But there is yet another coincidence that you will probably have noticed.

"Mr. Jeffrey's body was found on the twenty-seventh of March, and then by the merest chance. It might have remained undiscovered for weeks—or even months; and if this had happened, it is certain that Mrs. Wilson's next of kin would have disputed John Blackmore's claim—most probably with success—on the grounds that Mr. Jeffrey died before Mrs. Wilson. But all this uncertainty and difficulty was prevented by the circumstance that Mr. Jeffrey paid his rent personally to the porter on the twenty-sixth, so establishing the fact beyond question that he was alive on that date.

"Thus, by a series of coincidences, John Blackmore is enabled to inherit the fortune of a man who, almost certainly, had no intention of bequeathimg it to him."

Thorndyke paused, and Mr. Marchmont, who had listened with close attention, nodded as he glanced at his silent partner.

"You have stated the case with remarkable lucidity," he said, "and I am free to confess that some of the points you have raised had escaped my notice."

"Well, then," resumed Thorndyke, "to continue: The facts with which you furnished me, when thus collated, made it evident that the case was a very singular one, and it appeared to me that a case presenting such a series of coincidences in favor of one of the parties should be viewed with some suspicion and subjected to very close examination. But these facts yielded no further conclusion, and it was clear that no progress could be made until we had obtained some fresh data.

"In what direction, however, these new facts were to be looked for did not for the moment appear. Indeed, it seemed as if the inquiry had come to a full stop.

"But there is one rule which I follow religiously in all my investigations, and that is to collect facts of all kinds in any way related to the case in hand, no matter how trivial they may be or how apparently irrelevant."

CHAPTER XVII

THE MAN IN NEW INN

"NOW, in pursuance of this rule, I took an opportunity, which offered, of looking over the chambers in New Inn, which had been left untouched since the death of their occupant, and I had hardly entered the rooms when I made a very curious discovery. On the wall hung a framed photograph of an ancient Persian inscription in cuneiform characters."

The expectant look which had appeared on Mr. Marchmont's face changed suddenly to one of disappointment, as he remarked:

"Curious, perhaps, but not of much importance to us, I am afraid."

"My uncle was greatly interested in cuneiform texts, as I think I mentioned," said Stephen Blackmore. "I seem to remember this photograph, too—it used to stand on the mantelpiece in his old rooms, I believe."

"Very probably," replied Thorndyke. "Well, it hung on the wall at New Inn, and it was hung upside-down."

"Upside-down!" exclaimed Blackmore. "That is really very odd."

"Very odd indeed," agreed Thorndyke. "The inscription, I find, was one of the first to be deciphered. From it Grotefend, with incredible patience and skill, managed to construct a number of the hitherto unknown signs. Now is it not an astonishing thing that an Oriental scholar, setting so much store by this monument of human ingenuity that he has a photograph of it framed, should then hang that photograph upon his wall upside-down?"

"I see your point," said Marchmont, "and I certainly agree with you that the circumstance is strongly suggestive of the decay of the mental faculties."

Thorndyke smiled almost imperceptibly as he continued:

"The way in which it came to be inverted is pretty obvious. The photograph had evidently been in the frame some years, but had never been hung up until lately, for the plates by which it was suspended were new; and when I unscrewed one, I found the wood underneath as dark and time-stained as elsewhere; and there were no other marks of plates or rings.

"The frame-maker had, however, pasted his label on the back of the frame, and as this label hung the right way up, it appeared as if the person who fixed on the plates had adopted it as a guide."

"Possibly," said Mr. Marchmont somewhat impatiently. "But these facts, though doubtless very curious and interesting, do not seem to have much bearing upon the genuineness of the late Mr. Blackmore's will."

"On the contrary," replied Thorndyke, "they appeared to me to be full of significance. However, I will return to the chambers presently, and I will now demonstrate to you that the alteration, which you have told me had been noticed at the bank, in the character of Mr. Jeffrey's signature, occurred at the time that I mentioned and was quite an abrupt change."

He drew from his little pile of documents the photographs of the checks and handed them to our visitors, by whom they were examined with varying degrees of interest.

"You will see," said he, "that the change took place between the twenty-ninth of September and the eighteenth of October and was, therefore, coincident in time with the other remarkable changes in the habits of the deceased."

"Yes, I see that," replied Mr Marchmont, "and no doubt the fact would be of some importance if there were any question as to the genuineness of the testator's signature. But there is not. The signature of the will was witnessed, and the witnesses have been produced."

"Whence it follows," added Mr. Winwood, "that all this hair-splitting is entirely irrelevant and, in fact, so much waste of time."

"If you will note the facts that I am presenting to you," said Thorndyke, "and postpone your conclusions and comments until I have finished, you will have a better chance of grasping the case as a whole. I will now relate to you a very strange adventure which befell Dr. Jervis."

