# ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

MARCH 10,

4ft + 8ft

Mystery
Thrills
Romance

## The Double Chance

by J. S. Fletcher

*Author of* "The Inner Temple"

10¢ PER COPY MARCH 10 BY THE YEAR $4.00


"There is only ***ONE*** CREAM of WHEAT"

*Painted by Edw. V. Brewer for Cream of Wheat Company*

# Great News for Shavers from Williams


## The New Doublecap Stick

NOW you can get Williams' famous Shaving Stick in a really perfect holder; a holder that gives you not a mere finger-tip hold, but a firm full-hand hold.

The new Doublecap Stick has the same magic-like power of all Williams' Sticks, to make your shave pleasant, more comfortable, quicker. It gives the same thick, busy lather. It has the same toning effect on the skin. And, quite as important for an easier shave, you can get a big man-sized hold on it.

Even the small free trial size of this Williams Doublecap Stick proves its new convenience. Every shaver, certainly every stick user should get this proof. Send postal or use coupon below—now.

***Doublecap more convenient***

Take hold of the stick you now use. Then take hold of Doublecap—its new convenience is striking. Here for the first time is a shaving stick that gives you a full, whole-handed hold, even when the Stick is worn down.

***Doublecap more sanitary***

Doublecap is protected by a quickly removed sanitary fibre wrapper—a departure from the old-fashioned troublesome tinfoil; then further protected by a special wrapping, hermetically sealed. Around the center of the stick is a threaded metal ring, to each side of which a cap is screwed. While you are using one end of the stick, the other end is protected from exposure.

***Doublecap 100% economical***

This is the Re-load. Doublecap Re-loads cost less than the original Doublecap package. ¶Months hence, when you have finally used up the original stick, remove the thin wafer of soap remaining within the metal ring. Just push it out with your finger and stick it on the top of a Doublecap Re-load.

## FREE

***to every man who wants better shaving***

**Mail this coupon for Free Trial Size Doublecap Stick**

The J. B. Williams Company,
Department J, Glastonbury, Conn.

Send me the free sample of Williams' New Doublecap Stick.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

# ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

VOL. CXLIX — CONTENTS FOR MARCH 10, 1923 — NUMBER 6



## FIVE CONTINUED STORIES



## NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES



## MISCELLANEOUS AND POETRY



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There have been scores of stories of politics and political intrigues. Argosy-Allstory has published many of the best. But never, we believe, have we printed a story of politics as vital, as true, and as interesting as

### GRAFT—By Wolcott LeClear Beard

which begins next week. The author has found drama, surprises and thrills in a small New England city and in the life of an old New England lady, Miss Sophronia Herondene, descendant of pirates and Puritans, who learns to fight the devil with fire.

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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

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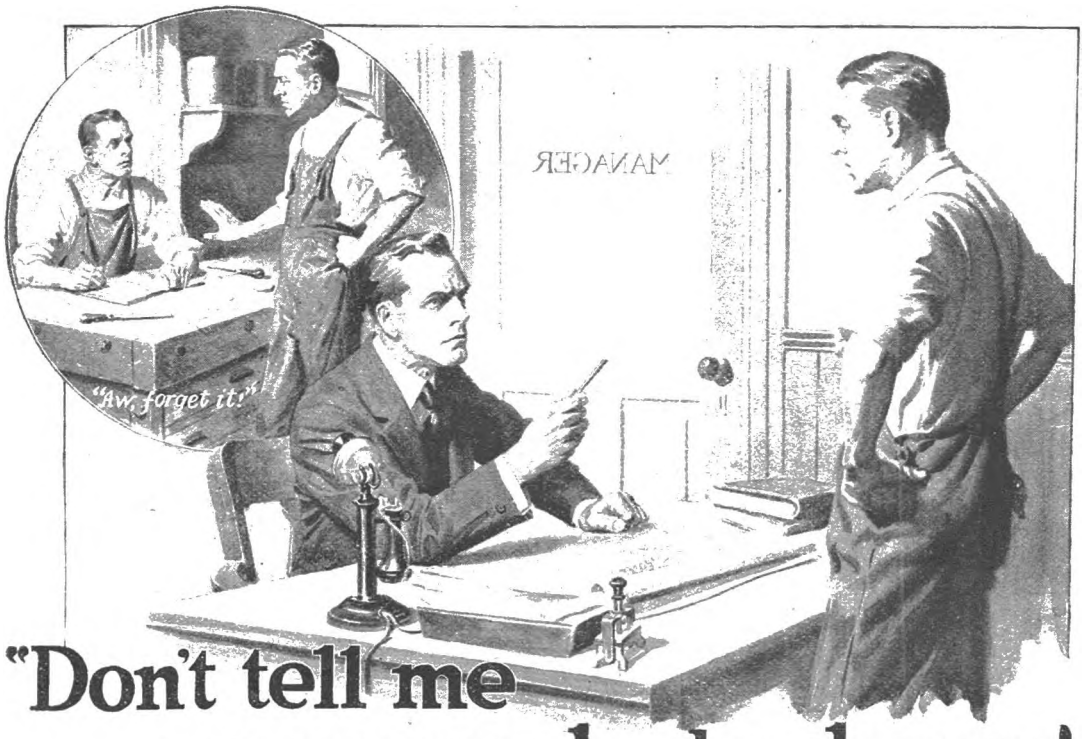


# "Don't tell me you never had a chance!

"Four years ago you and I worked at the same bench. We were *both* discontented. Remember the noon we saw the International Correspondence Schools' advertisement? That woke me up. I realized that to get ahead I needed special training, and I decided to let the I. C. S. help me. When I marked the coupon I asked you to sign with me. You said, 'Aw, forget it!'

"I made the most of my opportunity and have been climbing ever since. You had the same chance I had, but you turned it down. No, Jim, you can't expect more money until you've trained yourself to handle bigger work."

---

There are lots of "Jims" in the world—in stores, factories, offices, everywhere. Are *you* one of them? Wake up! Every time you see an I. C. S. coupon your chance is staring you in the face. Don't turn it down.

Right now more than 150,000 men are preparing themselves for bigger jobs and better pay through I. C. S. courses.

You can join them and get in line for promotion. Mark and mail the coupon, and find out how.

TEAR OUT HERE

**INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS**
Box 2181-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

**BUSINESS TRAINING DEPARTMENT**

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|---|---|
| ☐ Business Management | ☐ Salesmanship |
| ☐ Industrial Management | ☐ Advertising |
| ☐ Personnel Organization | ☐ Better Letters |
| ☐ Traffic Management | ☐ Foreign Trade |
| ☐ Business Law | ☐ Stenography and Typing |
| ☐ Banking and Banking Law | ☐ Business English |
| ☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.) | ☐ Civil Service |
| ☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting | ☐ Railway Mail Clerk |
| ☐ Bookkeeping | ☐ Common School Subjects |
| ☐ Private Secretary | ☐ High School Subjects |
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**TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT**

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|---|---|
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| ☐ Electric Lighting | ☐ Blue Print Reading |
| ☐ Mechanical Engineer | ☐ Contractor and Builder |
| ☐ Mechanical Draftsman | ☐ Architectural Draftsman |
| ☐ Machine Shop Practice | ☐ Concrete Builder |
| ☐ Railroad Positions | ☐ Structural Engineer |
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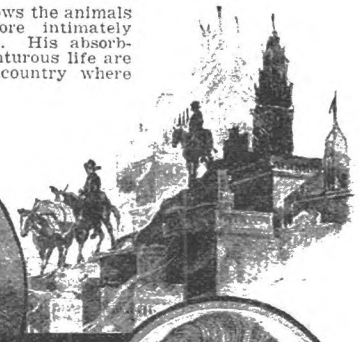
Name .....
Street 1-10-23
Address .....
City ..... State .....
Occupation .....
*Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.*

This great author knows the animals of the wilderness more intimately than any other writer. His absorbing tales of their adventurous life are laid in the range of country where no hunters go.



**Visit the Great North Country from your Easy Chair**

# From the Great White Way *to the* Great White Spaces

## Pack up your troubles *and* follow CURWOOD *into* Adventureland

COME to the great magic land of the Northwest—come where the breath of Romance stirs in the blood of men and women—come to the land of adventure, strange, enchanting, wondrous. Stand under the great open sky—gaze at the wondrous Red Moon and the North Star—hear the cry of the wolf-pack—thrill to the magic of the forests—sit by the soft glow of the camp-fire—come to the top of the world and feel the spell of the vast white wilderness! You do not have to stir out of your easy chair to do it.

James Oliver Curwood takes you! Here is great drama, played by great and fearless men who quicken your red blood and lift you clear of care and worry, carrying you far and happily into Adventureland!

## JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD
## *6 Complete Volumes · Now at a Special Price*

**"The Hunted Woman," "Baree, Son of Kazan," "God's Country and the Woman," "The Grizzly King," "The Courage of Marge O'Doone," "Nomads of the North"**

There never was a writer with the compelling power of James Oliver Curwood. His books have that gripping broad interest of big things done in a big way. Whether you read about "Baree, Son of Kazan," the story of the little outcast wolf-dog, or about "The Hunted Woman," the appeal fairly takes you by the heart. As no man has done before, he brings to you the atmosphere of the North, the appeal and mystery of the wilderness, the scent of crisp air, the overpowering sensation of great, untrammeled spaces.

Here are the humor and tragedy, the griefs and gladness of a great and glorious country. More than 2,000,000 copies of these books have been sold. The tales have been eagerly sought by moving picture companies. And now you have the opportunity of obtaining a beautiful six-volume set of James Oliver Curwood at practically HALF PRICE and on amazingly easy terms. But you need send no money now—just the coupon, for free examination before you are asked to pay a penny.

**Send No Money** If you are tired of ordinary novels, if you are "fed-up" with the humdrum of your daily routine, if you want to feel the clean white snow of the great Northwest under your feet, if you want to live among real men and real women, follow Curwood into adventureland! Don't bother to send any money. Merely mail the coupon and the six volumes of Curwood will be sent to you at once. When they arrive, you have the privilege of examining them for seven days, and paying for them in small monthly installments or returning them. This offer is good only while the present special edition is available. Take advantage of it now—mail the coupon or a letter at once and make sure of your set.


**NELSON DOUBLEDAY, Inc.**
**Dept. C-183. Garden City, New York**

**Nelson Doubleday, Inc.**
**Dept. C-183. Garden City, New York**

Kindly send me the six volume set of James Oliver Curwood, bound in dark maroon cloth, with titles lettered in gold. I am to have the privilege of examining them for seven days and at the end of that time if I decide to keep them I will forward you $1.50 and then send $2.00 each month for three months making a total of $7.50 in full payment, which is almost half the regular price. If I wish to do so, I may return the set before the end of the examination period and then will not owe you anything.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

**By sending cash with your order you can secure this set for only $7.00.**

# Sold—

*"She is yours, Master"—muttered the trembling slave-dealer.*

SICK at heart the crouching girl heard the dreadful bargain and hated her beauty for having brought her to this fate. How could she escape from this veiled monster into whose hands she had been given—this mysterious man of mighty power—whose icy voice aroused a nameless fear in strong hearts—whose will made slaves of brilliant men—whose face none had yet seen.

Here is an extraordinary situation: Who was this man whom no one really knew? Who was this dark-eyed girl brought up in luxury—yet sold like a common slave?

**This is one of the most exciting stories ever told—and it is only one of the marvelous books here offered you in**

# Masterpieces of Oriental Mystery

## 11 Thrilling Volumes By SAX ROHMER

Adventure, romance, sorcery, secrets, thrills, all crowded between the covers of these books. Sax Rohmer will take you from the homes of aristocracy to the lowest of Limehouse dives. With him you will travel from Egypt to Broadway—from China to Piccadilly.

But there is more in them than mere excitement and adventure. They are rich with the mysteries of the Orient. The secrets of Chinese religious fanatics, of robber bands of India, of wily opium smugglers, of wizards of all countries, lend to these stories a rare fascination.

### Positively the Last Chance to Readers of Argosy

Today—Now, this is the moment, this is the time. Never again will this special edition be offered to Argosy readers at this price with the wonderful set free.

This coupon means money saved—means joy and delight. Send it today—tomorrow may be too late. The last of this edition will soon be gone.

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### Enjoy Them for Ten Days Absolutely Free of Charge

So send your coupon right now, this minute. Grasp the chance while it is here, for in addition, while they last, we will give


**FREE** 3 Wonderful Volumes "True Stories of Celebrated Crimes"

We have on hand a few sets of those marvelous books—"TRUE STORIES OF CELEBRATED CRIMES," which we are offering, *while they last*, as a premium for promptness to the first purchasers of Sax Rohmer.

Here are hundreds of pages teeming with excitement—actual exploits of world-renowned Detectives, Government Agents, Secret Service Men and Private Investigators.

Adventures with Forgers, Blackmailers, Counterfeiters, Outlaws, Robbers, Embezzlers, Highwaymen, Assassins, Swindlers and Smugglers form an almost unbelievable record—all the more fascinating because it is *absolutely true*.

**Mail the Coupon today and get your set FREE**

A.A.S. 3-10-23

McKINLAY STONE & MACKENZIE
30 Irving Place
New York

Please send me on approval, all charges prepaid, your special set of MASTERPIECES OF ORIENTAL MYSTERY, by Sax Rohmer, in 11 volumes, handsomely bound in cloth; also The True Stories of Celebrated Crimes in 3 vols. If I decide to keep the books I will send you $1.00 promptly and further pay you $1.00 a month for only 12 months for the Sax Rohmer set and will keep the "True Stories of Celebrated Crimes" without charge. Otherwise I will return both sets within 10 days of receipt at your expense, the examination to cost me nothing.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

# "I WANT YOU"

-Uncle Sam

# BECOME Railway Mail Clerks!

## $1600 to $2300 a Year

## LIFE JOBS!

**RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS HAVE PLEASANT WORK—TRAVELLING CONTINUALLY.**

*Become City Mail Carriers, Post Office Clerks, Customs Clerks, Clerks at Washington, D. C.*

**Men—Women—18 or Over.**

Government positions have yearly **vacations with full pay. Promotion** to **Big Paid** positions is **very rapid.** The position is not affected by strikes, poor business conditions or the whims of some petty boss. It is steady with full pay all of the time.

**Common education is sufficient—Pull is not required**

*Every Man or Woman 18 or over should send coupon at once—today—sure.*

**DON'T TURN THIS PAGE, without sending coupon.**

VALUABLE COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. P274 Rochester, N. Y.

Kindly send me, without any obligation whatever on my part, and free of charge (1) A full description of the position checked below; (2) Sample examination questions; (3) Free copy of copyrighted book, "Government Positions and How to Get Them"; (4) A list of U. S. Government Jobs obtainable; (5) Tell me how to get the position checked.

| | |
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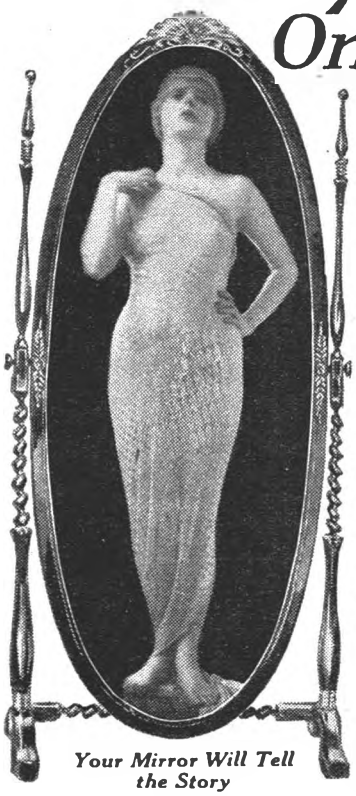
| ....Railway Mail Clerk | ($1600—$2300) |
| ....Postoffice Clerk | ($1400—$1800) |
| ....City Mail Carrier | ($1400—$1800) |
| ....Income Tax Auditors | ($2040—$3000) |
| ....Rural Mail Carrier | ($1800—$2600) |
| ....Customs Positions | ($1100—$2000) |
| ....Clerk at Panama Canal | ($1392—$2000) |
| ....Clerk at Washington, D. C. | ($1140—$1800) |

Name.....

Address.....

Use this coupon before you mislay it—WRITE PLAINLY—P274

# You Can Weigh Thirty Pounds Less One Month from Today



*Your Mirror Will Tell the Story*

**Amazing new discovery makes it easy to take off a pound or more a day. One woman reduced 13 pounds in 8 days. Another lost 65 pounds in a few weeks and her health was improved a hundred per cent. Still another lost 22 pounds in two weeks. All without tiresome treatments, discomforts or bitter self-denials. Results in 48 hours. 10 Days Trial.**

A WONDERFUL new method of losing excess flesh has been discovered. A method that can give you the type of figure you admire so much—one month from today—or less. Results are often gained in only 48 hours.

It requires no appliances, medicines, exercise or massage. Any one can apply it at once.

**Complete Cost for All Only 97c Plus Few Cents Postage**

300,000 formerly stout men and women have gladly paid $1.97, and more, for this remarkable method. Many write that their improved appearance and health was worth hundreds of dollars to them. Yet for a limited time you are being given the opportunity to purchase this wonderful method for only 97c.

**Use the Coupon and Save a Dollar**

## Lose Flesh Quickly — and Improve Health

This safe, *natural* method of reducing gives you renewed vitality and energy, in addition to restoring your normal youthful figure. You obtain a clearer complexion, a brighter eye, a more elastic step. Nerves are improved. Sleep is more refreshing. The years seem to drop away as the superfluous fat vanishes.

When you have arrived at your ideal weight, the new discovery will enable you to maintain it steadily.

## The Secret Explained

It was given to Eugene Christian, the well-known food specialist, to discover this one safe, certain and easily followed method of regaining normal, healthful weight. He discovered that certain foods, when eaten together, take off weight instead of adding to it. Certain combinations cause fat, others consume fat. There is nothing complicated. It is simply a matter of learning how to combine your food properly, and this is easily done.

You will even be able to eat many delicious dishes which you have denied yourself in the past.

## 10 Days Trial—Send No Money

Elated with his discovery and with the new hope and energy it offers to stout men and women, Eugene Christian incorporated this method into a course of simple, easy-to-follow little lessons under the title of "Weight Control — the Basis of Health." This is now offered to you on trial.

Send no money; just put your name and address on the coupon, or send a letter if you prefer. The course will be mailed to you in PLAIN CONTAINER, and 97c (plus postage) to the postman will make it yours. Then if you are not fully satisfied in every particular, you may return it within 10 days after its receipt, and your money will be immediately refunded. *If more convenient, you may remit with coupon, but this is not necessary.*

As soon as the course arrives, weigh yourself. Then try the first lesson. Weigh yourself in two days or so and note the result. You'll be as happily surprised as the thousands of others who have quickly regained a normal, beautiful figure.

Remember, send no money. Just mail the coupon or a letter. You are thoroughly protected by our liberal guarantee. Act to-day, however, to avoid delay, as it is hard for us to keep up with the demand for these lessons. Corrective Eating Society, Inc., Dept. W-1693, 47 West 16th St., New York City.

*If you prefer to write a letter, copy wording of coupon in a letter or on a postcard.*

CORRECTIVE EATING SOCIETY, Inc.
Dept. W-1693, 47 West 16th St.,
New York City

You may send me, IN PLAIN CONTAINER, Eugene Christian's Course, "Weight Control—the Basis of Health." I will pay the postman only 97c (plus postage) on arrival. If I am not satisfied with it, I have the privilege of returning it to you within 10 days after its receipt. It is, of course, understood that you are to return my money if I return the course within this time.

Name.....
(Please write plainly)

Address.....

City..... State.....

## Read What Others Say

**Loses 13 Pounds in 8 Days**

"Hurrah! I have lost 13 pounds since last Monday and I feel better than I have for months."
MRS. GEO. GUITERMAN,
420 E. 60th St., New York City.

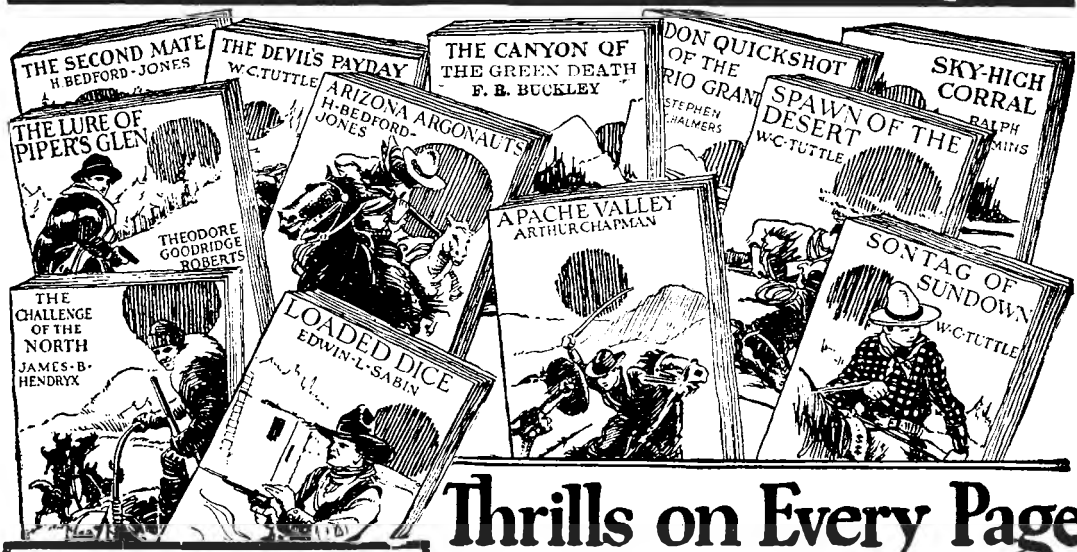
**Loses 22 Pounds in 14 Days**

"I reduced from 175 pounds to 153 pounds (a reduction of 22 pounds) in two weeks. Before I started I was flabby, heavy and sick. Stomach trouble bothered me all the time. I feel wonderful now."
BEN NADDLE,
102 Fulton St.,
New York City.

**Lost 28 Pounds in 30 Days**

"I found your instructions easy to follow and your method delightful. In 30 days I lost 28 pounds—8 pounds the very first week. My general health has been greatly benefited."
(Signed) EARL A. KETTEL,
225 W. 39th St.,
New York City.

# RED BLOODED, BANG-UP STORIES!




## Thrills on Every Page

## 12 Big Bully Books $1.98 For All

## *Every One a Ripsnorter!*

Exciting? You'll say so! 12 red-blooded tales. Real thrills on every page. Smashing, unexpected endings make you gasp. Never a slow evening if you own these books. Just like being a cowboy, a prospector, a dare-devil adventurer yourself. Every story a "humdinger."

Live the life of the big open Western world—among hairy-chested, hard-fighting frontiersmen who tramp, ride, camp, scheme, love and hate—yes, and sometimes shoot to kill! These gripping stories will pick you up, and whirl you bodily into the "gun-toting" life of the West—the bad old, glad old West. Every book will make you "hold on to your chair."

## 12 GREAT BOOKS

**DON QUICKSHOT OF THE RIO GRANDE** — Stephen Chalmers
A thrilling story of life among raiding Mexican bandits, train robbers, Texas rangers, and a prairie fire.

**LOADED DICE** — Edwin L. Sabin
A romance of Texas, of the early days, when lives depended on quickness of draw. A tale of men who were jugglers with death.

**SONTAG OF SUNDOWN** — W. C. Tuttle
An exciting story of the question of ranch ownership—which promoted bloodshed and a war of no mean caliber.

**SPAWN OF THE DESERT** — W. C. Tuttle
A tale of Calico Town:
Where men lived raw in the desert's maw,
and Hell was nothing to shun; where they buried 'em neat, without preacher or sheet and writ on their tombstone, crude but sweet, "This jasper was slow with his gun."

**ARIZONA ARGONAUTS** — H. Bedford-Jones
Three adventurers whose fortunes lead through drought and danger to the golden goal they sought.

**THE LURE OF PIPER'S GLEN** — Theodore Goodridge Roberts
It was the lure of the North, of plentiful game and of the clear wind from the great plains. Young Jim Todhunter heard it, and found adventure a-plenty.

**APACHE VALLEY** — Arthur Chapman
A story of a cattle war in the Southwest, with all it means—terror and blood feud; alarms by night and day; rustling and stealthy murder.

**THE CHALLENGE OF THE NORTH** — James B. Hendryx
This is a story of the call of the great Northland; of purposes and cross purposes; of true men and of "bad" men; and of big deals and pioneering triumphs.

**THE SECOND MATE** — H. Bedford-Jones
Peril and mutiny on the China Seas. Two white women at the mercy of a villainous crew. Jim Barnes realized the desperate chance he had taken when he became mate of the Sulu Queen.

**THE DEVIL'S PAYDAY** — W. C. Tuttle
A sky of brass, the sun a flame,
And the land no place to dwell;
A hunk of earth, so doggone hot
That it still belongs to Hell.

**THE CANYON OF THE GREEN DEATH** — F. R. Buckley
Who were the devils in human form whose haunt was the lost barranca? Invisible, terrible, they brought the young officer of the law to a strange dilemma.

**SKY-HIGH CORRAL** — Ralph Cummins
A yarn of the unending feuds between cattlemen and forest rangers; of the forest fires, grazing herds and bitter fights at timberline. Yet forest conservation won—through fire and blood.

## SEND NO MONEY

You can get this whole library of 12 fascinating, nerve-tightening books for about 16c each. The whole set sent to you right now—without sending a penny in advance. But listen! The night these books come you won't sleep! You're just bound to finish the one you start—if it takes till 3 A. M. You can't be out of amusement while you have these smashing stories in your home. Yet EVERY STORY IS CLEAN AND WHOLESOME—nothing that should not be read by any boy or girl.

Get this whole library right away. Don't send any money. Just your name and address on the handy coupon, and mail it. The whole 12 of these splendid books, each printed on good paper and each with a striking cover in full color, will be sent to you promptly. Just pay $1.98, plus a few cents postage, to the postman who delivers the books, and they are yours. There are no other payments of any kind. Each book complete. If you are in any way dissatisfied, send them back to us—and we will send back your money in full.

Stake yourself to a whole lot of pleasant evenings! Think of it! 12 full-length novels for only $1.98—and you take no risk. Take up this offer right now, for it may not be repeated in this magazine. Send the coupon today—NOW!

**GARDEN CITY PUB. CO., INC.**
**Dept. W-183**
**Garden City, New York**

**GARDEN CITY PUB. CO., INC.**
**Dept. W-183**
**Garden City, N. Y.**

You may send me the 12 volumes of Western stories by Hendryx, Tuttle and other famous authors. I will pay the postman only $1.98 (plus postage) on delivery. It is understood that I may return these books, if I desire, within five days and receive my money back promptly.

Name.....
Address.....
City.....State.....

# He Shocked *the* World *with* His Daring Exposures!

## He Made the World Blush for Shame!

Society stood aghast! Never before had any pen written such startling, breath-taking things! Never before had the shame of society, the hypocrisy of the world, the sin-blackened souls of men and women been so mercilessly exposed. With a boldness that brought a nation-wide gasp of amazement, he battered down the gilded doors of society and revealed such a scene of wickedness, decadence and brute passion within that convention was rocked to its foundations!

## Society Gasped!

No one was too high, too rich, too powerful to escape the fury of his attack. He snatched away the false cloak of respectability and openly branded the guilty with their shame. Reputations were blasted; men and women were dragged down from their artificial pedestals; their souls were stripped of their tinselled trappings and their shame laid bare to all the world.

**Society thought itself good until he uncovered its sins. He burst upon a complacent world like a flaming meteor, touching on the whole gamut of human sin, in every shape and guise, and in men and women of every station in life. Wherever transgressors were, there Brann the Iconoclast walked.**

# Now—Save $9.50 While This Special Offer Lasts

And now here is a wonderful opportunity for you to get the complete set of Brann the Iconoclast at an unbelievable saving. By publishing a tremendous edition we have brought down the cost of the books from $27.00 to $17.50—or in other words, at a *full saving* to you of *more than one third the cost.*

It is obvious that these sets will go quickly. Therefore if you have ever thought of getting the wonderful works of Brann the Iconoclast, *Now is the time*—while the edition lasts. Moreover, you may examine the set free, without a penny in advance.

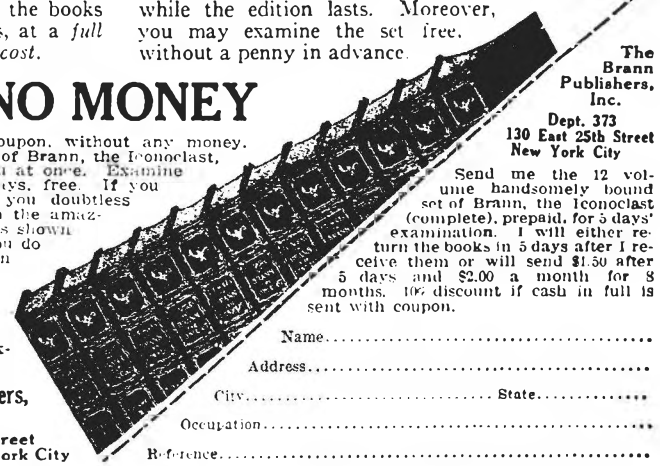
### A FEW OF BRANN'S MASTERPIECES

**A Pilgrimage to Perdition**
**Mankind's Mock-Modesty**
**Is Civilization a Sham?**
**A Sacred Leg Show**
**The Wickedness of Woman**
**The Woman Thou Gavest Me**
**Driven to the Devil**
**Adam and Eve**
**A Sister's Shame**
**The Social Swim**
**"The Perfumes of Passion"**
**The Law of Love**
**Glory of the New Garter**
**The Footlight Favorites**
**Hunting for a Husband**
**Thou Shalt Not**
**The Old Maid's Auction**
**Potiphar's Wife**

## SEND NO MONEY

Just mail the coupon, without any money. The 12 volume set of Brann, the Iconoclast, will be sent to you at once. Examine the books for 5 days, free. If you keep the set, as you doubtless will, pay for it on the amazingly easy terms as shown on the coupon. You do not risk a penny on this 5 day examination offer, so mail the coupon now, before the limited edition at this low price is exhausted.

**The Brann Publishers, Inc.**
**130 East 25th Street**
**Dept. 373, New York City**



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**130 East 25th Street**
**New York City**

Send me the 12 volume handsomely bound set of Brann, the Iconoclast (complete), prepaid, for 5 days' examination. I will either return the books in 5 days after I receive them or will send $1.50 after 5 days and $2.00 a month for 8 months. 10% discount if cash in full is sent with coupon.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

Occupation.....

Reference.....

# Bring Out the Beauty of Your Home

Our book tells how to refinish woodwork.

Also tells about finishing and refinishing old furniture.

There is no particular trick in making a porch swing—you can easily do it yourself and finish it with Johnson's Artistic Wood Finishes. Our book contains full information.

WELL finished furniture, woodwork and floors add materially to the beauty and attractiveness of your home. You, yourself, can easily refinish dingy, shabby, scratched wood. Our method involves practically no expense. All you need is a little time—a brush—and

## JOHNSON'S WOOD DYE

Johnson's Wood Dye is very easy to apply—it goes on easily and quickly, without a lap or a streak. It penetrates deeply, bringing out the beauty of the grain without raising it—dries in 4 hours and does not rub off or smudge. Johnson's Wood Dye is made in fourteen beautiful shades, all of which may be easily lightened or darkened—full directions on every label.

## FREE—Book on Wood Finishing

This book tells how to finish wood in artistic stained and enameled effects. Gives practical suggestions on making your home attractive, cheery and inviting. Tells just what materials to use and how to apply them. This book is the work of experts—profusely illustrated—contains color charts—gives covering capacities, etc. Use coupon below.

Our book tells all about floors and linoleum.

Old furniture can be made to harmonize with new by using the proper finish.

Small odd pieces of modern furniture add greatly to the attractiveness of every home. You can make them yourself for your family. Our book tells how to finish them.


**S. C. JOHNSON & SON, Dept. A R-3**
**RACINE, WIS. (Canadian Factory—Brantford)**

Please send me free and postpaid your book on Home Beautifying and Wood Finishing.

MY PAINT DEALER IS.....

HIS ADDRESS.....

MY NAME.....

MY ADDRESS.....


# An Amazingly Easy Way to Earn $10,000 a Year

## *Let Me Show You How Free*

TO the average man the $10,000 a year job is only a dream. Yet today there are a surprising number of men earning five figure salaries who were merely dreaming of them a short while ago. The secret of their success should prove a startling revelation to every ambitious man who has ever aspired to get into the $10,000 a year class.

There is nothing fundamentally "different" about the man whose salary runs into five figures. He is made of the same stuff as you and I. It is not necessary that he must enjoy the privilege of some influential connection or "pull." For example take J. P. Overstreet, of Dennison, Texas. A few short years ago he was a police officer earning less than $1,000 a year. To-day his earnings are in excess of $1,000 a month—more than $12,000 a year. C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa., was formerly a railroad employee on a small salary—last month his earnings were $1,562.

### Why Salesmen Earn Such Big Pay

Just stop a moment and think over the successful men of your acquaintance. How many of them are connected with some form of selling? If you will study any business organization you will see that the big jobs go to the men who sell, for upon their efforts depend the profits a company makes. Without trained men to place a product on the market, the finest goods are worth no more than so much clay. Salesmen are the very nerve centers of a business. Is it any wonder that they earn big pay?

The man who starts working as a bookkeeper or clerk for $25.00 a week never increases his value to the firm. Any advance in pay is merely a reward for length of service. At the end of ten years he is no more essential to the life of the organization than he was at the end of ten weeks. He is only a necessary liability—drawing his pay because somebody must be found to work at the unimportant routine jobs. Once established in the rut, he becomes a cog in the machine—when he is worn out, he can be easily and cheaply replaced.

### Why Don't You Get Into the Selling Field?

Mr. Overstreet, Mr. Campbell and the others whose letters you see on this page are all successful salesmen. They realized their ambitions by landing $10,000 jobs in an amazingly simple way, with the help and guidance of the National Salesmen's Training Association. Sometime—somewhere back in the past, each one of them read of this remarkable course of Salesmanship training and Employment Service just as you are reading of it to-day. Each one of them was dissatisfied with his earning capacity—as perhaps you are—and each one cast his lot with the N. S. T. A. To-day they are important factors in the business world—enjoying all the comforts and luxuries money can buy. And yet they are not exceptions, for there are thousands of N. S. T. A. trained salesmen who are making big money, as we will be only too glad to show you if you will mail the coupon.

### We Train You and Help You Land a Job

The National Salesmen's Training Association is an organization of top-notch salesmen and sales managers formed for the express purpose of training men in the science of successful selling. You do not need to know the first thing about selling—for the N. S. T. A. trains you from the ground up—gives you a complete insight into selling methods—in your spare time without making it necessary to give up your present position until you are ready to begin actual selling.

In addition to this remarkable efficient course of training, the N. S. T. A. maintains a Free Employment Service to help its Members to jobs in the lines for which they are best suited. This in itself is of incalculable value, for it allows the prospective salesman to make a complete survey of the selling field and to select the work which most appeals to him.