He then proceeded to recount the incidents connected with my visits to the mysterious patient in Kennington Lane, including the construction of the chart, presenting the latter for the inspection of his hearers. To this recital our three visitors listened in utter bewilderment, as, indeed, did I also; for I could not conceive in what way my adventures could be related to the affairs of the late Mr. Blackmore. This was manifestly the view taken by Mr. Marchmont, for during a pause, in which the chart was handed to him, he remarked somewhat stiffly:

"I am assuming, Dr. Thorndyke, that the curious story you are telling us has some relevance to the matter in which we are interested."

"You are quite correct in your assumption," replied Thorndyke. "The story is very relevant indeed, as you will presently be convinced."

"Thank you," said Marchmont, sinking back once more into his chair with a sigh of resignation.

"A few days ago," pursued Thorndyke, "Dr. Jervis and I located, with the aid of this chart, the house to which he had been called. We found that it was to let, the recent tenant having left hurriedly, so, when we had obtained the keys, we entered and explored in accordance with the rule that I mentioned just now."

Here he gave a brief account of our visit and the conditions that we observed, and was proceeding to furnish a list of the articles that he had found, when Mr. Winwood started from his chair.

"Good heavens, sir!" he exclaimed, "have I come here, at great personal inconvenience, to hear you read the inventory of a dust-heap?"

"You came by your own wish," replied Thorndyke, "and I may add that you are not being forcibly detained."

At this hint Mr. Winwood sat down and shut himself up once more.

"We will now," pursued Thorndyke with unmoved serenity, "consider the significance of these relics and we will begin with this pair of spectacles. They belonged to a person who was near-sighted and astigmatic in

the left eye and almost certainly blind in the right. Such a description agrees entirely with Dr. Jervis's account of the sick man.''

He paused for a moment, and then, as no one made any comment, proceeded:

"We next come to this little bamboo stick. It is part of a Japanese brush, such as is used for writing in Chinese ink or for making small drawings."

Again he paused as though expecting some remark from his listeners; but no one spoke, and he continued:

"Then there is this bottle with the theatrical wig-maker's label on it, which once contained cement. Its presence suggests some person who was accustomed to 'make up' with a false mustache or beard. You have heard Dr. Jervis's account of Mr. Morgan and his coachman, and will agree with me that the circumstances bear out this suggestion."

He paused once more amd looked round expectantly at his audience, none of whom. however, volunteered any remark.

"Do none of these objects that I have described seem to have any suggestion for us?" he asked in a tone of some surprise.

"They convey nothing to me," said Mr. Marchmont, glancing at his partner, who shook his head like a restive horse.

"Nor to you, Mr. Blackmore?"

"No," replied Stephen, "unless you mean to suggest that the sick man was my Uncle Jeffrey."

"That is precisely what I do mean to suggest," rejoined Thorndyke. "I had formed that opinion, indeed, before I saw them and I need not say how much they strengthened it."

"My uncle was certainly blind in the right eye," said Blackmore.

"And," interrupted Thorndyke, "from the same cause—dislocation of the crystalline lens."

"Possibly. And he probably used such a brush as you found, since I know that he corresponded in Japanese with his native friends in Tokyo. But this is surely very slender evidence."

"It is no evidence at all," replied Thorndyke. "It is merely a suggestion."

"Moreover,'' said Marchmont, "there is the insuperable objection that Mr. Jeffrey was living at New Inn at this time."

"What evidence is there of that?" asked Thorndyke.

"Evidence!" exclaimed Marchmont impatiently. "Why, my dear sir—" he paused suddenly and, leaning forward, regarded Thorndyke with a new and rather startled expression, "—you mean to suggest—" he began.

"I suggest to you what that inverted inscription suggested to me—that *the person who occupied those chambers in New Inn was not Jeffrey Blackmore!*"

CHAPTER XVIII

THORNDYKE EXPLAINS

THE lawyer appeared thunderstruck. "This is an amazing proposition!" he exclaimed. "Yet the thing is certainly not impossible, for, now that you recall the fact, no one who had known him previously ever saw him at the Inn! The question of identity was never raised!"

"Excepting," said Mr. Winwood, "in regard to the body; which was certainly that of Jeffrey Blackmore."

"Yes, of course,'' said Marchmont; "I had forgotten that for the moment. The body was identified beyond doubt. You don't dispute the identity of the body, do you?"

"Certainly not," replied Thorndyke.

"Then for heaven's sake, tell us what you do mean, for I must confess that I am completely bewildered in this tangle of mysteries and contradictions!"

"It is certainly an intricate case," said Thorndyke, " but I think that you will find it comes together very completely. I have described to you my preliminary observations in the order in which I made them and have given you a hint of the nature of my inferences. Now I will lay before you the hypothesis that I have formed as to what were the actual occurrences in this mysterious case.

"It appeared to me probable that John Blackmore must have come to know, in some way, of the will that Mrs. Wilson had made in his brother's favor and that he kept himself informed as to the state of her health. When it became known to him that she was suffering from cancer, and that her death was likely to take place within a certain number of months, I think that he conceived the scheme that he subsequently carried out with such remarkable success.

"In September of 1899, Jeffrey Blackmore returned from Nice, and I think that John

ıst have met him and either drugged him
en and there and carried him to Kenning-
ı Lane, or induced him to go voluntarily.
ıce in the house and shut up in that dun-
on-like bedroom, it would be easy to ad-
ınister morphia—in small quantities at
ıst and in larger doses afterward, as tolera-
ın of the drug became established."
"But could this be done against the vic-
n's will?" asked Marchmont.
"Certainly. Small doses could be con-
yed in food and drink, or administered
ring sleep, and then, you know, the mor-
ia habit is quickly formed and, once it was
ːablished, the unfortunate man would
obably take the drug voluntarily. More-
er this drug-habit weakens the will and
ralyzes the mental faculties to an extraor-
ınary degree—which was probably the
incipal object in using it.
"John Blackmore's intention, on this hy-
thesis, would be to keep his brother in a
ıte of continual torpor and mental en-
ːblement as long as Mrs. Wilson remained
ve, so that the woman, his accomplice,
uld manage the prisoner, leaving him,
hn, free to play his part elsewhere.
"As soon as he had thus secured his un-
ːtunate brother, I suggest that this inge-
ɔus villain engaged the chambers at New
n. In order to personate his brother, he
ıst have shaved off his mustache and
ard and worn spectacles; and these spec-
ːles introduce a very curious and interest-
ɜ feature into the case.
"To the majority of people the wearing of
ectacles, for the purpose of disguise or
rsonation, seems a perfectly simple and
sy proceeding. But to a person of nor-
ıl eyesight it is nothing of the kind; for if
wears spectacles suited for long sight, he
unable to see distinctly through them at
, while if he wears even weak concave or
ar-sight glasses, the effort to see through
em soon produces such strain and fatigue
ıt his eyes become disabled altogether.
ı the stage, of course, the difficulty is got
er quite simply by using spectacles of
ıin window-glass, but in ordinary life
is would hardly do; the 'property' spec-
ːles would probably be noticed and give
e to suspicion.
"The personator would, therefore, be in
is dilemma: if he wore actual spectacles
would not be able to see through them,
ıile if he wore sham spectacles of plain
ıss his disguise might be detected. There is only one way out of the difficulty, and that not a very satisfactory one, but Mr. J. Morgan seems to have adopted it in lieu of a better.

"We have learned from Dr. Jervis that this gentleman wore spectacles and that these spectacles seem to have had very peculiar optical properties; for while the image of the candle-flame reflected in them was inverted, showing that one surface at least was concave, my colleague observed that objects seen through them appeared quite free from distortion or change of size, as if seen through plain glass. But there is only one kind of glass which could possess these optical properties, and that is a plain glass with curved surfaces like an ordinary watch-glass."

I started when Thorndyke reached this point, and thought of the contents of the cardboard box, which I now saw was among the objects on the table.

"Do you follow the argument?" my colleague inquired.

"Yes," replied Mr. Marchmont, "I think I follow you, though I do not see the application of all this."

"That will appear presently. For the present we may take it that Mr. J. Morgan wore spectacles of this peculiar character, presumably for the purposes of disguise; and I am assuming, for the purposes of the argument, that Mr. J. Morgan and Mr. John Blackmore are one and the same."

"It is assuming a great deal," grunted Mr. Winwood.

"And now," continued Thorndyke, disregarding the last remark, "to return from this digression to John Blackmore's proceedings. I imagine that he spent very little time at the Inn—for the porter saw him only occasionally and believed him to be frequently absent—and when he was at Kennington Lane or at his office in the city, or elsewhere, he would replace his beard with a false one of the same appearance, which would require to be fixed on securely and finished round the edges with short hairs cemented to the skin—for an ordinary theatrical beard would be detected instantly in daylight.

"He would now commence experiments in forging his brother's handwriting, which he must have practised previously to have obtained Jeffrey's furniture from the repository where it was stored. The difference was observed at the bank, as Mr.

Marchmont has told us, but the imitation was close enough not to arouse suspicion.

"The next thing was to make the fresh will and get it witnessed; and this was managed with such adroitness that, although neither of the witnesses had ever seen Jeffrey Blackmore, their identification has been accepted without question. It is evident that, when shaved, John Blackmore must have resembled his brother pretty closely or he would never have attempted to carry out this scheme, and he will have calculated, with much acuteness, that the porter, when called in to identify the body, would observe only the resemblance and would disregard any apparent difference in appearance.