### *Read These Amazing Stories of Quick Success*

**Earned $524 in Two Weeks**

I have never earned more than $60 a month. Last week I cleared $306 and this week $218. You have done wonders for me.—Geo. W. Kearns, Oklahoma City, Okla.

**I Now Earn as High as $100 a Day**

I took your course two years ago. Was earning $16 a week clerking. Am now selling many of the largest firms in the U. S. I have earned more than $100 a day. You secured me my position. Our Sales Manager is a graduate of yours.—J. L. DeBonis, Chicago, Ill.

**Earns $1,562 in Thirty Days**

My earnings for the past thirty days are $1,562, and I won Second Prize in March, although I only worked two weeks during that month.—C. W. Campbell, Greensburg, Pa.

**Earned $1,800 in Six Weeks**

As soon as I received a letter from you and your literature, I knew that I was on the right track and very soon after I applied for a position as a Salesman to one of the firms whom you informed me were in need of a Salesman and to whom you had recommended me. As soon as they received my application, which was by mail, they wired me to come for an appointment, which I did, with the result being that I sold my service to them in about thirty minutes, took a territory in Illinois and Wisconsin and made a success of it from the very first week.

From that time on I have been what might be termed as a "high pressure" Salesman, selling lines where nine out of ten Order Takers would fail. I have sold goods in a highly successful manner in nine or ten States, both North and South. My earnings for March were over $1,000 and over $1,800 for the last six weeks, while last week my earnings were $356.00. I travel eleven months out of the year, working five days each week.

The N. S. T. A. dug me out of a rut where I was earning less than $1,000 a year and showed me how to make a success.—J. P. Overstreet, Dennison, Texas.

### Salesmen Are Needed—Now!

Get out of that rut! Work for yourself! Salesmanship is the biggest paid of all professions. Just because you have never sold anything is no sign that you can't. We have made Star Salesmen of men from all walks of life, with no previous selling experience. These men have jumped from small pay jobs to big selling positions and handsome incomes. The same training on which they founded their success is open to you. You can follow in their footsteps. Why don't you get in a class with men who make real money? Never before have the opportunities been greater. At least you cannot afford not to investigate the great field of selling and see what it offers you. It will only cost you a 2-cent stamp and the facts and proof you will receive will surprise you.

### Free Book on Salesmanship

Just mail the coupon or write for our free illustrated Book, "Modern Salesmanship," which we will be glad to send without any obligation on your part. Let us prove you can quickly become a Star Salesman. Let us show you how you too can step into the ranks of these big money makers of business. See how easily you can learn this fascinating, big pay profession at home in your spare time. Learn what we have done for others and what we stand ready to do for you. Don't put it off until tomorrow—write us to-day. Every hour lost keeps you that much farther from success. Mail the coupon at once.

**National Salesmen's Training Association**
**Dept. 2-C, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.**

National Salesmen's Training Association
Dept. 2-C, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

Please send me, without any obligation on my part, your free Book, "Modern Salesmanship," and full information about the N. S. T. A. system of Salesmanship training and Employment Service. Also a list showing lines of business with openings for salesmen.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....

Age.....Occupation.....

# Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

**Classified Advertising Rates in The Munsey Magazines:**

| | LINE RATE | |
|---|---|---|
| Munsey's Magazine | $1.50 | Combination line rate $4.00 less 2 per cent cash discount. |
| Argosy-Allstory Weekly | 2.50 | |

Minimum space four lines.

**April 21st Argosy-Allstory Forms Close March 24th.**

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**BIGGEST MONEY-MAKER IN AMERICA.** I WANT 100 MEN AND WOMEN QUICK TO TAKE ORDERS FOR RAINCOATS, RAINCAPES AND WATERPROOF APRONS. THOUSANDS OF ORDERS WAITING FOR YOU. $2.00 AN HOUR FOR SPARE TIME. MAHER MADE $567.50 IN JUNE. NISSEN $19 IN THREE HOURS. PURVIANCE $207 IN SEVEN DAYS. $2500 A YEAR PROFIT FOR FOUR AVERAGE ORDERS A DAY. NO DELIVERING OR COLLECTING. NO EXPERIENCE OR CAPITAL REQUIRED. WRITE QUICK FOR INFORMATION. COMER MFG. CO., DEPT. Y-153, DAYTON, OHIO.

**WANTED: TAILORING SALESMEN—MAKE BIG MONEY** from the very start—opportunity of your lifetime to get into your own business. We are the largest made-to-measure tailoring house in the country, furnishing elaborate sample equipments, including 500 all wool fabrics, and guarantee absolute satisfaction—perfect fit, best workmanship, or no sale. Write for line and all accessories to be sent free. Earn from $75.00 to $200.00 per week. State whether or not you have experience in taking orders for men's made-to-measure clothes. A. W. KIMBALL, Sales Manager, Lock Box 483, Chicago, Ill.

**"$10 A DAY AND MORE,"** our new book, shows clearly how you may gain sure success and large profits selling Guaranteed Hosiery and Underwear, factory to family. It is Free. Write today. C. & D. CO., 13-E Grand Rapids, Mich.

**WE PAY $200** monthly salary, furnish rig and expenses to introduce our guaranteed poultry and stock powders. BIGLER COMPANY, X-506, Springfield, Illinois.

**AGENTS—$75—$100 weekly** taking orders for popular $2.98 raincoats. Commissions advanced. We deliver and collect. Free coats to workers. EAGLE RAINCOAT CO., 124 Lees Bldg., Chicago.

**Only One Policy Daily Means $130 Per Month Profit.** Same on renewals. Policy pays $5000 death; $25 weekly benefit for injury or sickness. Men or women acceptable. Premium $10 yearly. Full or spare time. Easy seller. Write quick for territory. Underwriters, Dept. R. B., 196 Market St., Newark, N. J.

**AGENTS—OUR SOAP AND TOILET ARTICLE PLAN IS A WONDER.** GET OUR FREE SAMPLE CASE OFFER. HO-RO-CO, 157 LOCUST, ST. LOUIS, MO.

**Tailoring Salesmen—$5.00 to $15.00 Profit on Each Order.** All-Wool suits and extra pants to retail at $26.50 and up. Fit and workmanship absolutely guaranteed. Write today for new Spring swatch line showing 250 large woolen samples. JAY ROSE & CO., Dept. A-100, 411 S. Wells St., Chicago, Ill.

**AGENTS—CLEAN UP $100 WEEKLY WITH "NIFTY NINE",** weekly average 100 sales—dollar profit each. 30—40 sales daily frequently made; demonstrating outfit cinches order. 30 other coin-coaxers, all daily necessities. Postal brings our unique plans. DAVIS PRODUCTS COMPANY, Dept. 58, Chicago.

AGENTS: We pay $72 a week taking orders for Reversible Raincoats. Something brand new. Easiest seller ever introduced. No capital required. You take the orders; we deliver and collect and pay your commission on same day. Saves customer over $20. Write quick. THOMAS MFG. CO., Class 1707, Dayton, Ohio.

**Big Pay For Spare Time or Side Line.** $5.00 to $10.00 an evening selling Lodge Wall Emblems. Every member wants one. Free sample and cash bonus plan. KIER EMBLEM CO., Dept. AA-1, 538 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill.

## MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

**EXCHANGE PLOTS FOR $$**—Photoplay ideas accepted any form; revised, typed, published, copyrighted. Sold. Advice free. UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CORP., 918 Western Mutual Life Bldg., Los Angeles.

**PHOTOPLAYS WANTED BY 48 COMPANIES: $10 TO $500 EACH PAID FOR PLAYS.** No correspondence course or experience needed; details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. PRODUCERS LEAGUE, 388 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

## MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

**LAND OPPORTUNITY!** 20, 40, 80 ac. tracts only $10 to $50 down, bal. long time; near thriving city in lower Mich. Write today for free illustrated booklet giving full information. Swigart Land Company, Y-1245 First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

## STAMPS AND RARE COINS

**STAMPS**—100 Different for 2c and collectors names. 10 Different Foreign Coins, 20c. 50 Austria-Hungary Stamps 5c. 20 Russia Stamps 10c. 30 Sweden Stamps 10c. Lists free. TOLEDO STAMP COMPANY, Dept. A, Toledo, Ohio.

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**Tailoring Agents**—Several hundred of our men are earning $50 to $150 a week taking orders for our virgin wool tailored to order suits, which retail at the flat price of $29.50. None higher. They are wonderful values, $20.00 cheaper than store prices. Rich, beautiful assortment of 650 samples and complete selling outfit free. We train the inexperienced. Reliable men write. State territory. J. B. SIMPSON, INC., Dept. 524, 831 W. Adams St., Chicago.

**Agents Sell Harper's Ten Use Household Cleaning Set.** It washes and dries windows, cleans walls, sweeps, scrubs, mops and does five other things. Sells for only $2.85. Over 100% profit. Free information. Harper Brush Works, 107 A St., Fairfield, Iowa.

**OUR AGENTS MAKE $35 TO $50 DAILY** and are getting it with new marvelous invention. Sells to everybody. Low price. Pocket outfit. Write SUREN CO., 25 N. Dearborn St., Chicago.

**WE START YOU** in business, furnishing everything. Men and women, $30.00 to $100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

**27,000 RECORDS GUARANTEED WITH ONE EVERPLAY PHONOGRAPH NEEDLE**; new, different; cannot injure records; $10.00 daily easy. Free sample to workers. EVERPLAY, Desk 812, McClurg Bldg., Chicago.

**Capable Men May Earn $15 to $25 day** selling high-grade Double-Wear Shoes direct from factory to wearer. Big opportunity for you. Clever Selling Plan insures your success. Write today for full particulars, style sheets, etc. Doublewear Shoe Co., Manufacturers, 12-A, Minneapolis, Minn.

**WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR.** Soaps, Extracts, Perfumes, Toilet Goods. Experience unnecessary. Carnation Co., Dept. 200, St. Louis, Mo.

**TAILORING SALESMEN MAKE $75 A WEEK** SELLING OUR STRICTLY ALL-WOOL MADE-TO-MEASURE SUITS AT $26.50. YOU COLLECT PROFITS IN ADVANCE AND KEEP THEM. WE SUPPLY FINEST SELLING OUTFIT IN AMERICA. MANY EXCLUSIVE MONEY-MAKING FEATURES. Tailoring, raincoat, and side-line men, part or full time, get in touch with us immediately. GOODWEAR CHICAGO, INC., 844 W. Adams St., Dept. 286, Chicago, Ill.

**Clarke made $18 an hour selling vestpocket windshield cleaner needed by every autoist, motorman, engineer;** one rub keeps glass clear 24 hours; 60,000 sold. Amazing proposition free. Security Mfg. Co., Dept. 675, Toledo, Ohio.

**LARGE SHIRT MANUFACTURER** wants Agents to sell complete line of shirts direct to wearer. Exclusive patterns. Big values. Free samples. Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York.

**$13.45 FOR A STYLISH MADE-TO-YOUR-MEASURE 3-PIECE SUIT**—regular $25.00 value. We are making this bargain offer to prove our remarkable values in tailoring. Write for our big sample outfit showing how agents make $35.00 to $40.00 extra every week taking orders for high-grade tailoring. WASHINGTON TAILORING CO., Dept. Q-304, Chicago.

**BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. EVERY OWNER BUYS GOLD INITIALS** for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 54, East Orange, N. J.

**AGENTS—$15 A DAY—EASY, QUICK SALES—FREE AUTO—BIG WEEKLY BONUS.** $1.50 premium Free to every customer. Simply show our Beautiful, 7 piece, Solid Aluminum Handle Cutlery Set. Appeals instantly. We deliver and collect. Pay daily. NEW ERA MFG. CO., 803 Madison St., Dept. 20-T, Chicago.

## AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

**STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC., ARE WANTED** for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss., or write Literary Bureau, 110, Hannibal, Mo.

**FREE TO WRITERS**—a wonderful little book of money making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

**MANUSCRIPT TYPING**, prompt service. 1,000 words or fraction thereof for 50c. Write to SAUL KRAMER, 365 So. 4th Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

## SONG POEMS WANTED

**WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG.** We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. NEW YORK MELODY CORP., 403 Fitzgerald Building, New York.

**Classified Advertising continued on page 6.**

# $80 Drafting Course Free

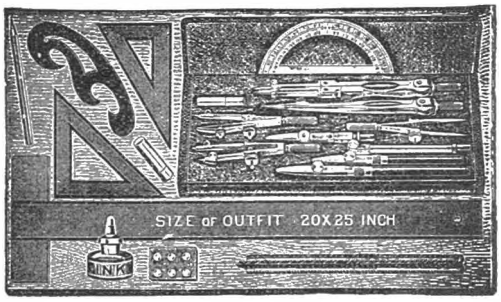
There is such an urgent demand for practical, trained Draftsmen that I am making this special offer in order to enable deserving, ambitious and bright men to get into this line of work. I will teach you to become a Draftsman and Designer, until you are **drawing a salary of $250.00 a month.** You need not pay me for my personal instruction or for the complete set of instruments.

## $250 a Month

Starting salary according to my agreement and guarantee. Draftsmen's work is pleasant and profitable. Positions are open paying $3,600.00 a year in the best surroundings. They are open everywhere. Thousands of men are needed who have just the kind of training I will give you. You can get this training during spare time in your own home.

## Mail the Coupon

for my valuable book—"Successful **Draftsmanship.**" It explains how YOU can become a Successful Draftsman in a short time. The book is free at present, so write **AT ONCE.**




## Earn While Learning

You can be earning a handsome income while learning at home. This is a special offer I am making. Absolutely no obligations of any kind in sending coupon. But you must write at once, as I limit the number of my students.

***Mail the FREE Coupon*** at once for my book—***"Successful Draftsmanship,"*** also list of open positions and for the free offer to be earning good money at once while learning at home. This offer is limited and in order to benefit thereby — **act at once.**

**Chief Draftsman Dobe**
**1951 Lawrence Ave., Div. 14-53, Chicago, Ill.**

## Chief Draftsman Will Train You Personally

on practical Drafting-room work **Until** you are competent and **Until** you are in a permanent position at a salary paying at least $250 per month. This is an exceptional opportunity for a few selected ambitious men, between the ages of 16 and 50 whom I will train personally.

## Send the Coupon

or a letter and let me tell you how you can become a Draftsman in your spare time and earn a good salary. Don't delay — send the coupon at once.

**I Guarantee**
To instruct you until competent and in a permanent paying position at a regular Draftsman's salary of at least $250 per month and guarantee to furnish you free complete Draftsman's working outfit at once from the start.

## FREE-this $25.00 Draftsman's Working Outfit

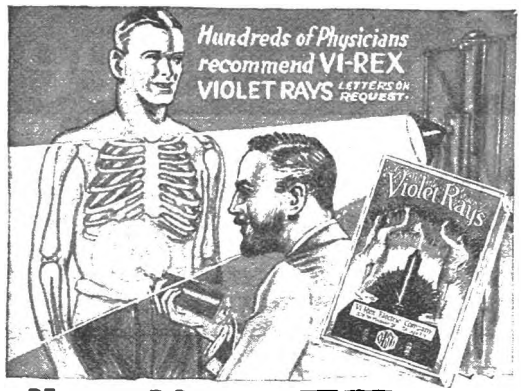
These are regular working instruments, the kind I use myself. I give them free to you if you enroll at once. **Send the Free Coupon today.**

**Free Course Offer Coupon**
**Chief Draftsman Dobe**
**1951 Lawrence Ave. Div. 14-53 Chicago**


Without any obligation to me please mail your book, "Successful Draftsmanship" and full particulars of your liberal "Personal Instruction" offer to a few students. It is understood I am obligated in no way whatever.

*Name*_____

*Address* _____




# Health-Vigor SUCCESS

**FREE BOOK**

*By means of Marvelous*

# VIOLET RAYS

## *Use it Yourself at Home*

This wonderful FREE book describes the marvelous strange new force, simply tells how Violet Rays revitalizes every cell and works apparent miracles in overcoming pain and sickness. Pleasant to use in your home.

Physicians and plain home folks explain how Violet Rays has made them well, strong and happy. 60 pages, illustrated, actual photographs, scientific charts and diagrams. It's FREE

## QUICK RESULTS—No Medicine

Violet Rays work quickly, you feel results at once, it's scientific, goes after the cause. That's why results are quick and permanent. Dr. Duncan, Kewanee, Ill. writes, "Violet Rays is the finest thing I ever used . . . to relieve pain, treatments are so pleasant all my patients like it." Use it yourself at home, save Doctor's bills. See list of ailments Violet Rays treats successfully, and many others, not space to list. Success depends on health, this book shows the way.

## Beauty Aid

Brings natural, magnetic beauty of health, no dieting, exercise or drugs.

## Earn Cash

Men, women, without experience earn liberal profits in spare time showing Violet Rays to neighbors. Proves results first demonstration, sells on sight. Get attractive offer and wholesale prices now.

### Send For FREE BOOK

Explains how Nikola Tesla discovered Violet Rays, how it works, why it heals. Tells what doctors and plain folks accomplish in conquering pain, disease and nervous troubles with Violet Rays.

**REVEALS MARVELOUS SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY**

Shows charts of human body, explains where pains start, how to banish them. Offered FREE for a limited time only, to introduce Violet Rays. Send for FREE copy.

### Check Your Ailment Below for Free Advice

Here is a partial list of ailments successfully treated with Violet Ray:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Catarrh | Eye Disease | Nervousness | Sore Throat |
| Chilblains | Falling Hair | Neuralgia | Sprains |
| Colds | Hay Fever | Neuritis | Tonsilitis |
| Constipation | Headache | Paralysis | Whooping Cough |
| Deafness | Goitre | Piles | Asthma |
| Earaches | Insomnia | Rheumatism | |
| Eczema | Lumbago | Skin Diseases | |

**VI-REX ELECTRIC CO., 326 WEST MADISON ST. Dept. 93, CHICAGO**

Please send me without cost or obligation your free book describing your VI-REX Violet Ray outfits, and details of your free trial offer.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

## HELP WANTED

**RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS, STENOGRAPHERS, CLERKS, TYPISTS,** wanted by Government. Examinations weekly. Prepare at home. Write for free list and plan 301, payment after securing position. CSS, 1710 Market St., Philadelphia.

**SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME. YOU CAN EARN FIFTEEN TO FIFTY DOLLARS WEEKLY** writing showcards at home. No canvassing. Pleasant, profitable profession, easily, quickly learned by our simple graphic block system. Artistic ability unnecessary. We instruct you and supply you work. Wilson Methods, Ltd., Dept. G, Toronto, Canada.

**MEN—WOMEN**—18 UP. Get U. S Government Jobs. $1140—$1800 year. Common education sufficient with our coaching. Sample lessons free. FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. P-1, Rochester, N. Y.

## HELP WANTED—MALE

**EARN $110 TO $250 MONTHLY, EXPENSES PAID,** AS RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR. POSITION GUARANTEED AFTER 3 MONTHS' SPARE TIME STUDY OR MONEY REFUNDED. EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES. WRITE FOR FREE BOOKLET CM-30, STAND. BUSINESS TRAINING INST., BUFFALO, N. Y.

**FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN, SLEEPING CAR,** Train Porters (colored). $140—$200. Experience unnecessary. 836 Railway Bureau, East St. Louis, Ill.

## HELP WANTED—FEMALE

**WE PAY BIG MONEY** for painting pillow tops and lamp shades. Simple, easy, quick. Experience unnecessary. NILEART COMPANY, 2235, Ft. Wayne, Ind.

## HELP WANTED—GENERAL

**EARN UP TO $400 MONTHLY, LIVING EXPENSES PAID,** IN HOTEL WORK. SPLENDID OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINED MEN AND WOMEN—MANY OPENINGS. WE HAVE MORE THAN WE CAN FILL. 80,000 HOTEL POSITIONS TO BE FILLED THE COMING YEAR. WE TRAIN YOU AT HOME. SEND FOR FREE BOOKLET. STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INST., 200 CARLTON COURT, BUFFALO, N. Y.

**YOU READ THESE LITTLE ADVERTISEMENTS.** Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

## PATENT ATTORNEYS

**PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS. PROMPTNESS ASSURED.** SEND DRAWING OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND OPINION AS TO PATENTABILITY. WATSON E. COLEMAN, 624 F ST., WASHINGTON, D. C.

**PATENTS.** If you have an invention write for our Guide Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., 630 F, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS. WRITE FOR FREE ILLUSTRATED GUIDE BOOK** and record of invention blank. Send model or sketch and description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Free. Highest References. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms. VICTOR J. EVANS & CO., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS PROCURED—TRADE MARKS REGISTERED—** A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly furnished without charge. Booklet of information and form for disclosing idea free on request. Richard B. Owen, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 2278-J Woolworth Bldg., N. Y.

## PATENTS AND INVENTIONS

**INVENTIONS COMMERCIALIZED** on cash or royalty basis. Patented or unpatented. In business 24 years. Complete facilities. References. Write ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249, St. Louis, Mo.

## TRADE SCHOOLS

**EARN $10 TO $15.00 PER DAY.** Learn Sign Painting, Auto Painting, Decorating, Paperhanging, Graining, Marbling—Send for Free Catalogue. CHICAGO PAINTING SCHOOL, 152 West Austin Ave., Chicago.

## WANTED TO BUY

**Cash for Old Gold, Platinum, Silver, Diamonds, Liberty Bonds, War, Thrift, Unused Postage Stamps, False Teeth, Magneto Points, Jobs, any valuables.** Mail in today. Cash sent return mail. Goods returned in ten days if you are not satisfied. Ohio Smelting Co., 301 Hippodrome Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

# ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY

VOL. CXLIX SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 1923 NUMBER 6


# *THE FAME OF J. S. FLETCHER*

***This noted English writer of detective stories is hailed by his own countrymen and by competent American critics as the rightful successor to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The Argosy-Allstory Weekly was the first magazine to welcome Mr. Fletcher's work to this country (The Diamonds—1905). We now present his latest achievement, THE DOUBLE CHANCE. It not only is fascinating fiction, but a valuable contribution to the science of crime detection.***

THE Fletcher whom we featured nearly a score of years ago with his first masterpiece of mystery has lost none of his cunning. His plot-skill is unexcelled, his characters are alive, and his literary style is a model of limpidity, forcefulness and charm.

In all his novels the reader's interest is sustained at a high level, and in attaining this result the author never goes beyond the sane limits of plausibility. His solutions, moreover, always contain a satisfying explanation and clarify the baffling angles. There are no loose ends to this man's work.

In none of his widely read novels does he rely on the exploits of a transcendental

detective whose fictional achievements cannot avoid casting an eclipse on the other characters.

This author has served a long and arduous apprenticeship to his art. His family intended him to become a barrister, and he read criminal law and attended many trials in the English courts. Journalism called him, however, and in this rigorous preparatory school he did special articles on noted murder cases.

The late Sir Henry Irving, famous actor and a recognized authority on criminology, was a confidant of Mr. Fletcher. He is eager to admit that Sir Henry did much to further his researches into the underlying causes of crime and the problems of its prevention.

Speaking of his working method, Mr. Fletcher says:

"I have always kept up my reading in criminal law, and in medical science as related to criminology. In addition, I never deal with facts unless I am thoroughly acquainted with them—no guess work! I am particularly careful about getting accurate details of things—even down to the minutest particulars."

This keen craftsmanship was evident in THE DIAMONDS, published in the *All-Story Magazine,* May to September, 1905. It will be remembered as a fascinating narrative dealing with the tragic history of a magnificent diamond necklace. The story opened with a mysterious brass-bound box in a pawnbroker's window. A white sailor and a Hindu murder the proprietor and steal the box. In it is the necklace. Next the sailor slays his accomplice and flees into the moorland. Here an escaped convict kills him for his clothes to use as a disguise, and finds the diamonds in a pocket. The convict in turn is shot dead by pursuing officers. And so the evil toll runs on until at last the rightful owner comes into possession of the necklace. He was Sir Octavius Burke, who had received the jewels for valuable services to a principality in India.

Probably the most quoted of the Fletcher stories, THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER, appeared in 1918, and at once won great popularity in America as well as across the Atlantic. This brilliant tale of London and Scotland Yard received the hearty public indorsement of President Woodrow Wilson, who used its rich imagery as an anodyne to the exacting cares of his high office.

Here is a list of Fletcher's best known novels—all dealing with crime and the detection of crime:

THE TALLEYRAND MAXIM, (1920)
THE PARADISE MYSTERY, (1920)
DEAD MEN'S MONEY, (1920)
THE ORANGE-YELLOW DIAMOND, (1921)
THE CHESTERMARKE INSTINCT, (1921)
THE BOROUGH TREASURER, (1921)
THE HERAPATH PROPERTY, (1921)
SCARHAVEN KEEP, (1922)
THE RAYNER-SLADE AMALGAMATION, (1922)
RAVENSDENE COURT, (1922)
THE MIDDLE OF THINGS, (1922)
THE LOST MR. LINTHWAITE, (January, 1923)

Announcement is made that EXTERIOR TO THE EVIDENCE is to be published in May, 1923, by Alfred A. Knopf, publishers in the United States of the above printed list of Fletcher's books.

THE DOUBLE CHANCE, which begins with this issue of the ARGOSY-ALLSTORY, contains a mystifying plot in which the dark ways of evil are shown in contrast with the shining faith of the true heart. This story, in five installments, is still another proof that only the best is to be found in the pages of the ARGOSY-ALLSTORY WEEKLY.

Now turn to the next page and plunge into its absorbing opening.

# The Double Chance

By J. S. FLETCHER

*Author of "The Middle Temple Murder," etc.*

## CHAPTER I.

### ESCAPED!

ON a certain evening of early spring, just about the time when the last glimmer of twilight was about to fade into the final delicate shades of dusk, a woman opened the door of a lonely cottage, which stood in the midst of a belt of fir trees high above a deep valley, and, standing on the doorstep, looked at the lights which had already begun to twinkle far below.

From force of habit, contracted long before and practiced through many years, she shaded her eyes with her right hand, although the sun had then been gone down a good half hour. An observer would have thought she was peering anxiously through the gloom—in reality she was listening for the sound of a footstep on the rocky path which came upward from the stream at the foot of the bank. It was her custom to listen for this footstep every night, and because the sun shone directly on the place in spring and summer at that hour she had contracted the custom of shielding her eyes.

The familiar aspects of the landscape were still plainly visible to this solitary watcher. On the opposite side of the valley she saw the ancient castle in which a Saxon king had kept his state, and near it the old church, square-towered, gray-walled, scarcely less ancient; the picturesque inn, with its thatched roof and timbered gables; an old farmstead or two; cottages, whose ages were reckoned by generations instead of by years.

Nearby was a complete contrast in a little town of red-brick cottages, built on regular and mathematical lines, not one brick of which had been there in her childhood—no, nor for years after she was wife and mother. There was always some resentment in her as she looked at these evidences of modernity; she remembered that where the new village now lay there were fields which were famous for their mushrooms, and coppices celebrated for their nuts and trees, under which she and her companions had played. And between this new hive of industry and the river rose the outward evidence of the underground force which had made this change between old and new—the outer works of a coal mine, the gigantic shaftings, the mighty scaffoldings, the great wheels, the sheds, engine-houses, pumping-houses, machinery-houses, the mountainous banks of slag—all of which had sprung into being since that day when a scientific man with a long nose and blue spectacles who was stopping at the castle told Sir Robert Mannersley that his ancient estate lay over a coal seam which might prove to be worth millions.

Margaret Britten turned from this scene full of a wistful longing. She had the instinct of folk who are born and bred on the soil, and change was hard to bear. She had first seen the light in that cottage; she and her man had lived in it when her own father and mother were dead; there she had borne her own children. All connected with her had earned their living on the land in the old-fashioned ways—as laborers, gamekeepers, woodmen. Now there was only one man of her family left—her son Jim—and instead of following the plow over the broad uplands behind the cottage, or assuming the keeper's velvet coat, he, too, had been claimed by King Coal, and earned his money—good money, as she knew—as checkweighman at the colliery.

As she turned to glance within the cottage

doorway Margaret heard Jim's step on the rock-strewn pathway far beneath, and then his familiar whistle. She ran within and opened the door of the oven a few inches, and took a peep at something which was undergoing some process inside, and thereby suffered a savory odor to escape which reached the nostrils of Mr. James Britten twenty yards away.

"That smells good, mother!" he exclaimed a minute later, as he came bustling into the cottage, and seizing Margaret by her ample waist kissed both her cheeks. "You could smell that over at Mannersley! What is it this time?"

"It's liver and bacon, with an onion for flavor, and a gravy that you could stand a spoon in, my lad," replied Margaret as she began to bustle about. "So get your cleaning-up done and fall to while it's hot."

"No second invitation needed, mother," responded Jim, with alacrity, and plunged into the back place of the cottage, where he was presently making a great noise with soap and water, and from whence he quickly emerged with shining face and damp hair.

"I'm sharper set than usual to-night, mother," he remarked, as he drew a chair to the table and looked approvingly at the smoking dish which Margaret set before him.

"Then lay knife aboard, lad," counselled his mother.

Now that her immediate duties were done she sat down in her easy-chair by the hearth and watched her son eat, a smile of placid enjoyment overspreading her broad, good-humored countenance. She was one of those old-fashioned women who delight in seeing their menfolk do full justice to their victuals, and who believe—and rightly—that a vigorous and hearty appetite is the surest sign of sound health. Margaret Britten, in short, was happiest when she beheld Jim at the close of his day's labors proving himself a mighty trencherman, and it was her great pride to study his appetite and to tickle his palate.

And he was worth it, she said to herself as she sat watching him—a fine, handsome lad of five-and-twenty, straight as a willow-wand, with clear gray eyes and direct look, and a head of thick brown hair which still curled as obstinately as when he was a baby in arms. No better young man in all that countryside, thought Margaret; nor one, other folk might have said, that was more modest, considering that he was all that was left to a mother who had consequently done her best to spoil him.

"Any news to-day, Jim?" asked Margaret, when the young man had taken off the final edge of his appetite. "Aught happened?"

"Well, I have heard some news, mother," replied Jim, thoughtfully regarding the inroads which he had made on his supper-dish, and then helping himself again. "It's little more than a rumor, but I believe there's a lot of truth in it. Sir Robert's thinking of starting a grand sort of club for the men."

"Some of them men'll get till they don't know what ails 'em," said Margaret, with a sniff. "Why can't they bide at home same as you do?"

Jim laughed, and gave her a wink. "Most of 'em haven't got as comfortable homes as I have, mother," he said. "A place like that would do a lot of good."

"I reckon that'll be one of Miss Phillipa's ideas," said Margaret. "She's always full of plans for doing grand things for them colliers. Nobody did nought for farm-laborers in my time."

"We live in different times, mother," said Jim.

"Aye, marry, and see some different goings-on!" sighed Margaret. She rose and poured fresh tea into her son's cup.

"I saw that new manager to-day," she said. "I went down the lane to see how poor Sarah Dickinson was and he came by, riding his horse, when I was standing at their garden gate talking to Jane Dickinson. I don't wonder the men don't like him, Jim—there's no doubt he's a handsome young fellow, but I never saw such eyes in all my born days! He fair made me dither—his eyes is that black and fierce."

"I don't know how it is that Mr. Quinton isn't liked," said Jim thoughtfully. "And as to calling him a new manager, mother—why, he's been here nearly two

years! Time to prove him, that. I expect it's because he's very firm, and perhaps a bit strict and severe."

"Well, I wouldn't like to get across with him," said Margaret. "Take care you don't, my lad."

"There's no fear of that, mother," answered Jim. "Mr. Quinton's naught to say to folk who behave themselves."

He rose from the table, and, according to a nightly custom on which he insisted, gathered the supper things together and carried them into the back place, whither Margaret presently retired to wash them up. Then he lighted his pipe, and after lounging about a little got some books and writing material out of a drawer and spread them on the table in preparation for an evening's study. For Mr. James Britten had ambition, and meant to rise in the world.

On this occasion, however, he had only just opened a book when the latch of the door was lifted, and a girl's clear, high-bred voice said: "May I come in, Mrs. Britten—are you there?"

Before Jim could respond Margaret had heard Miss Phillipa Mannersley's voice, and came bustling out of the back place with smiles all over her countenance.

"Eh, bless your bonny face, miss!" she cried. "The idea of seeing you at this time of the day! But you was always up to some sort of notions ever since you was a little girl."

"Well, my notion this evening, Mrs. Britten, was that I must really have a good walk before dinner," said Phillipa, laughing, "so I made Ann Mary come round the woods with me, and we were so near you I felt that I must look in. Ann Mary, Jim," she continued, giving the young checkweighman an arch look, "is somewhere outside—perhaps peeping through the window. Hadn't you better go and see?"

"Oh, Miss Phillipa, Miss Phillipa!" said Margaret, when Jim had shot out of the cottage with remarkable alacrity. "The idea of you encouraging young people in their love affairs."

"Well, why shouldn't I, Mrs. Britten?" asked Phillipa. "I'm sure it's a very delightful thing to see young people so much in love with each other as Jim and Ann Mary are. And I think Ann Mary deserves a treat—I have made her walk so far. And I thought, Mrs. Britten, that while they have their little talk outside you would perhaps treat me to a glass of that delicious cowslip wine that you gave me last time I was here—it won't spoil my dinner, I can assure you!"

"Eh, that it won't, miss, nor a bit of my home-made seed-cake, neither!" exclaimed Margaret, bustling into the next room. "No, I'll warrant 'em both to do nobody harm."

Left to herself for the moment, Phillipa Mannersley's pretty face changed, as suddenly as a hillside bathed in sunshine changes when a sudden storm, a sudden sweeping of cloud and rain, blots out all the light and color. It was a pretty vivacious, laughing face which had so unexpectedly presented itself in the little cottage; as Margaret's back was turned it became an anxious and troubled face.

The violet eyes grew dark with a strange perplexity; the warm, smiling mouth became drawn and sad; the slender fingers interlaced themselves restlessly. And as if against their will the violet eyes lifted themselves to a photograph which hung on one side of the mantelpiece—an expensively-framed photograph of a young man between whom and herself there was more than a likeness. She sat gazing at the fire with a troubled expression until she heard a jingle of glass and china.

As Margaret reëntered with a tray the previous vivacity of voice and manner returned. A moment later she was laughing and chatting to the old woman as if she had not a care in the world.

Meanwhile, Mr. James Britten, whose lady-love, a winsome maiden named Ann Mary Riley, Miss Mannersley's protégée from childhood, and now her attached and faithful maid, had waited his coming at the garden gate, was being drawn by that young lady out of all possible earshot of the cottage. There was something mysterious in the way in which Ann Mary led him away. But at last she paused in the shadow of a hedgerow.

"Jim," she whispered, "weren't you surprised to see Miss Phillipa to-night?"

"I was a bit surprised," Jim admitted.

"She's come on purpose to see you," she whispered. "I believe there's some trouble. I was to tell you that when she comes out you're to go a little way down the path with us. She wants to speak to you about something. Jim, she's in awful trouble. She cried once or twice coming here, and I've only once seen her cry before, and that was when—"

"Hush, hush, lass!" said Jim. "Let's go back and wait outside the door."

Ten minutes later Phillipa's clear voice was heard saying farewell to Margaret. She came out into the dusk calling the lovers.