"The position in which John Blackmore was now placed was one of extraordinary difficulty. His brother was immured in Kennington Lane, but, owing to the insecurity of his prison and the frequent absence of his jailer, this confinement could be maintained with safety only by keeping the imprisoned man continuously under the influence of full doses of morphia.

"This constant drugging must have been highly injurious to the health of a delicate man like Jeffrey and, as time went on, there must have loomed up the ever-incresaing danger that he might die before the appointed time; in which event John would be involved in a double catastrophe, for, on the one hand, the will would now be useless, and, on the other, the crime would be almost inevitably discovered.

"It was, no doubt, with this danger in view that John called in Dr. Jervis—making, as it turned out, a very unsuitable choice. My colleague's assistance was invoked, no doubt, partly to keep the victim alive and partly in the hope that if that were impossible, he might be prepared to cover the crime with a death-certificate.

"We are now approaching the end of the tragedy. Mrs. Wilson died on the twenty-fourth of March. Circumstances point to the conclusion that the murder took place on the evening of the twenty-sixth. Now on that day, about half-past six in the evening, the supposed Jeffrey Blackmore entered New Inn in a four-wheeled cab, as you are aware, his face being seen at the window by the porter as the vehicle passed the lodge under the archway. There was a dense fog at the time, so the cab would be lost to sight as soon as it entered the Square. At this time the offices at No. 31 would be empty and not a soul present in the house to witness the arrival.

"From the first time that my suspicions took definite shape that cab seemed to me to hold the key to the mystery. There can be no doubt that it contained two people—one of them was John Blackmore, whose face was seen at the window, and the other, his victim, the unfortunate Jeffrey.

"As to what happened in that silent house there is no need to speculate. The peculiar vertical manner in which the needle of the syringe was introduced is naturally explained by the fact of its being thrust through the clothing, and we can not but admire the cool calculation with which the appliances of murder were left to give color to the idea of suicide.

"Having committed the crime, the murderer presently walked out and showed himself at the lodge, under the pretext of paying the rent, thus furnishing proof of survival in respect to Mrs. Wilson. After this he returned to the Inn, but not to the chambers, for there is a postern-gate, as you know, opening into Houghton Street. Through this, no doubt, the murderer left the Inn, and vanished, to reappear at the inquest unrecognizable in his beard, his padded clothing and eyes uncovered by spectacles.

"With regard to the identification of the body by the porter there is, as I have said, no mystery. There must have been a considerable resemblance between the two brothers, and the porter, taking it for granted that the body was that of his tenant, would naturally recognize it as such, for even if he had noticed any departure from the usual appearance, he would attribute the difference to changes produced by death.

"Such, gentlemen, is my theory of the circumstances that surrounded the death of Jeffrey Blackmore, and I shall be glad to hear any comments that you may have to make."

CHAPTER XIX

STEP BY STEP

THERE was an interval of silence after Thorndyke had finished which was at last broken by Mr. Winwood.

"I must admit, sir," said he, "that you have displayed extraordinary ingenuity in the construction of the astonishing story you have told us, and that this story, if it

were true, would dispose satisfactorily of every difficulty and obscure point in the case. But is it true? It seems to me to be a matter of pure conjecture, woven most ingeniously around a few slightly suggestive facts. And, seeing that it involves a charge of murder of a most diabolical character against Mr. John Blackmore, nothing but the most conclusive proof would justify us in entertaining it."

"It is not conjecture," said Thorndyke, "although it was so at first. But when I had formed a hypothesis which fitted the facts known to me, I proceeded to test it and have now no doubt that it is correct."

"Would you mind laying before us any new facts that you have discovered which tend to confirm your theory?" said Mr. Marchmont.

"I will place the entire mass of evidence before you," said Thorndyke, "and then I think you will have no more doubts than I have.

"You will observe that there are four points which require to be proved: The first is the identity of Jeffrey with the sick man of Kennington Lane; the second is the identity of Mr. J. Morgan with John Blackmore; the third is the identity of John Blackmore with the tenant of 31 New Inn, and the fourth is the presence together of John and Jeffrey Blackmore at the chambers on the night of the latter gentleman's death.

"We will take the first point. Here are the spectacles I found in the empty house. I tested them optically with great care and measured them minutely and wrote down on this piece of paper their description. I will read it to you:

Spectacles for distance, curl sides, steel frames, Stopford's pattern, with gold plate under bridge. Distance between centers, 6.2 cm. Right eye plain glass. Left eye—3D spherical—2D cylindrical, axis 35°.

"Now spectacles of this pattern are, I believe, made only by Cuxton & Parry of New Bond Street. I therefore wrote to Mr. Cuxton, who knows me, and asked if he had supplied spectacles to the late Jeffrey Blackmore, Esq., and, if so, whether he would send me a description of them, together with the name of the occulist who prescribed them.