"I want to give Ann Mary a taste of my cowslip wine," said Margaret, who had followed Phillipa to the door. "Happen Jim'll see Miss Phillipa down to the bottom, and Ann Mary can run after."

Jim led the way down the path in silence until Phillipa stopped him. Looking at her in the faint light he saw that her face was greatly troubled. She laid her hand on his arm.

"Jim," she said, "Ann Mary told you that I had come purposely to see you?"

"Yes, miss," he answered.

She remained silent for a moment, and then, with a frightened look round, drew nearer to him, and spoke in a lower whisper. "Jim, my cousin has escaped!"

Jim Britten started as if she had told him that the mine had blown up. He drew back, staring at her.

"Miss Phillipa!" he whispered. "Mr. Clinton—escaped!"

"Yes, Jim. And oh, Jim, I'm afraid—afraid he's some desperate project in coming down here to Mannersley, to my father—to—to me!" she said. "Listen, Jim. I got a letter this morning from a friend of mine in London enclosing one which she said had been sent to her with a most urgent request that it should be sent on to me under cover of one from her. I opened the blank envelope, and found a letter from my cousin. He told me that he had made his escape, and would leave no stone unturned to prove his innocence. There was the same old bitter spirit again—against my father, Jim. He vowed and protested his innocence just as—but you know, Jim."

"Yes, Miss Phillipa," said Jim, in a strained voice, "I know—I know!"

"And he reiterated all he said about conspiracies and plots, and so on," she continued. "Oh, I'm sure he means to come back to Mannersley! And he'll come to you first, Jim, because you're his foster-brother."

"I shouldn't wonder, miss," said Jim quietly. "In fact, since you told me that he'd got away that's just what I've made up my mind to; and in that case make yourself easy, miss—I'll let you know."

"Heaven bless you!" she said. "And—but here's Ann Mary. Come, Ann Mary, we must hurry home."

A minute later Jim Britten had kissed his sweetheart, pressed her young mistress's hand, and was hastening up the rocky path to the cottage. He found his mother yawning in her chair.

"Well, Jim, lad," she said, "I shall be off to my rest—I expect you'll be for sitting up over your books and figures."

"Aye, mother," he answered, "I shall sit up latish to-night. I've a lot to do, and I'm not a bit sleepy."

He sat working—and thinking—hour after hour, and there was always a look of strained attention, of expectancy, on his face, in spite of the books. And at last, in the dead silence of midnight, came what he expected—a summons that he had known in years of old—a curious tap at the cottage window. Jim Britten rose slowly and, turning down the lamp, went over and unbarred the door.

## CHAPTER II.

### A MEETING—AND A SPY.

OUT of the shelter of a holly-bush which flanked the cottage porch a man's figure emerged, and without a word slipped past Jim into the living room. In the same silence Jim barred the door again, and turned to the lamp. The visitor laid a hand on his arm in passing.

"Jim—you knew the old signal!"

Jim turned up the light. It fell on the face and figure of a young man of apparently twenty-three or twenty-four years of age,

handsome of feature, slender and graceful of body. But the face was worn and strained, and it seemed to Jim that the frame was thin and wasted. He hastily pushed forward a chair to the hearth, and poured out some hot milk which he had been keeping in readiness on the hob.

"Sit down, sir, and drink that," he said. "You're cold."

"I came through the woods at the back, Jim. Ah, that's good—thank you. You didn't expect to see me, Jim?"

"I did, sir," said Jim, pushing his visitor into a chair. "I knew you'd come to me."

The visitor stared at him in surprise and half started from his chair.

"How did you know?" he exclaimed. "It's not—you haven't seen anything in the papers?"

"Your cousin has been here—to-night, sir," replied Jim quietly.

The young man finished the glass of hot milk which Jim had handed him, and looked thoughtfully at the fire for a few moments. And while he was thus occupied Jim furtively looked at him.

He saw that he was well and fashionably dressed, and scrupulously groomed, as he always remembered him being; but he also saw that the dark, closely cropped hair had streaks of silver in it, and that there were lines and wrinkles in the almost boyish face which had not been there when he had last seen it. And the figure, which he remembered as having been so sprightly and agile, seemed in some indefinite way to have become wearied and crushed, in spite of the smart suit and fine linen. Face and figure were those of a man who has been into the valley of bitterness.

"I wonder where else I should go, Jim?" said the visitor, suddenly breaking the silence. "Considering that all my thoughts have been fixed on this place for the last two years, it was only natural that I should turn here, for more reasons than one, even if I don't stop more than a few hours. And that's what's in my mind—there are two people I want to see—must see—and after that I'm off."

"But, Mr. Clinton—"

"You needn't 'mister' me, Jim, nor 'sir' me, either," interposed the other. "After all, when the truth's told, I'm only an escaped convict."

"Why, sir, that's just where it is," said Jim bluntly. "They'll be after you, no doubt."

"And that's just why I'm safe here for a while, Jim," returned Clinton. "They'd never expect me to come down to Mannersley. It's a fortnight now since I got away. Pooh! I'm not afraid of 'em—not I, indeed!"

"I don't know how you managed it, sir," said Jim wonderingly.

Clinton smiled. "Managed it!" he said. "Why, as easily as anything, bar the first preliminary risk. Warrinder, when he found they'd sent me to Dartmoor, took a sort of hunting box down there, as close as ever he could get, and he devised a means of letting me know. Then he waited—always in readiness—day and night; and at last my chance came, and I took it. Of course, I ran the gantlet. They had a pot-shot or two at me, Jim. Look here." He turned up the cuff of his left sleeve as he spoke, and revealed a newly healed wound which ran across the forearm.

"Only a scratch, you see, but near enough," he continued. "Well, I got to Warrinder's place all right, and the rest has been easy. It was Warrinder who brought me up here in his motor—he's putting up at Ashford, across country there, until to-morrow night, when he's going to meet me at Dead Man's Cross—you know, Jim—at midnight. Then he'll run me to Liverpool. There's a full kit waiting there for me, and I'm off to Canada."

Jim looked up from a steady contemplation of the fire.

"Mr. Clinton, sir, what do you want down here?" he asked.

Clinton's countenance assumed a determined expression. He smote the knuckles of his right hand against the palm of his left.

"I want to see two people, Jim—I will and must see both!" he answered, the resolution in his voice made fiercer by the hushed whisper in which, at a signal from Jim, he had spoken ever since entering the cottage. "And you can guess whom they

are—my uncle and my cousin. But, above all, Sir Robert!"

"Why Sir Robert so particularly, sir?"

"Because he, more than anybody, can put things in motion for clearing me," said Clinton. "He must do it—he shall do it!"

Jim held up a finger. "Mr. Clinton," he said, "you won't misunderstand Jim Britten—but supposing Sir Robert believes you guilty?"

The young man's brows knitted, and his lips tightened; but in a moment his face cleared.

"Isn't that exactly a reason why I should see him and do my best to convince him of my innocence?" he said. "He never gave me one single chance, Jim, as you know. You know what a hard, proud man he is, and when it came to it he shut himself up within his pride and wouldn't hear a word from me.

"I know, of course, I'd got a bad name from my previous goings on. I know he'd a lot of trouble with me when I was at Eton. I know I was sent down from Cambridge. I know he had to pay my debts twice. I know I got mixed up with a very shady lot at Newmarket—"

"Wasn't this Mr. Warrinder one of them, sir?" asked Jim.

"Never mind that, Jim. Warrinder's stuck to me like a brick," replied Clinton. "Well, I know, I say, that I went the pace pretty badly. I've had time to reflect upon it since, I can tell you! But there's an ocean of difference between being rackety and gambling, and so on, and being a common thief. I am as innocent of that charge as your dear old mother is, Jim, before Heaven!"

"I always believed it, sir," said Jim, looking at him steadily. "And I know a rare lot of people who believe just the same—a rare lot."

"Then, who was—who is—the scoundrel for whom I've suffered?" said Clinton hotly. "Why, because I was a sort of black sheep as a boy, was my uncle only too ready to believe this thing against me when it came?"

"I believe it nearly broke his heart, Mr. Clinton," said Jim. "He's never seemed to me to be the same man since."

"It's pretty nearly broken my life," said Clinton grimly. "But look here, Jim, I must see my uncle, if only to impress upon him that it's his solemn duty to stir himself in this matter. Good heavens! I should think any fool could see why."

"Perhaps I don't quite see all you mean, sir," said Jim.

Clinton leaned forward, and began to emphasize his point with taps of his finger on his foster brother's arm.

"My uncle is getting an old man," he said, "and it is most unlikely that he will ever marry again."

"He'll never marry again, sir!" exclaimed Jim. "He's too much taken up with Miss Phillipa."

"He has no sons," continued Clinton, "and no brothers living. Consequently, I, his nephew, as only son of his late brother, Philip Mannersley, succeed at his death to the title."

"Well, sir?"

"For the honor of the title—we've borne it since the fourteenth century, Jim, though you're such an old radical that that means nothing to you—he ought to have this affair reopened. The thing to do is to find the real culprit!" exclaimed Clinton.

"Find the guilty man! I must and will see Sir Robert, Jim, if I have to force my way to him. I will make him see that I am innocent, and that it is his duty, even after these two years—two years of misery and degradation to me—to reopen the matter and have me cleared. I want to see him in secret if it can be arranged; if it can't, I'll force my way to him, and take whatever consequences may come."

Jim Britten remained silent for a while, thinking things over. At last he looked earnestly at Clinton, and spoke more earnestly.

"Mr. Clinton," he said, "it would be a bad job, sir, if anything happened here that let it get made known that you were back and had got across again with Sir Robert—it would."

"Why, Jim?"

"Why, sir, because all the men, to every man and lad, believed you innocent, and that there was some plot against you," answered Jim. "On that point, to this day, sir, it wouldn't take much to raise a riot."

Clinton stared at him almost incredulously.

"You know, sir, what a favorite you were," continued Jim. "You used to talk to them about racing, and give them tips, and—"

"Well," said Clinton, "what then, Jim?"

Jim bent forward and spoke in an earnest whisper.

"There's Miss Phillipa to be considered, Mr. Clinton," he said. "Hasn't she been through enough already?"

Clinton jumped to his feet in an agitation which he could not conceal.

"Been through enough!" he said hoarsely. "I should think she has been through enough—we've both been through enough! Jim, I must see Phillipa—will see her—because if my uncle refuses to do what he can do, I want her—"

"Well, sir?"

"I want her to follow me out there, and we'll start a new life in a new land," said Clinton, clenching his hands. "We're engaged, after all, and her first duty's to me."

Jim had risen, too, and he stood staring sadly at his foster-brother.

"Nay, sir—nay!" he said. "Get yourself cleared first. You've made a mistake, sir. I told Miss Phillipa I should tell you so. You shouldn't have broken away from there, sir. There wasn't long to stop; it would soon have passed, and you'd have been a free man. Now you're not free. Listen, Mr. Clinton. I'll arrange for you to see Miss Phillipa to-morrow night, and you must see what she says about seeing her father. But if you'll take my advice, sir, when that's done you'll go back and give yourself up. And—"

The sound of a footstep in the room overhead made them both start.

"That's mother," said Jim. "I shall have to tell her you're here, sir. You don't mind, sir?"

"Mind!" exclaimed Clinton. "If you'd seen as few kind faces as I have this last year or two, you'd be glad to see one you could trust, Jim!"

A moment later Margaret, clad in a medley of nondescript garments and a mighty nightcap, burst into the room and threw her arms round her foster-son's neck.

Had the three people thus reunited only known it, a man who had followed Clinton Mannersley through the woods, and had watched him and Jim Britten through the cottage window, now stole softly away and made off toward the village, meditating on the secret he had discovered.

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## CHAPTER III.

### QUINTON SPEAKS.

SIR ROBERT MANNERSLEY, seventeenth of his line in the proud order of the baronetage, had been a poor man until coal was found on his estate, and he was glad, for the sake of his family, to develop the enormous mineral wealth which lay all around him.

He would have liked to preserve some of the old simplicity and dignity of life in the immediate vicinity of the castle, but all that was left of old times was the castle itself, which was really an old house, picturesque and romantic enough now that time had mellowed it, that had been built out of the ruins of the ancient fortress a hundred years after the latter had been destroyed.

Within its time-mellowed chambers Sir Robert found his great recreation. The responsibilities of the colliery had transformed him into a business man, because he was a conscientious man, and he made a point of attending at his offices with punctuality and assiduity; but he was never so happy as when under his own rooftree and by his own hearth, talking to his friends or showing them some of his treasures.

On the evening of the day following Phillipa Mannersley's visit to the checkweighman's cottage on the opposite side of the valley three people sat round the hearth in Sir Robert's study examining an old Roman lamp which he had just taken from a cabinet. Sir Robert himself sat in his accustomed easy chair, by which stood a small table supporting a shaded lamp, the light of which fell on his finely chiseled features, his snowy hair and mustache, his long, shapely fingers moving lovingly about the curio as he explained its peculiarities and beauties to his daughter and his guest.

Phillipa, prettier than ever in her dinner

dress, hung over her father's chair; the guest stood before them on the hearthrug. And a close observer would have seen that while he manifested a polite interest in the Roman lamp, Mr. Mark Quinton was much more interested in its owner's daughter.

The manager of Mannersley Main was a tall, well-built man of apparently thirty years of age, who had much of the military man in his appearance, in his movements. It required little knowledge of human nature to see that Mark Quinton was a born martinet—a man destined to command and to have his own way. If his stern lips issued an order, and his steel-blue eyes emphasized it, most men under him hastened to carry it out without demur.

But the stern lips were tender enough, and the keen eyes soft enough, whenever Miss Phillipa Mannersley happened to be near, and some people were beginning to notice the fact.

"And I believe there is no other specimen of this particular date, or of this particular sort, with the exception of one in the British Museum in London," said Sir Robert, lovingly handling his Roman lamp. "A somewhat similar lamp was unearthed some years ago, but it was not at all of the date or class of this—not at all!"

"Wherefore Mannersley Castle and its owner can boast themselves of being in possession of something which would be quite unique if it were not for that tiresome British Museum," said Phillipa, patting her father's head. "You ought to be flattered at making the acquaintance of such treasures, Mr. Quinton. And now I must leave you gentlemen to entertain yourselves, for I am going out."

"Out, my dear, at this hour?" exclaimed Sir Robert. "Dear me, why—"

"Only for a while, papa, and it is on an errand of mercy—one of my old women," said Phillipa. "I shall be home again before you know I am gone."

"I sincerely hope, my dear, that the object of your visit does not reside in the miners' village," said Sir Robert.

"Shall I go with you wherever it is, Miss Mannersley?" said Quinton. "It is rather late, and though—"

"Thanks, no, really," she said. "Ann Mary, you know, goes with me everywhere. I shall see you on my return, Mr. Quinton."

She gave him a light nod, and left the room.

Sir Robert rose from his chair. "Roman art, eh?" he said. "Ah! That reminds me that I had some Roman coins sent to me the other day. I'll show them to you. They're in another room. Sit down, Quinton, and I'll fetch them. Light another cigar, do!"

The old baronet went out of the room, and the manager walked over to a side table to take a cigar from an open case. In passing another small table on his way, he saw a card lying on it—a mere scrap of card, crumpled and dirty—and before he could turn his eyes from it read what was written on it: "The Hermit's Cell—to-night—nine thirty."

He chose a cigar, went back to the hearth, and stood there wondering what such a mysterious sentence meant. The door opened—Phillipa returned, in walking dress. She looked flurried, and a little upset.

"All alone, Mr. Quinton?" she exclaimed.

"Your father is fetching some coins, Miss Mannersley," he answered.

"Poor you!" she said. "I—I left something here. I am so careless in leaving things lying about. I—oh, here it is—an address."

Before Quinton had realized the situation she had snatched up the card he had unwittingly seen, and with a smiling nod had again quitted the room.

When Sir Robert came sauntering back with a tray of coins, some five minutes later, Quinton had let his cigar die out, and was standing very erect and set of face before the old baronet's desk.

"Now, these coins, Quinton," began Sir Robert, "are, I believe—"

Quinton drew his attention with a short cough. "Sir Robert," he said.

The elder man glanced at him, set down the tray of coins, and quietly took his own chair.

"Go on, Quinton," he said, not unkindly. "I had an idea that you wanted to speak to me."

"Yes," said Quinton; "yes. The fact is, I think I ought to go away. I am not the sort of man to beat about the bush, especial-

ly with you, and—I am in love with your daughter."

The old man nodded his head several times. "Aye," he said, "so I thought, Quinton—so I thought. Well, I see no harm in that. Your family is of equal rank with mine, and I have the greatest opinion of you in every way."

"Then you would—" cried Quinton.

"Give her to you?" interposed Sir Robert with a smile. "Aye, very likely I would. But, Quinton, I fear it's no use. Sit down. You know the terrible stain on our recent history?" he went on when the younger man had taken a seat. "You have heard of what happened to my nephew just before you came here?"

Quinton bowed his head in silence.

"They were always fond of each other as boy and girl," continued Sir Robert; "and, despite all that has happened, I believe she still cares for that graceless young scoundrel. Quinton, I tremble to think of what may happen when—when he is free again!"

Quinton sat in silence for some time. At last he looked the old man earnestly in the face.

"Sir Robert!" he said. "Do you really believe your nephew was guilty?"

Sir Robert passed his hand over his forehead. "I wish I could think else!" he answered. "But—I can't!"

Quinton rose. "I'll go now," he said. "You—you'll understand. And you'll let me speak to you some other time, sir?"

He pressed the hand which the old man gave him, and, leaving the study, got his hat and coat and let himself out by a side door into the grounds. He wanted to be alone—wanted to think.

"Still cares for that graceless young scoundrel!" he said bitterly.

If that were true, what hope was there for him?

## CHAPTER IV.

### A FEARSOME DISCOVERY.

THE place which Clinton Mannersley had selected as a suitable rendezvous was one well known to Phillipa and himself. It was a lonely cave, which centuries earlier had been transformed into a rude oratory by a hermit, whose ghost was said to haunt it.

Phillipa gained the rendezvous by a roundabout way. As she reached it a figure rose out of the darkness.

"Phillipa!"

"Clinton!"

For a moment she let him take her in his arms and kiss her; for a moment the recollection of their old boy-and-girl love welled up strongly within her; for a moment she felt inclined to remember nothing but that he had suffered terribly, and that she had the instinct to take him to her bosom and comfort him. But then the danger of his situation, the dire perplexity of the future rose up before her, and steadied her nerves. She knew that she was the stronger of the two, and that if any light was to come out of all this darkness, it would have to be through her initiative.

"Clinton, dear!" she said. "Listen. I cannot be out long, and we must say what we have to say quickly. Don't think me hard or cold if I seem practical—it is only because I am so anxious, so terribly anxious, to think what can be done. Why, Clinton, have you done this?"

"Done it, Phillipa—got away? Wouldn't any man have got away if he'd had the chance?" he replied bitterly. "It's all very well for you and for Jim Britten to say 'Why did you do it?' You were neither of you in my place."

"But you had only a few months to wait, Clinton," she urged. "Eight months at the most—I kept a careful count, Clinton."

"Eight months—eight eternities of torture!" he said between his teeth. "It's no use, Phillipa. I'm out, thank Heaven, and out I'll stop."

"Who helped you—who managed it?" she asked.

"Warrinder engineered it," he answered curtly.

"Warrinder! That man? Oh, Clinton!"

Clinton uttered a suppressed exclamation. "There you are!" he said testily. "Warrinder's the only living soul that has tried to do anything for me, anyhow!"

"That's unjust, Clinton, and it's not true," she said. "I had hoped that when

you were free, Clinton, you would never have anything more to do with your old companions," she added. "You know, dear, they were not a nice set of men, and I have sometimes wondered whether some of them were not concerned in the affair that brought you to ruin—I have, really."

Clinton uttered a loud snort of disdain.

"What awful rot, Phillipa! The mere idea!" he exclaimed. "Hang it all, we may have been a lot of silly young asses as regards horses and cards, but we weren't common thieves. No, the real culprit, the scoundrel for whom I've suffered, must be looked for nearer at home than that, my dear!"

"But where, Clinton, and how?" she asked.

"That's more for your father than for me," he said resolutely. "And that's why I must and will see him. I want to put the matter to him quite calmly and quietly—it will be the first time I have ever had the chance of doing it. Sir Robert condemned me in this affair because of the past. It was the old story of the dog with the bad name. And what's more, Phil, you know it."

And Phillipa, with all her faith in her father, did know it, and she made no direct answer. She pressed Clinton's hand in the darkness to show her sympathy—she herself had never doubted his innocence.

"And if you do see my father, Clinton, what after that?" she asked.

"I'm off to Canada," he answered. "Warrinder is going to drive me to Liverpool in his motor—he's hanging about here—and I've got a full kit waiting me there and plenty of money. And, Phil, when I've got fairly settled down there in Canada I want you to come out to me. After all I've gone through you won't leave me alone there, will you, Phil?"

Phillipa's strong will rose to the occasion, and turned her love for her girlhood's sweetheart into the paths of common sense. She took a firm grasp of Clinton's hands.

"Listen, Clinton!" she said. "We have loved each other since we were children, and I am not conscious of any change in myself. But now you must hear my opinion as a woman, and if you really care for me you will follow it. I will arrange for you to see my father alone, with ample time to talk to him, to-morrow."

"I knew you would, Phil!" he murmured.

"And whatever my father or any one may ever urge to the contrary," she went on, "I will always believe in your innocence, and I will eventually marry you—but on one condition only!"

"Well?" said Clinton half doubtfully. "And that—"

"That as soon as you have seen my father, and said what you have to say, you go straight back and give yourself up to the authorities. You have only a few months to—to stay there. They will soon pass, and then you will be legally free. Legally free, remember!"

Clinton made no answer.

"Think, Clinton," she went on. "Think well. On the one hand is—cowardice and dishonor. On the other hand is—courage. And there is—me."

He remained silent for some time longer, and when at last he spoke it was only in a whisper.

"Very well, I promise, Phillipa!"

The girl drew his face to hers and kissed him warmly.

"I knew you would, Clinton, I knew you would! Thank Heaven! Oh, my poor boy, we shall come through all right yet," she said. "Now, listen. Here is my key to the side door which opens into my father's study. Come there to-morrow evening a little after half past nine—when it is quite dark—let yourself in, and plead your cause with him. And after that—what are you doing, Clinton?"

"Striking a match," he said. "I want to see your face again."

While the faint light lasted these two looked long and earnestly at each other, and Clinton saw tears in the girl's eyes. The match died out.

"I'll keep the promise, Phillipa," he said solemnly.

She took his hand in hers with a firm pressure.

"Come," she said. "You can walk back with me as far as the gate by the keep."

Clinton turned away from the wicket gate near the keep after Phillipa had passed

through it and relocked it on the other side.

After retracing his steps a little way in the direction of the Hermit's Cell, he plunged into the wood which led down to the banks of the river and made for a footbridge which spanned the stream at a point well outside the outskirts of the lower village. On that footbridge he had arranged to meet Jim Britten shortly after ten o'clock. And as he came up to the narrow path which led to it he saw Jim's figure dimly outlined against the sky and the stars.

"That you, Jim?" he whispered.

The figure moved toward him with a warning. "H-sh!" and came close in the gloom.

"Keep quiet, Mr. Clinton," murmured Jim's voice. "Something's gone wrong!"

"Wrong—how—in what way?" asked Clinton.

"Speak low," said Jim. "You know I was late home to-night, and of course when I got there you'd gone. It turns out that just after you'd left who should turn up but Illingworth."

"Illingworth?"

"The police inspector, Mr. Clinton; you remember him, though he's been promoted lately," replied Jim. "You mustn't go back up there to-night, Mr. Clinton."

"No," said Clinton; "no—that's evident. What's to be done? Look here, Jim," he continued suddenly, "you may as well know what I've arranged. My cousin and I have settled that I'm to see Sir Robert to-morrow night and say what I have to say to him, and after that—well, I've promised her that I'll go back and serve it out!"

"And the best thing, sir," said Jim, shaking him by the hand; "you'll be a proper free man then. Well, then, all we've got to do is to make you dead safe until after to-morrow night. But how and where? Let's think. I have it, sir—Moses Pogmore's!"

Clinton started perceptibly. "What, Black Moses?" he exclaimed. "Why there particularly?"

"Why, sir, because, first of all, Black Moses lives all by himself—he can't abide women and won't have 'em near his place; secondly, his cottage is as lonely as ours is; and thirdly, you were always a favorite of his because you went in for horses and dogs and such like," said Jim. "Black Moses 'll let nobody enter while you're there. Come along, Mr. Clinton, we'll go and see him."

Turning away from the footbridge, near which they had lingered during this conversation, Jim led the way along various paths until they came to a disused brick field, in which a light shone from a cottage window. He posted him in the lee of one of the tumble-down brick kilns.

"Stop there, Mr. Clinton, while I prepare Moses for your coming," he said. "I've no doubt about your reception, but he might just chance to have some of his mates with him, and I don't want anybody but him to know about you."

Clinton waited under the kiln while Jim went warily up to the cottage. There was a chilly wind, and he was tired; also he was not feeling particularly happy. He meant to keep his promise to Phillipa, but the thought of giving himself up and completing the term of his sentence was not attractive to him, especially after that taste of much-desired freedom. He was feeling very bitter and very wrathful against the whole chain of circumstances which had led his life to this point, when Jim Britten reappeared.

"Come on, sir," said Jim. "There's no one there but Moses. I've told him, and he'll see you're all right."

Gaining the cottage door in such a fashion that no one could see them cross the lighted window, Jim gently opened it and pushed Clinton in before him. The refugee entered, blinking at the light.

"Well, Moses," he said with an attempt at cheerfulness, "you didn't expect to see me, I'll bet!"

An enormous man, who had scrupulously cleansed himself of the coal dust and grime of the pit before taking his evening rest, but who was so dark of hair and complexion as fully to justify his mates in calling him Black Moses, rose from a chair on the hearth, and seizing Clinton's hand, wrung it with great heartiness.

"Mestur Clinton, sir!" he said. "Proud to see ye, sir; proud—and glad—to see ye. No, sir, I didn't expect to see neither you nor Jim there, but"—here he wrung the

young man's hand again and lowered his voice--" Jim's telled me what the trouble is, sir, and you can depend on Moses Pogmore, as you've give the straight tip to many's the time, and not oft been wrong.

" Sit down, sir, and sit you down, Jim; and you shall have a taste of spirits, Mestur Clinton—I know Jim there's a 'totaler, and I've naught to say agen it—and don't you be afraid of 'em, for it's a drop of as good brandy as you could get up at the castle—I give seven shilling the bottle for it."

Thus welcomed, Clinton sat down, and was glad to do so; he was glad, too, of the brandy and water which the burly giant mixed for him.

" You're running a risk in harboring me, you know, Moses," he said. " You'd better turn me out—though I know you won't."

Moses swore a mighty oath and smacked the table with his open palm.

" No, not for all the laws in the land, sir!" he said. " Jim, my lad, I don't like a man to come under my roof without suppin'. I'll make thee a sup o' tea or coffee, like—which, now?"

" I'll have a drink of that milk, Moses," said Jim, pointing to a measure which stood on the table. " Here's your good health," he continued as Moses pushed the milk toward him. " And now I'll go—I know Mr. Clinton's in safe hands."

" As safe as if he were a babby and in his cradle," said Moses. " I'll see to him, Jim, my lad."

He saw to his charge that night as if he had been entertaining a king, and next morning, in spite of all that Clinton could urge, insisted on " playing," saying that the loss of a day's work was no more to him than naught, and that he was going to stand by his guest until night. And so the day went by uneventfully, but in safety, and at the time suggested by Phillipa, Clinton, after a hearty farewell from Moses Pogmore, set out in the dusk for the castle.

He was conscious as he went along, making his way from one point to another like a hunted thing that dreads even the light of day, that he was feeling heart sick and despondent. He knew very well that he had made a fool of himself in his boyhood and young manhood, that there was no wonder that his uncle had become sick and wearied of his folly and his wild goings-on. But he was also conscious of his own entire innocence in the matter for which he had already suffered, and must yet suffer, and a sort of apathy filled him as to the future.

Then he thought of Phillipa and her promise, and went forward, strengthened in his resolve, and wishing that he had his time to come over again.

Knowing all the ins and outs of the grounds and gardens about the castle, Clinton had no difficulty in posting himself in such a position in the shrubbery near the windows of Sir Robert's study that he could see into the room. But in his eagerness to see his uncle and pour out his woes and his entreaties he had arrived too early; he could see that the room was empty. Then a servant appeared in the study and drew down all the blinds; after that he could see no more.

After waiting what seemed an age Clinton at last moved out of the shrubbery and crept to the side door, to which Phillipa had provided him with a key. That door opened directly into the study, as he knew well. He inserted the key in the lock. It turned without a sound. In another second he was inside the room. A high screen stood between him and the center of the study, hiding his view of the desk whereat Sir Robert usually worked at night. He moved softly round it, expecting to find the room empty. Everything was so still, so very quiet—so unusually quiet—that it must be empty.

But what was this that he found himself staring at--staring with eyes which grew wider and wider with the certainty of some great horror, of—oh, Heaven! what had befallen that old man, gray-haired, so motionless, fallen forward across his desk? What was this crimson stream running across the white mass of papers beneath him, what was that red-stained thing that—

He turned with a cry for help struggling in his dry throat, only to find it smothered, and himself seized by a tall, stern-faced man, a stranger. At the same time he saw other faces crowding about him, other voices sounding, crying his name, fingers pointing at him. And Clinton Mannersley suddenly realized with an awful sickening of heart

that once more fate was against him, and that he stood there suspected of murder!

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WEB OF CIRCUMSTANCE.

IT was only a sprinkling of men that went down the shaft of Mannersley Main next morning. Those who went were the sort of men whom nothing affects, who are of a stolidity of temperament which cannot be broken down.

As for the rest of the population of the new village, it, like the people of the old, man and boy, woman and child, gave itself up without reserve to a discussion of the terrible tragedy of the previous evening. For the news had spread like wildfire, as was inevitable in so small and tightly packed a place, and everybody had known it ere midnight. And it naturally presented itself in a crude and primitive form.

Mr. Clinton, who got three years' penal servitude for forging his uncle's name a while back, had broken out of prison, and come home, and stabbed poor Sir Robert to the heart in his own study, and if he had not been caught in the very act—well, hands had been laid on him the very minute after it was done! He was safely locked up, and Sir Robert was dead and gone—forever!

Long before breakfast time that morning the newly built courthouse at Mannersley, in which, so far, nothing more serious than a few charges of drunkenness and poaching had been heard, was besieged by a crowd of miners determined to hear what went on when Clinton was brought up before the magistrates.

Some of the men, knowing what would happen, had crammed a package of food in their pockets and stationed themselves at the door of the public entrance before daylight. Among these was Black Moses, whose stentorian voice could be heard haranguing those about him at intervals as the morning wore away. The theme of his discourse was his profound and intense belief in Clinton's innocence; its invariable conclusion a passionate desire to get at the truth of a mystery which Moses stigmatized in unprintable language.

"Tell ye Master Clinton's as innocent as any bairn i' one o' them cottages," insisted Black Moses for the hundredth time, holding forth with undiminished ardor as the time drew near for the sitting of the court. "He could no more do a foul thing like that there nor our district nurse. Wild and skittish he may ha' been as a lad, but there's a difference between sowing yer wild oats and doing murder! He never did it!"

"He might ha' done it in a temper," said a voice. "We're all liable to that at times."

"I tell thee he never did it," vociferated Black Moses, "and I'll feight thee or any man i' Mannersla as said he did. Wait till all this mystery's over, and some on yer 'll see summat."

Within a moment of the doors being opened the court was packed to its last corner. Outside, hundreds waited eagerly to hear what news could be passed to them from the favored ones within. And as that news came, bit by bit, the friends of the accused man—which means practically the whole crowd—felt their hearts become as lead and their hopes sink lower and lower.

For the whole story, as it was told to the countryside magistrates who had hastened to fill the bench, seemed so simple, so devoid of anything savoring of the mysterious! It was just a plain, straightforward story, sordid, brutal, horrible—but, above all, on the face of it, a story which seemed impossible of contradiction.

To Sir Clinton Mannersley, sitting closely guarded in the dock, the whole thing seemed like a horrible nightmare. Although he had never closed his eyes since the event which was still hovering in dreadful scarlet and black before them he was so wide awake as to believe himself in a dream or a trance or gone out of his senses.

He stared with astonishment at a young solicitor—with whom he had had many a lark in boyish days, recent enough—who was glibly setting forth the case against him. He heard all Rowland Parke said as if Rowland Parke was a puppet gifted with miraculous powers of speech.

"And as your worships well know," Mr. Parke was saying, "it is the usual practice in these cases merely to give evidence of arrest, and then to ask for an adjournment.

But in this case, as I shall hope to show to your worships, there are two reasons why I should bring before you the case in full—at any rate, as it presents itself now. The first is that we have sufficient and most full evidence to show why your worships should, without further delay, commit the prisoner, who is now, by what is alleged to be his own dastardly act, Sir Clinton Mannersley, for trial; the second, that we believe it may allay a certain feeling of suspicion in this immediate district that he is a deeply wronged man.

" Into that question I need not go—it is a fact well known to all of us that there is a distinct belief in this village that he is such a man, and it will be well to show to those who hold it that he is not.

" Now, briefly, your worships, the facts are these: The prisoner nearly three years ago was found guilty, at Clothford Assizes, of forgery, and was sentenced to three years' penal servitude. A fortnight ago he escaped from Dartmoor. I shall show you that he made his way here; that he came here with a grievance against his uncle, our late greatly respected friend, Sir Robert Mannersley; that he was heard to express sentiments which, in view of what has happened, can only be taken as direct threats; that he lurked about the place, and was harbored by people who should have known better; and that, after hiding in the shrubberies of the castle last night for nearly an hour, he effected an entrance to Sir Robert's study, and was all but caught in the very act which we say he committed.

" Clearer evidence than that which I shall give you has, I venture to say, never been put before a bench of magistrates. Call Inspector Illingworth."

The police inspector, consequential, and proud because of his recent promotion, looked round the court, during the initial processes of the witness box, with calm dignity.

" Inspector Illingworth, you were hastily telephoned for last night from the castle about half past nine?"

" I was."

" You went there at once?"

" I did."

" On arriving there what did you find—what did you see?"

" On arriving I found the household in a state of confusion. I was shown at once into the late Sir Robert's study. There I found Dr. Childe, Mr. Quinton, Mr. Stead, Mr. Dauncey, the butler, and the prisoner, Sir Clinton. I saw the body of the late Sir Robert."

" Where was that body?"

" It was lying across a writing desk. There was a curious looking, a sort of foreign looking, knife, or dagger, on the desk."

" Dr. Childe told you that Sir Robert was dead?"

" Yes, sir."

" And in consequence of what Mr. Quinton told you, you took the prisoner into custody?"

" I did."

" Did he say anything?"

" He seemed dazed. He muttered something about ' conspiracy.' Otherwise he said nothing."

" Now, I want to ask you a further question, inspector. You are aware, of course, that the prisoner was sentenced to three years' penal servitude rather more than two years ago, and that he has recently made his escape from Dartmoor?"

" Yes, sir."

" When did you hear of that?"

" Well, at once, but I kept the knowledge to myself for certain reasons."