"He replied, in this letter here, that he had supplied glasses to Mr. Jeffrey Blackmore and described them thus:

"The spectacles were for distance and had steel frames of Stopford's pattern, with curl sides and a gold plate under the bridge. The formula, which was from Mr. Hindley's prescription, was R. E. plain glass. L. E.—3D sph.—2D cyl., axis 35°.

"You see the descriptions are identical. I then wrote to Mr. Hindley, asking certain questions, to which he replied thus:

"You are quite right; Mr. Jeffrey Blackmore had a tremulous iris in his right eye (which was practically blind) due to dislocation of the lens. The pupils were rather large, certainly not contracted.

"Thus, you see, the description of the deceased tallies with that of the sick man as given by Dr. Jervis, excepting that there was then no sign of his being addicted to taking morphia. One more item of evidence I have on this point, and it is one that will appeal to the legal mind.

"A few days ago, I wrote to Mr. Stephen, asking him whether he possessed a recent photograph of his Uncle Jeffrey. He had one and sent it to me by return. This portrait I showed to Dr. Jervis, asking him if he recognized the person. After examining it attentively, without any hint from me, he identified it as a portrait of the sick man of Kennington Lane."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Marchmont. "This is most important. Are you prepared to swear to the resemblance, Dr. Jervis?"

"Perfectly. I have not the slightest doubt," I replied.

"Excellent!" said Mr. Marchmont. "Pray go on, Dr. Thorndyke."

"Well, that is all the evidence I have on the first point," said Thorndyke, "but, to my mind, it constitutes practically conclusive proof of identity."

"It is undoubtedly very weighty evidence," Mr. Marchmont agreed.

"Now, as to the second point—the identity of John Blackmore with Mr. J. Morgan of Kennington Lane. To begin with the *prima facie* probabilities, in relation to certain assumed data. If we assume:

"1. That the sick man was Jeffrey Blackmore;

"2. That his symptoms were due to the administration of a slow poison;

"3. That the poison was being administered by J. Morgan, as suggested by his manifest disguise and the strange secrecy of his conduct;

"And if we then ask ourselves who could have a motive for causing the death of

Mr. Jeffrey in this manner and at this time, the answer is John Blackmore, the principal beneficiary under the very unstable second will. The most obvious hypothesis, then, is that Mr. J. Morgan and John Blackmore were one and the same person."

"But this is mere surmise," objected Mr. Marchmont.

"Exactly; as every hypothesis must be until it has been tested and verified. And now for the facts that tend to support this hypothesis. The first item—a very small one—I picked up when I called on the doctor who had attended Mrs. Wilson. My object was to obtain particulars as to her illness and death, but, incidentally, I discovered that he was well acquainted with John Blackmore and had treated him—without operation and, therefore, without cure—for a nasal polypus. You will remember that Mr. J. Morgan appeared to have a nasal polypus. I may mention, by the way, that John Blackmore had been aware of Mrs. Wilson's state of health from the onset of her symptoms and kept himself informed as to her progress. Moreover, at his request a telegram was sent to his office in Copthall Avenue, announcing her death.

"The next item of evidence is more important. I made a second visit to the house-agent at Kennington for the purpose of obtaining, if possible, the names and addresses of the persons who had been mentioned as references when Mr. Morgan took the house. I ascertained that only one reference had been given—the intending tenant's stockbroker; and the name of that stockbroker was John Blackmore of Copthall Avenue."

"That is a significant fact," remarked Mr. Marchmont.

"Yes," answered Thorndyke, "and it would be interesting to confront John Blackmore with this house-agent, who would have seen him with his beard on. Well, that is all the evidence that I have on this point. It is far from conclusive by itself, but, such as it is, it tends to support the hypothesis that J. Morgan and John Blackmore were one and the same.

"I will now pass on to the evidence of the third point—the identity of John Blackmore with the tenant of New Inn.

"With reference to the inverted inscription, that furnishes indirect evidence only. It suggests that the tenant was not Jeffrey. But, if not Jeffrey, it was some one who was personating him; and that some one must have resembled him closely enough for the personation to remain undetected even on the production of Jeffrey's body. But the only person known to us who answers this description is John Blackmore.

"Again, the individual who personated Jeffrey must have had some strong motive for doing so. But the only person known to us who could have had any such motive is John Blackmore.

"The next item of evidence on this point is also merely suggestive and indirect, though to me it was of the greatest value, since it furnished the first link in the chain of evidence connecting Jeffrey Blackmore with the sick man of Kennington. On the floor of the bedroom in New Inn I found the shattered remains of a small glass object which had been trodden on. Here are some of the fragments in this box, and you will see that we have joined a few of them together to help us in our investigations.

"My assistant, who was formerly a watchmaker, judged them to be fragments of the thin crystal glass of a lady's watch, and that, I think, was also Dr. Jervis's opinion. But the small part which remains of the original edge furnishes proof in two respects that this was not a watch-glass. In the first place, on taking a careful tracing of this piece of the edge, I found that its curve was part of an ellipse; but watch-glasses, nowadays, are invariably circular. In the second place, watch-glasses are ground on the edge to a single bevel to snap into the bezel or frame; but the edge of this is ground to a double bevel, like the edge of a spectacle-glass which fits into a groove and is held in position by a screw.

"The unavoidable inference is that this was a spectacle-glass, but, since it had the optical properties of plain glass, it could not have been used to assist vision and was therefore presumably intended for the purpose of disguise. Now you will remember that Mr. J. Morgan wore spectacles having precisely the optical properties of a crystal watch-glass, and it was this fact that first suggested to me a possible connection between New Inn and Kennington Lane."

"By the way," said Stephen Blackmore, "you said that my uncle had plain glass in one side of his spectacles?"

"Yes," replied Thorndyke; "over his blind eye. But that was actually plain glass with flat surfaces, not curved like this one. I

should like to observe, with reference to this spectacle-glass, that its importance as a clue is much greater than might, at first sight, appear. The spectacles worn by Mr. Morgan were not merely peculiar or remarkable; they were probably unique. It is exceedingly likely that there is not, in the whole world, another similar pair of spectacles. Hence, the finding of this broken glass does really establish a considerable probability that J. Morgan was, at some time, in the chambers in New Inn. But we have seen that it is highly probable that J. Morgan was, in fact, John Blackmore, wherefore the presence of this glass is evidence suggesting that John Blackmore is the man who personated Jeffrey at New Inn.

"You will have observed, no doubt, that the evidence on the second and third points is by no means conclusive when taken separately, but I think you will agree that the whole body of circumstantial evidence is very strong and might easily be strengthened by further investigation."

"Yes," said Marchmont, "I think we may admit that there is enough evidence to make your theory a possible and even a probable one; and if you can show that there are any good grounds for believing that John and Jeffrey Blackmore were together in the chambers on the evening of the twenty-sixth of March, I should say that you had made out a *prima facie* case. What say you, Winwood?"

"Let us hear the evidence," replied Mr. Winwood gruffly.

"Very well," said Thorndyke, "you shall. And, what is more, you shall have it first-hand."

CHAPTER XX

THE ENEMY DECIDES

HE PRESSED the button of the electric bell three times and, after a short interval, Polton let himself in with his latch-key and beckoned to some one on the landing.

"Here is Walker, sir," said he, and he then retired, shutting the oak after him and leaving a seedy-looking stranger standing near the door and gazing at the assembled company with a mixture of embarrassment and defiance.

"Sit down, Walker," said Thorndyke, placing a chair for him. "I want you to answer a few questions for the information of these gentlemen."

"I know," said Walker with an oracular nod. "You can ask me anything you like."

"Your name, I believe, is James Walker?"

"That's me, sir."

"And your occupation?"

"My occupation, sir, don't agree with my name at all, because I drives a cab—a four-wheeled cab is what I drives—and a uncommon dry job it is, let me tell you."

Acting on this delicate hint, Thorndyke mixed a stiff whisky and soda and passed it across to the cabman, who consumed half at a single gulp and then peered thoughtfully into the tumbler.

"Rum stuff, this soda-water," he remarked. "Makes it taste as if there wasn't no whisky in it."

This hint Thorndyke ventured to ignore and continued his inquiries:

"Do you remember a very foggy day about three weeks ago?"

"Rather. It was the twenty-sixth of March. I remember it because my benefit society came down on me for arrears that morning."

"Will you tell us now what happened to you between six and seven in the evening of that day?"

"I will," replied the cabman, emptying his tumbler by way of bracing himself up for the effort. "I drove a fare to Vauxhall Station and got there a little before six. As I didn't pick up no one there, I drove away and was just turning down Upper Kennington Lane when I see two gentlemen standing at the corner by Harleyford Road, and one of 'em hails me, so I pulls up by the curb. One of 'em seemed to be drunk, for the other one was holding him up, but he might have been feeling queer—it wasn't no affair of mine.

"But the rum thing about 'em was that they was as like as two peas. Their faces was alike, their clothes was alike, they wore the same kind of hats and they both had spectacles. 'Wot O!' says I to myself, ''ere's the Siamese Twins out on the jamboree!' Well, the gent what wasn't drunk he opens the door and shoves in the other one what was, and he says to me, he says: 'Do you know New Inn?' he says. Now there was a —— silly question to ask a man what was born and brought up in White Horse Alley, Drury Lane. 'Do I know my grandmother?' says I.

"'Well,' says he, 'you drive in through the gate in Wych Street,' he says.

"'Of course I shall,' I says. 'Did you think I was going to drive in the back way down the steps?' I says.