" We will leave those reasons at present. You have had for some days a knowledge that he was in this neighborhood?"

" For three days."

" How did you obtain that knowledge?"

" From a man named Lioney Moore, a miner."

" And from his information you made certain observations and inquiries, with regard to the prisoner's whereabouts?"

" Yes."

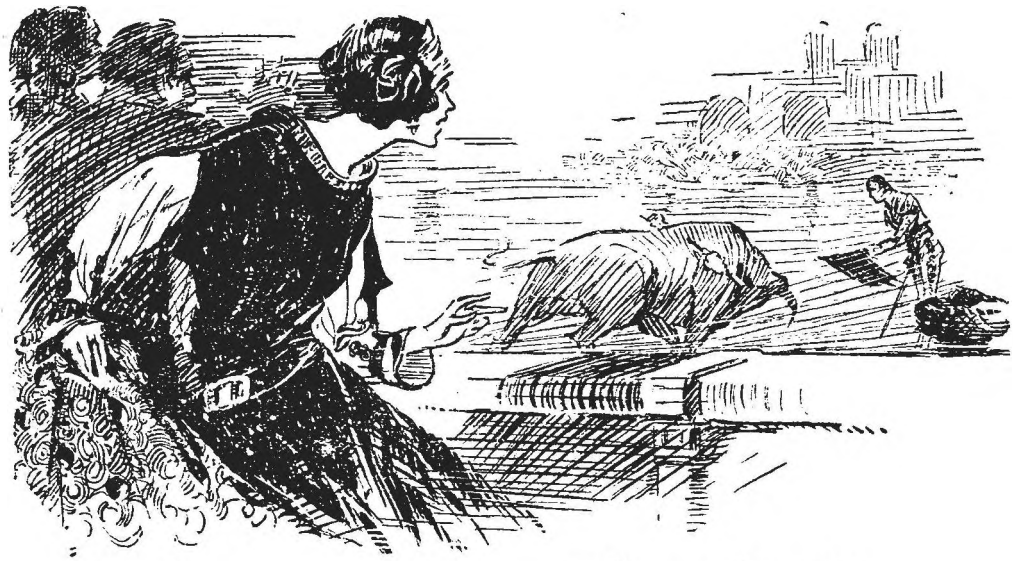
" They were only partly successful?"

" Only partly; I could not lay hands on him until too late."

" That will do, inspector. Call Lioney Moore."

The prisoner looked expectantly at the man who entered the witness box.

***TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.***



# Beauty and the Bull-Ring

**By DORIAN NEVE**

***A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE***

IT was the week of the Feria. For days the highway which skirted the small village in which we lived had been a colorful panorama of men and beasts, all bound for the animal fair at Seville. A drove of bulls, following a docile leader, padded patiently through the choking dust of a sun-baked road. A train of oxen with yokes bound to their horns dragged heavily laden carts to the sound of creaking wheels and the guttural calls of the drivers plodding on foot. Melancholy mules, sad-eyed burros, long-haired goats and grunting pigs crowded one another off the highway. Swarthy *gitanos* hobbled their mules and camped in the scant shade for the noonday meal and a siesta.

In the city the Prado de San Sebastian hummed with workmen erecting booths and *casetas* which hemmed the sidewalk. The parade ground was a jumble of provisional corrals. This I noted when I had gone to the city to see dad off on a business trip. In our three years' residence in Seville, whither my father had been sent in the service of his country, we had never failed to attend the animal fair. This year, however, I was to go alone, although dad had not encouraged my intention. For, in Spain, a woman does not enjoy the same freedom of movement accorded her in Anglo-Saxon countries. Even with a male escort she is subjected to the all too audible comment of passers-by. And while the foreigner may resent this open stalking, the native woman both accepts and expects this tribute to her charms. But I had lived too long in Latin countries to permit their customs to impede my freedom. And by this time Sevillianos had grown accustomed to seeing me go about unattended.

I had sent our faithful Francisco to town

with the horses under cover of the night, to escape the hot sun. Following my visit to the fair, I purposed to dine with friends and to ride home in the twilight. Therefore, I had risen early, donned my riding togs, and walked to the station.

Now, a woman in riding clothes—I had never forsaken the skirt and side saddle—never failed to attract the attention of the villagers, despite the fact that I was more often to be seen in that garb than in any other. So it was the same gathering of the curious which awaited me at the railway station. The children—who long since had come to look upon the *señor's* daughter as a never-failing repository of sweets and pennies—greeted me noisily. Flowers were pressed upon me; the privilege of carrying my riding crop squabbled over; my boots admired, and the dust removed against all protest.

I had given myself only time enough to reach the station in a leisurely walk. Having become inured to the eccentricities of Spanish railways, I was not surprised to learn, after a glance at my watch, that the *rapido* was already fifteen minutes late. The platform was now generally filled with travelers, like myself, bound for the Feria. Suddenly a murmur ran through the crowd. A shout went up. My small admirers deserted me *en bloc*. "Querido!" spread from mouth to mouth. The bullfighter, of course.

The very mention of his name caused me to tingle with aversion. To be sure, I was acquainted with the fact that our village was the home of Spain's idol. In our early morning canters my father and I had often passed the *torero* riding a thick-necked horse and accompanied by a bevy of young bloods who, despite their titles and ancient lineage, were flattered by their intimacy with the bullfighter.

My love of horses and of the animal kingdom in general always aroused in me a burning resentment against Spain's national sport. The subject had become one of bitter controversy between my Spanish friends and myself, and I had persistently refused to witness any exhibition of the *torero's* art. It was only natural, then, that I should feel hostility toward the man who had—so to speak—put our village on the map. And while my father never failed to acknowledge the fellow's courteous greeting, I had made it a rule to turn my head disdainfully away when he passed us by. So I had never really met the man face to face.

The crowd at the station, having done homage, parted. Between the lines, the bullfighter strode leisurely toward that end of the platform where I was hugging the shade. Chatting with his companions—some of whom had been visitors at our home—the *torero* followed their eyes, and in acknowledgment of my somewhat curt nod in return to their greeting he lifted his hat.

Our eyes met. To my surprise, I saw his were of a deep blue. His light chestnut hair, waving back from a high forehead, showed a line of fair skin where the sun had not penetrated. The nose was straight and thin, with a suggestion of bluntness at the tip. His chin was square and cleft. Close-set ears, a smooth-shaven face, a head and neck superbly modeled. Lithe and catlike in his movements, his frame suggested rather than displayed his strength. Clad in a well-tailored suit of pongee silk, he might easily have passed for an Englishman sojourning in the tropics. "Handsome," I conceded mentally; then, pandering to my prejudice, added, "and no doubt conceited."

The train came in, puffing, groaning, and with an air of utter exhaustion. The cause of its delay was evidenced in the packed compartments. Not a seat was visible. Even the first-class carriages were jammed. Compartments habitually reserved for women were preëmpted by a sweating, merry-making crowd.

I was on the point of turning back and foregoing the journey, when a young prince I had seen with the *torero's* party overtook me. The train was crowded. Had the *señorita*—how beautiful—not reserved a compartment for herself? No? Then would the *señorita* graciously deign to accept a seat in the compartment reserved for their party? In vain I made my excuses. The toylike whistle blew; there was the clang of metal against the wheels; the guard shouted, and I found myself hurried

aboard and conducted into the presence of my pet aversion—Querido, idol of Spain.

I fear I ill-repaid his courtesy. The conversation was centered upon the respective merits of Irish hunters and desert-bred horses. The bullfighter had just purchased a pure-bred Arabian stallion, which he was to show at the fair. I confined my part in the discussion to my host's companions. Not once did I address the *torero* direct. But, try as I might, I could not maintain the hostility I had built up against Señor Don Armando Ramon-Valdes—the family name of the bullfighter.

"*Querido!*" I scoffed mentally. "Beloved," "Darling"! What a silly name for a man to bestow upon himself!

But against my will I found myself listening to his deep voice or stealing glances at him when his head was turned away. Had I been quite honest with myself I must have acknowledged a winning personality, a poise, a culture wholly unexpected in one of his calling.

At the station in Seville, Señor Valdes was met by a ponderous landau, drawn by four sleek mules gayly bedecked with jangling bells, red-trimmed harness and bridles fairly concealed beneath chenille balls of red, green and yellow. In this equipage the *torero* was to ride in the parade which formally opened the fair.

I declined his offer to drive me to my destination. To be seen in public with a bullfighter!

The Paseo was thronged with a continuous procession of carriages, motor cars, equestrians, parading back and forth under a maze of flags, bunting and banners. The sidewalks seethed with a holiday crowd. In the Caseta del Circulo de Labradores, the band played. Mounted officers cantered by, officiously clearing the way for the parade.

Mounted, and attended by the faithful Francisco, I watched the pageant from a cross street hemmed in by horsemen and vehicles of sundry description. Everybody talked, or shouted greetings. A murmur of expectation; cheers and the band's trumpeteers blared the formal opening of the fair, then struck up a swinging march. The outriders hove in sight. Following a detachment of cavalry came the carriages with the city officials sweating in their ceremonious black. Now a buzz of admiration as the cavaliers came in sight; perched upon ornate saddles high above the horses' necks; clad in short boleros; tightly fitting breeches open at the knee or linked by miniature Teddy bears in gold. On their heads the riders wore the stiff-brimmed *sombreros Cordobes* with the sloping crown. They might easily have walked out of a picture. The crowd huzzahed.

Now a craning of necks. Riders raised themselves in the saddle. A shout—a series of shouts, which set Killarney, my mount, to prancing. The bullfighter's landau came in sight.

"Querido! Querido! Querido!"

The bullfighter passed by, lifting his hat first to the right then to the left, smiling in acknowledgment of the shower of flowers and confetti thrown at his coach.

Our eyes met. The blood surged to my cheeks. I hated myself for that blush, yet hardly knowing why I blushed.

## II.

THE sun was sinking in amber splendor as I made my way across the Prado. In an open space beyond, Francisco was waiting with the horses. At my approach, Killarney pawed impatiently. Irish Rose neighed in anticipation of the lump of sugar sure to be forthcoming. Mounting, I skirted the edge of the corrals on the way toward the road which led homeward.

"*Señorita!*" Francisco called, reining at Killarney's flank. "Look, *señorita!* Yonder is the noble animal the bullfighter has just bought."

He indicated a group of men in whose midst Querido sat upon his horse. "Has the *señorita* seen the horse? No? What a pity! Such a noble beast! White as alabaster—not a strand of black to be found anywhere. For several years Señor Valdes has been searching for such an one, but without success until at last the equerry to the king found it. And it is worth a king's ransom. Look, *señorita!* We can ride between the corrals and see the beauty at close range. *Par'aca!* I will go first, with your kind permission—"

Francisco, however, had not waited for my kind permission. Already he was threading his way through the narrow space between the fences, toward the open where Señor Valdes was in the act of putting his superb Arabian through some pretty paces. Half vexed, yet appreciative of my groom's love of horseflesh, I followed. In brushing too close to a fence, my skirt caught in a forked rail. To prevent a tear, Francisco dismounted and released me. As he led his horse into the open, a commotion arose at the far end of the grounds. The crowd craned their necks. Some sauntered inquiringly in the direction whence the hubbub came. A brawl, probably, I thought, as I reined Killarney and watched the Arabian from a distance.

Suddenly, with cries of warning, the crowd broke into a run. Sidewalks, booths and *casetas* were deserted by a fleeing mob which scrambled, jumped and knocked one another down as they came on pell-mell. Mules brayed, lambs bleated, cries of terror rent the air.

"*El toro!*" I heard them shout. A horseman galloped by, calling over his shoulder to me. "Ride, *señorita!* A bull has got loose from its box on the railway siding! Ride for your life!"

At that instant I recalled having seen a train of bullpens on the siding as we came into Seville that morning. The bullfighter had called attention to the load of Miura bulls which were being shipped to Madrid for the fighting season. But knowing the Spaniard's love of a practical joke, I expected to see nothing more frightsome than a cow being driven through the street which ran between the booths. I raised myself in my saddle to get a better view. The sight which greeted my eyes caused me to catch my breath sharply.

"It is true, Francisco!" I called. "*El toro!* The bull! Look! He has overturned a carriage!"

The screaming occupants were dumped into the street. The poor horses struggled frantically to free themselves from the traces. I watched spellbound, expecting the frothing beast to bury his horns in their quivering sides. Not so! Instead, the demon focused his attention upon a deserted booth which flaunted its red bunting to the evening breeze. A challenge! A bellow of defiance! He charged—his great neck bent low—and lifted the structure from its foundation like a toy.

In the clatter of bottles, crockery and cans which followed the assault, the bull paused and snorted—sniffing the strange concoctions which drenched his head. That pause was his undoing. A man stepped out from behind the débris—so close to the bull's head he all but brushed the horns. A shot rang out—then three in quick succession. Querido again took aim. Maddened by the pain, the bull plunged toward him. Before a scream had escaped my lips the man had stepped nimbly aside. Down the street a clatter of hoofs; a volley of shots as the mounted officers closed in upon the wounded beast now filled with hell-fury to gore to death his ancient enemy.

Trembling with fright at the sound of the volley, Killarney whirled about face, plunging and scraping against the fences in his frantic effort to be off. I talked to him; I stroked his neck and sought to quiet him. Irish Rose, infected with the terror, plunged and dragged at her bridle, preventing the groom from mounting.

Another shot—the shot of mercy—and Killarney bolted straight for a fence. "Safe over! Good boy! Now get your stride. What! Another? Hip! Hip! There we are! Your Irish blood is up—what? Steady now—don't disgrace me by a cropper! Just want to stretch your legs—and there's Irish Rose behind us. Now for a brush! We're off! Gone away!" I called laughingly over my shoulder as Killarney made for the highway, lengthening his stride as he warmed to the race.

On we dashed. Teams of oxen; laden mules and carts passed in a whirl of dust. A horseman waved his arms and shouted. His voice was lost in a clatter of hoofs. Still on! Killarney showed no signs of tiring.

"Say when you're fagged, old dear," I called to him. "No? Still not enough? Ha! That was a narrow squeak!" as a goat rose from the side of the road fairly under my horse's feet. He swerved dangerously, then righted himself.

"Come, now—quiet down." I pulled gently at the bit—then with a firmer hand. Killarney refused to yield. Now I remembered how against my father's will I had long since discarded the curb.

Leaning forward in the saddle, I stroked the glossy neck—talking, cajoling, as I was wont to do. For once my blandishments were ineffectual. Killarney held his break-neck pace. The clatter of hoofs behind had ceased. My throat burned with the biting dust. My eyes ran tears.

"Come, now—this will never do!" I braced myself and pulled with all my strength. The bridle parted. The bit dangled against the horse's neck. With a snort and a defiant tossing of his head, he leaped into the air and started fresh. Killarney was beyond control!

"Sit tight—sit tight and keep your head!" a voice within me spoke. "Conserve your strength."

I set my jaws. Time and space seemed blotted out. My brain whirled through the years of childhood; my dead mother's face; my father's tender care: my first ride, held fast in his protecting arms, seated before him in the saddle—a pudgy, flaxen-haired child.

A sharp recall to the present—the danger—a stumble—the turn of a hoof upon a loose stone, and what? Blood pounded in my ears. Or was it hoofbeats behind? A piercing shriek—the glare of an approaching train—the track ahead. Which would reach it first?

I drove the spur home. A leap, a spurt—and we were clear. Trembling with reaction, I swayed from side to side. Shouts—voices—murky lights. A village hove in sight.

Should I risk a drop from the saddle? The rhythmic beat of hoofs behind—louder now—upon the cobbled street. Hah! Was the crazed beast's strength ebbing—or was it mine? "Steady, old girl!" I wavered and gripped the pommel.

"Steady!" a voice echoed—a voice in Spanish, wafted to me on the night winds.

How long it was I never knew. Slowly, it seemed, the rider crept up behind.

"Lean to the right and release your iron!" I heard him shout.

My muscles responded to the call. Inch by inch he gained. Killarney's failing wind—a last great effort to outrun his pursuer—a swerve; an arm about my waist; the impact—and Killarney bit the dust. The race was won!

Out of a cloud of nebulous forms I drifted back to earth. Strange voices; a sob; something cool and soothing stroked my head.

"Speak, *señorita!* Speak, for the love of God, ere I shoot myself to escape thy father's wrath!"

"Sh!" another cautioned. "Make room! Let her have air!" Then, close to my face: "*Señorita!* Ah, you hear me? God be thanked! Please to drink some wine." He pressed a cup to my lips.

"Querido," I murmured; then, overcome with confusion, corrected: "Señor Valdes—I assure you I'm quite unhurt. It was stupid of me to faint when all danger was over."

"Please to drink," he urged, and raised me with his arm about my waist.

At the door of the humble inn I sat and smiled upon the old men and crones who had gathered to felicitate me upon my thrilling rescue and to pay homage to their hero. In the road beyond, Francisco—pale and tight-lipped—cooled the frothy horses, aided by a score of willing hands. Killarney, now a humbled beast, nipped the neck of Irish Rose. And, farther on, Querido stood beside his milk-white Arab, stroking the silky coat with a loving hand. In the blue light of the young moon the horse seemed carved from marble.

From time to time Francisco left his work to peer inquiringly at me or to embellish his tale of how the Rose had wrenched herself from his grasp to follow her stable mate; how, on foot, he had followed until the mare was caught by a mounted officer; and—this with dramatic zeal—how the *torero*—God bless and guard him forevermore—hearing of my mad ride, had followed on the Arab.

"*Señorita,* God be thanked you were not killed." He crossed himself.

Señor Valdes joined us. "Is the gracious

lady quite restored? Now, is it wise to stand when one may sit?" he reprimanded in his caressing voice.