"'And then,' he says, 'you drive down the Square nearly to the end and you'll see a house with a large brass plate at the corner of the doorway. That's where we want to be set down,' he says. With that he nips in and pulls up the windows and off we goes.

"It took us nigh upon half an hour to get to New Inn through the fog, and as I drove in under the archway I saw it was half-past six by the clock in the porter's lodge. I drove down nearly to the end of the square and drew up opposite a house where there was a large brass plate by the doorway. Then the gent what was sober jumps out and begins hauling out the other one. I was just getting down off the box to help him when he says, rather short-like:

"All right, cabman,' he says, 'I can manage,' and he hands me five bob.

"The other gent seemed to have gone to sleep, and a rare job he had hauling him across the pavement. I see them, by the gas-lamps on the staircase, going up-stairs —regular Pilgrim's Progress it was, I tell you—but they got up at last, for I saw 'em light the gas in a room on the second floor. Then I drove off."

"Could you identify the house?" asked Thorndyke.

"I done it, this morning. You saw me. It was No. 31."

"How was it," said Marchmont, "that you did not come forward at the inquest?"

"What inquest?" inquired the cabman. "I don't know nothing about any inquest. The first I heard of the business was when one of our men told me yesterday about a notice what was stuck up in a shelter offering a reward for information concerning a four-wheel cab what drove to New Inn at six-thirty on the day of the fog at the end of last month. Then I came here and left a message, and this morning this gentleman came to me on the rank and paid up *like* a gentleman."

The latter ceremony was now repeated, and the cabman, having remarked that his services were at the disposal of the present company to an unlimited extent on the same terms, departed, beaming with satisfaction.

When he had gone, our three visitors sat for awhile looking at one another in silence. At length Stephen Blackmore rose with a stern expression on his pale face and said to Thorndyke:

"The police must be informed of this at once. I shall never be able to rest until I know that justice has been dealt out to this cold-hearted, merciless villain!"

"The police have already been informed," said Thorndyke. "I completed the case this morning and at once communicated with Superintendent Miller of Scotland Yard. A warrant was obtained immediately and I had expected to hear that the arrest had been made long before this, for Mr. Miller is usually most punctilious in keeping me informed of the progress of cases which I introduce to him. We shall hear to-morrow, no doubt."

"And for the present the case seems to have passed out of our hands," observed Mr. Marchmont.

"I shall enter a caveat, all the same," said Mr. Winwood.

"Why, that doesn't seem very necessary," said Marchmont. "The evidence that we have heard is enough to secure a conviction, and there will be plenty more when the police go into the case. And a conviction would, of course, put an end to the second will."

"I shall enter a caveat, all the same," said Mr. Winwood.

As the two partners showed a disposition to become heated over this question, Thorndyke suggested that they might discuss it at leisure by the light of subsequent events.

Taking this as a hint, for it was now close upon midnight, our visitors prepared to depart and were, in fact, making their way towards the door, when the bell rang.

Thorndyke hastily flung open the door and, as he recognized his visitor, uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Ha! Mr. Miller, we were just speaking of you. This is Mr. Stephen Blackmore, and these gentlemen are Messrs. Marchmont and Winwood, his solicitors, and my colleague, Dr. Jervis."

"Well, Doctor, I have just dropped in to give you the news, which will interest these gentlemen as well as yourself."

"Have you arrested the man?"

"No; he has arrested himself. He is dead!"

"Dead!" we all exclaimed together.

"Yes. It happened this way. We went down to his place at Surbiton early this

morning, but it seemed he had just left for town, so we took the next train and went straight to his office. But they must have smoked us and sent him a wire, for, just as we were approaching the office, a man answering the description ran out, jumped into a hansom and drove off like the devil.

"We chanced its being the right man and followed at a run, hailing the first hansom that we met; but he had a good start and his cabby had a good horse, so that we had all our work cut out to keep him in sight. We followed him over Blackfriars Bridge and down Stamford Street to Waterloo; but as we drove up the slope to the station we met a cab coming down and, as the cabby kissed his hand and smiled at us, we concluded it was the one we had been following.

"I remembered that the Southampton Express was due to start about this time, so we made for the platform and, just as the guard was about to blow his whistle, we saw a man bolt through the barrier and run up the platform. We dashed through a few seconds later and just managed to get on the train as it was moving off. But he had seen us, for his head was out of the window when we jumped in, and we kept a sharp lookout on both sides in case he should hop out again before the train got up speed.

"However, he didn't, and nothing more happened until we stopped at Southampton. You may be sure we lost no time in getting out and we ran up the platform, expecting to see him make a rush for the barrier. But there was no sign of him anywhere, and we began to think that he had given us the slip.

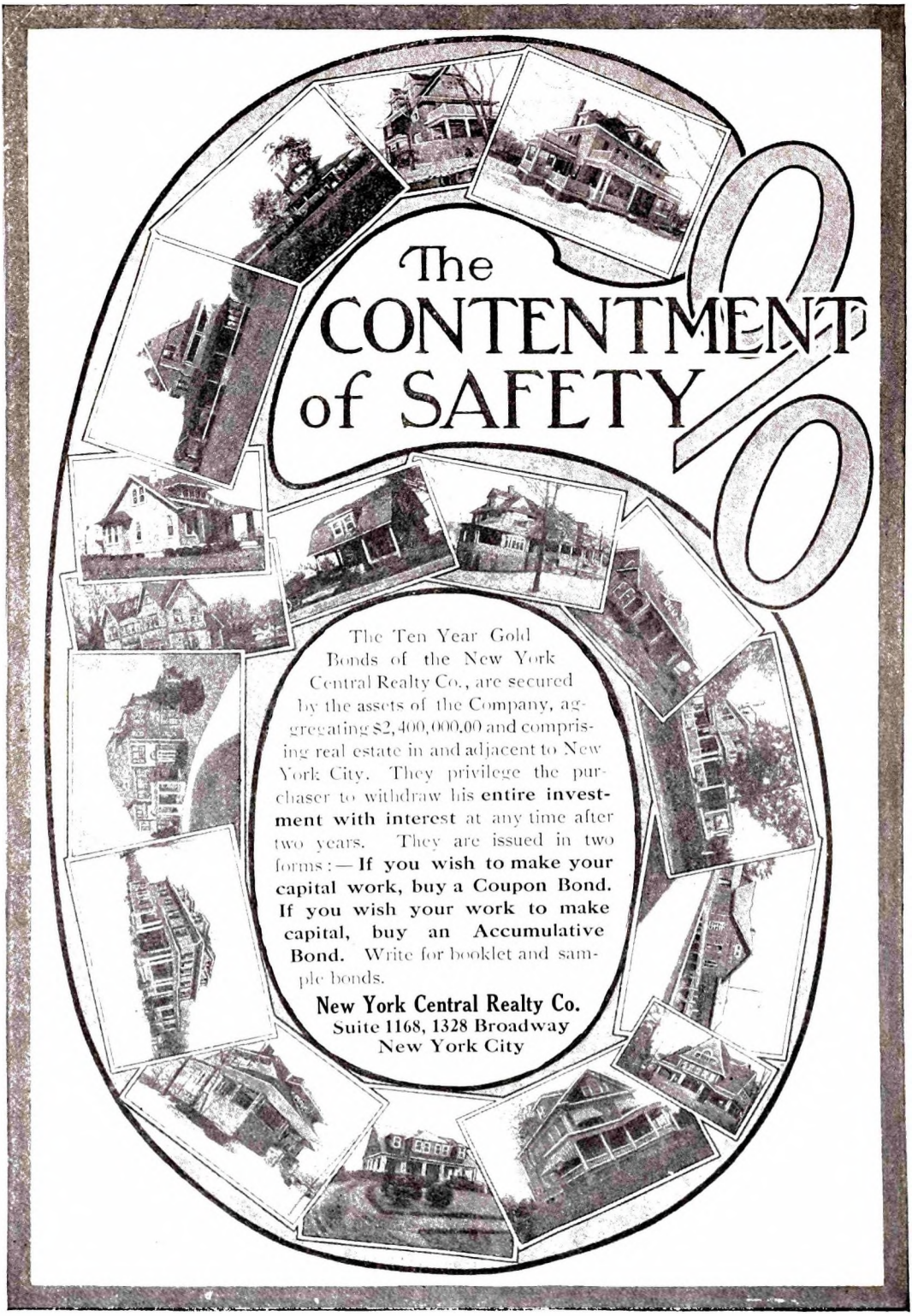
"Then, while my inspector watched the barrier, I went down the train until I came to the compartment that I had seen him enter. And there he was, lying back in the off corner, apparently fast asleep. But he wasn't asleep. He was dead. I found this on the floor of the carriage."

He held up a tiny glass tube, labeled "Aconitin Nitrate gr. 1-640."

"Ha!" exclaimed Thorndyke. "This fellow was well up in poisons, it seems! This tube contained twenty tabloids, a thirty-second of a grain altogether, so if he swallowed them all he took about twelve times the medicinal dose. Well, perhaps he has done the best thing, after all."

"The best thing for you, gentlemen," said Mr. Miller, "for there is no need to raise any questions in detail at the inquest: and publicity would be very unpleasant for Mr. Blackmore. It is a thousand pities that you or Dr. Jervis hadn't put us on the scent in time to prevent the crime—though, of course,we couldn't have entered the premises without a warrant. But it is easy to be wise after the event. Well, good-night, gentlemen; I suppose this accident disposes of your business as far as the will is concerned?"

"I suppose it does," said Mr. Winwood; "but I shall enter a caveat, all the same."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