"I'm quite fit again," I assured him. "The ride was not much stiffer than many a day with the hounds, and only for the broken bridle—"

He, too, crossed himself devoutly. "To-morrow—to-morrow, *señorita*, I will burn a candle to the Virgin in gratitude for the gift of my good horse," he said reverently.

I sighed—not so much from languor as from perplexity to understand life's inconsistencies. Señor Valdes noted the sigh.

"Is the *señorita* tired of waiting for the carriage? Mules, you know, are not as fleet as Arab steeds." He smiled, then, consulting his watch, went on: "They cannot be much longer. The messenger has been gone an hour." He bowed and left me.

To avoid a threatening stiffness, I walked along the road, attended by some children and a mongrel dog. Señor Valdes held aloof. I felt perturbed. A certain restraint lay between us. Had he sensed my aversion when we had met that morning in the train?

In due course the mules came jogging down the dusty road. There was much palaver and gesticulation with the men upon the box. When they refreshed themselves with many a *copa*—drunk to the health of rescuer and rescued—we made ready to start homeward. The villagers thronged about us. Blessings were lavishly intoned. Flowers were thrust into my hands. Señor Valdes assisted me to a seat in the landau; then stepped down.

"*Buenos noches, señorita,*" he said softly, "and *adios!*"

"But why good night—good-by?" I asked in some surprise. "Are you not driving with me?" Then on second thought I added: "Oh, I understand. You are returning to the city—"

"No, *señorita;* I return at once to my dear mother and the little Concha. They will be waiting. I ride behind."

I understood. Something in his gentle tone sent the blood tingling to my cheeks—a blush of shame. The hostility I had shown when first we met had not gone unnoticed. I bit my lip.

"Señor Don Armando," I said, then hesitated and tried again. "*Amigo mio—muy amigo mio*—will you not ride with me?"

Could I have done less?

## III.

"COULD I have done less?" I asked my father, when, on his return, I related my experience.

"Hardly less," he commented. There was a twinkle in his eye.

"Well?" I demanded. "Go on!"

"I was only thinking. Phil, I strongly suspect you've given me a much deleted version of that runaway."

"Nonsense, dad! You mustn't believe all the newspapers said about it. You know the Spaniards are given to romancing."

"*La verdad*—but since you've bribed or threatened Francisco so that I can't get the truth from him"—here dad stopped and crinkled his nose before he continued—"it will be necessary that I call upon Señor Valdes to express my gratitude and to inquire into the truth."

"You'll have an opportunity to thank Señor Valdez *muy pronto*," I hurried to tell him. "He dines with us to-night."

Dad's face was a study in surprise.

"Upon my word!" he expostulated. "Upon my word!" he reiterated. "Dash it all, Phyllis! One doesn't take a bull-fighter into the bosom of one's family!"

"Not even when he's saved your only child from death or disfiguration? Ungrateful wretch!" I tweaked his forelock. "Anyway, the deed is done. And perhaps you'll reserve your judgment until you've met the man."

I ensconced myself upon the arm of his chair and ruffled his hair. Presently he chuckled.

"Tell me!" I demanded. "Remember we've no secrets from each other."

"I was just wondering what your grandam will say when this affair travels back to England. 'The Hon. Miss Phyllis Cadogan rescued from death by a bull-fighter!' Gad! Can't you visualize the old lady's expression?" He laughed merrily.

"Grandmother will say as she has said

before and often: 'What *can* one expect from a selfish man who persists in dragging his only chick from post to post without a chaperon?'"

"Against that chick's will, of course," dad answered, a world of love shining in his eyes.

I pressed his arm.

"Old dear," I whispered. Then he pressed mine. Dear, dear dad—

Dad walked with our guest to the *finca* gates. I awaited his return on the path beneath the orange trees. The air was heavy with the scent of flowers. Birds twittered in the trees. In the distance a cornet bird piped his minor note. The blue-black mantle of night was studded with myriad stars. From afar the throaty voice of youth droned a love song to the strumming of a guitar. Mysterious night. Dad's footsteps aroused me.

"Well," I queried, "have I exaggerated?"

"Not a whit. Señor Valdes is all you represented—a winning personality; well-born and bred. Why such a man should choose bull-fighting as a profession—" he broke off.

Dad had voiced my thought.

"Señora Valdes called to-day and left cards," our butler informed us a few days later. Dad looked appealingly at me.

"Phil, will you do the honors for the family?" he entreated. "You know my aversion to making social calls."

And thus it was I had come to know Señora Valdes and the little Concha. The acquaintance had ripened into friendship during the ensuing weeks. It was pleasant to have the companionship of a woman—a mother whose only thought in life was for her children. It saddened me at times to think of all I had missed through the death of my own mother. Darling dad! He had done his best. His life was one long devotion to his chick, but a girl needs a mother's love.

I was thinking of this as I walked leisurely toward the Valdes home, under the noonday sun. Conchita awaited me at the corner of the street. She greeted me with affection and begged permission to carry my kit of paints.

"And how is your dear mother?" I inquired, linking her arm through mine.

"Ah, *pobre madre!*" she answered sadly. "She is pale and worn. All night she has been praying, and this morning we have been to mass. My brother fights the bulls to-day, you know. Our mother lives in terror that one day he will be gored to death." She sighed, then smiling up at me, continued: "So I am more than glad that you have come to spend the day with us."

Dear little Concha! With blue-black hair and soft brown eyes which seemed too large for her small, oval face, it was difficult to believe her a Ramon-Valdes. Not yet sixteen, she was the last-born and given to her mother late in life. Two sons between Conchita and her brother had died in youth.

Señora Valdes was in the kitchen overseeing the baking of my favorite almond cakes, Conchita explained as we entered the cool and darkened house. In the unpretentious drawing-room a row of candles burned at the foot of an image of the Virgin. Fresh flowers decorated the little altar. Upon the *prie-dieu* lay an open prayer-book.

Señora Valdes hurried in to greet me. She kissed me on each cheek and in keeping with Spanish custom, assured me that her house was mine. Her black dress accentuated the slenderness of her figure. Her ash-blond hair, still unsilvered, was drawn high upon her small head and surmounted by a comb of exquisite workmanship—a gift from her son.

It was in this garb that I had chosen to paint her. The large canvas on the easel was nearing completion. I scanned it with an appraising eye.

"My brother says the portrait is the work of a master-hand," Conchita piped, "and that only a Murillo or a Velasquez could make so perfect a likeness of our mother."

I laughed and pinched her cheek. "I fear thy brother is prejudiced, *ninita mia.*"

"I love thee," she whispered.

"And I love thee," I answered truly.

The use of the familiar "thee" and "thou" marked the progression of our friendship.

"When wilt thou begin *my* portrait, dear *señorita?* And what shall I wear? Perhaps the confirmation frock with the veil and candlestick, or dost thou think—"

"Peace! Peace, Conchita! Do not weary the *señorita* with thy chatter," her mother cautioned, hurrying out as a familiar step sounded in the courtyard.

Conchita clapped her hands. "Ha! There is my brother!"

"Has he not yet gone?" I asked with pleasurable anticipation.

"Not yet, *señorita*. He has been with the Arab horse. Wilt thou believe it, *señorita*, when I tell thee he loves the beast as if it were a woman? The truth! I have heard him talking with El Blanco—such words of endearment! Such adoration!—and for a horse! Canst thou explain it?"

I was saved the embarrassment of a reply by Querido's entrance. He kissed my hand.

"God is good," he said, searching my eyes.

Señora Valdes called to Conchita. The child went reluctantly, following us with inquiring eyes. A silence followed.

"You fight to-day," at last I said.

"Yes, *señorita*," he replied haltingly, as if reluctant to pursue the subject.

"And how is the Arabian?"

Querido smiled. "He grows more beautiful each day. Will the *señorita* one day ride him?—with the honored *señor's* permission—"

"Oh!—as for that!" I protested. "Indeed, I should love to ride the horse."

"Then one day soon—"

"Querido *mio*—it is time," the *señora's* voice called gently.

"I come, dear mother."

A creeping chill lay hold of me. Something of the *señora's* forebodings infected me. I shook it off.

"Good luck!" I said, extending my hand. He raised it to his lips. "Wait!" I said, withdrawing my fingers with a perturbation not wholly painful. "I will give thee a talisman. What shall it be?—a flower, a rose—"

"The red one at thy breast, if thou wilt be so kind."

I smiled as I pinned the rose upon his coat. My hand trembled at parting.

"*Hasta la vista!*" I called after him. He answered me with his eyes.

## IV.

In that corner of the patio where the sun's rays no longer filtered Señora Ramon-Valdes sat in her straight-back chair. From time to time as I worked upon the portrait, she fingered her rosary and prayed mutely for the safety of her son.

The love and devotion which permeated the household like an aura filled me with conflicting emotions. I found it difficult to reconcile Don Armando's home life with his sanguinary calling. Bull-fighters, as a class, are not held in good repute. Springing from the lowest strata of society, if not from the underworld, the indiscriminate adulation of the masses and a too well-filled purse encourage to loose living.

I had heard it stated that more *toreros* die from dissipation than are killed in the bull-ring. My early opinion of Señor Valdes was founded upon prejudice. But in the face of an acquaintance which had ripened into friendship, the inconsistency between the man and his vocation more and more bewildered me. Then, too, his mother had told me something of the family history. Her father was a Navarrese—had once been premier. Her mother, a native of Valencia, came of a family which had figured largely among high ecclesiastics of the church.

Señora Valdes had been a beauty in her day. This she had not told me, but, as I studied her patrician face, seeking to express the spirit on my canvas, I visualized her youth—the small head; the classic mold of her throat; the proud but not disdainful tilt of the chin—all duplicated with manly vigor in her son.

Faithfully to portray the eyes—here was my greatest test—eyes now blue, now gray; black-lashed and—

"Forgive me, *señora!*"

I dropped my brush and palette and hurried toward her. She had grown pale and blue about the lips.

"I have taxed thee beyond thy strength. Now rest."

She covered my hand with her own.

"Child, it is nothing. A bad thought perhaps," she replied, suppressing a sigh. "The days when my son fights the bull are hard to bear."

It hovered on my lips to ask her why, *why* he pursued the sanguinary calling—he who loved the horse, the dog. Had I not seen him rescue a bleating lamb, strayed from the fold? I had watched him bind with infinite tenderness the broken leg of a bird; soothe an ailing child—but what right had I to question?

A clock struck four. "Tea-time!" Conchita shouted, then added reverently: "God be praised! I could not have remained speechless a moment longer!"

The periods of self-imposed silence while I worked were nothing short of torture to one of the girl's nature.

Tea, I fear, was an empty function to my hostess. For Conchita it was a gorge of cakes. For me—well, I am English.

"A half hour more, *madre mia*, and the bull must die."

Conchita's pronouncement left me cold. Señora Valdes crossed herself. Again there crowded to my lips the imperative demand to know why Armando had chosen the hideous profession. There was a silence, then Señora Valdes spoke. It was as if she had divined my thoughts.

"It may interest thee to know, my Annunciata," she said, addressing me by the name she had bestowed upon me—because I was fair, fair as an annunciation lily—she had said, "and it may surprise thee to learn that Querido *mio* is the first of our family to fight the bulls—*la verdad*—" She affirmed her statement by a nod of the head.

"I come of an ancient and honored house. The family was wealthy. Wealth attracts wealth. I married a man of great fortune. And, although the marriage was arranged by my parents, we were happy. Love does not always bring happiness." She stopped and lost herself in thought.

"And yet, not to love—" I ventured.

"There are many kinds of love, my lily—the love of a mother for her child; the love of a child for its parents; the love of man for woman—"

"And the love of a man for his horse," Conchita finished, sententiously — still brooding over a seeming anomaly.

The *señora* smiled in spite of herself, then continued: "My marriage was a happy one. God blessed me with four children. Yes, I was happy—until we went to Madrid to live. My husband was ambitious and there was much money to advance his aspirations. He entered politics. With a gift for oratory, a caustic mind and a dominating personality, his future in his chosen field seemed assured. But there was a weakness. He was vain. He could not withstand flattery. The life at Court was his undoing. His enemies pandered to his weakness and blinded his discernment. Gambling, bad women, intrigues and extravagance—in ten years we were impoverished. Then his health failed. Stricken with apoplexy, he lingered many months—a hopeless cripple."

Señora Valdes passed her hand across her eyes as if to shut out the painful memory.

"Querido was in his eighteenth year when his father died. Like so many sons of wealthy parents, he was not prepared to fight life's battles. His father had encouraged him to a life of idleness and pleasure. My relatives—the churchmen—advised me to prepare my son for holy orders. What else was there for him to do? What can the son of a gentleman do without money—they argued? But my son was set against the priesthood. How should I live with the small children to support and only a pittance left from the wreckage—he demanded? My relatives offered to educate the younger boys. Well, in the end I persuaded Querido to prepare himself for holy orders. I left Madrid and returned to my native Valencia. The churchmen gave me vestments to embroider. I lived by my needle. Then my two sons died of smallpox—" The *señora's* voice faltered.

"And Querido?" I prompted, when the silence had become prolonged.

"Ah, yes—Querido—" She took up her story with a tender light in her eyes—"

"Before the first year of his novitiate had ended, Querido disappeared.

"Some months later came a letter from Barcelona. He gave me the reasons for having deserted the priesthood; that he was

not by nature fitted to the holy calling. God to him meant life in action—a man's work—not mumbling prayers, and God had revealed to him where his responsibility lay. His mother was his sacred care. Querido *mio*. In Barcelona he was preparing to become an advocate, meanwhile working at anything which offered to enable him to pursue his studies. From time to time small sums of money reached me, and by and by the sums grew larger—so large I was stricken with fear that my son had become a gambler. I demanded an explanation—and one day came a newspaper—I learned the truth. Señor Don Armando Ramon-Valdes—in whose veins flows the proudest blood of Spain—had become a bull-fighter! 'Querido, El Torero'—the paper said. Querido was the name I had fondly bestowed upon my first born. Querido *mio*."

Señora Valdes passed her hand across her quivering lips—then bringing herself sharply to an upright posture, continued: "Do not misconstrue me, Annunciata! I feel no shame for my son, though the pride of his blood is hard to kill. My son is a good man. No better lives. No doubt you have heard tales of the immoral lives the *toreros* lead. My son is not of these. He is clean. He lives only to make his mother and sister happy. God bless and protect him." She crossed herself and prayed mutely. I waited.

"And the study of law. He relinquished his ambition?" I asked, after a time.

"Ah!" The *señora's* face brightened. "That is still his ambition. Thou shouldst see his books! Almost they fill a room from top to floor. But, alas! Law must be studied many years and then, perhaps, more years must pass before a man may earn a living. A *torero* earns much money. Aaeeh! Annunciata, dost thou believe me when I say I would live on crusts if only my son would give up this gruesome business?"

I nodded. "I well understand," I assured her.

"But he says no. One day, perhaps, when he has saved enough to insure his women's future. Our wants are few. Meanwhile, I pray—I pray to the good God that it may come to pass."

"And, I, too, will pray for that early day," I echoed in my heart.

## V.

THE Arab responded to my voice. Desert-bred and trained, the bridle was nothing more than an ornate trapping. Mounted on Killarney, dad watched me from afar.

"It's like riding the wind," I told him as I brought up El Blanco to his side.

"The very poetry of motion," dad commented. "One readily understands Valdes's love for the horse. Well, have you had enough? Then, we'll turn back. I've a long day ahead of me in the hot city."

We cantered homeward. In the east, a shell-pink heralded the rising sun. From afar the convent bells called to matins. Lumbering carts drawn by oxen plodded toward the city. The goatherd—staff in hand—drove his flock to the meager pasture. Dawn—pregnant with everlasting hope. We rode in silence. Presently—feeling dad's eyes upon me—I turned inquiringly.

"What's the matter, Phil? You're not looking fit?" he said.

"It's the heat," I parried.

"Why not take a few weeks in England?"

"And leave you, daddy, darling! How dare you suggest it!"

He reached out and grasped my hand.

Within our walls the gardener was cutting roses. The coolness of the night still hung in the orange trees. I lingered there breathing deep of the fragrance and lost in reverie.

My father's voice roused me. "Come, Phil! Breakfast's waiting!"

"Sorry I can't be with you at dinner," my father said as he prepared to take his departure. "Saunders is coming from Cadiz. We're dining at the club. Hope you won't be lonely. Why not take the late afternoon train and dine with the Wiltshires? They've been inquiring for you—wondering why you've deserted them."

I shook my head. "Too hot in town, dad, dear. Besides, I'm going to the Valdes's to-day. And that reminds me: the

*señora* feels quite hurt because you've shown no desire to see the portraits. I might feel a bit resentful on my own account at your indifference over my masterpieces if I did not know your weakness."

"Tell the *señora* I'll make amends, *muy pronto*." His smile gave way to a puckered brow. "I say, Phil, aren't you seeing a good deal of the Valdes family? I mean to say—of course, you know—" He hesitated as if to choose his words. I filled the breach.

"Why, dad, you know I've been painting and now I'm making some sketches of Don Armando. They must be finished before he goes to Madrid. On his return I'm to paint his portrait. Is there any objection?" I concluded with a guilelessness I did not feel.

Dad did not meet my eyes. He strained me to him, kissed me and hurried out.

"*Hasta luego!*" he called over his shoulder. Dad, dear dad.

The days lagged. Querido was still in Madrid—my father away on a protracted tour of official business. My conscience troubled me because of the relief I felt at his absence. For the first time in my life I welcomed a separation. Something had grown up between us like a dividing wall. A shadow made the old frankness no longer possible.

The situation depressed me. I resolved to break through the depression; to talk with him—and yet, what was there to say? Can one put in words the heart's hunger, the tortures of a mind divided against itself? No. There is a sanctuary where only God may enter.

In solitude I worked upon the portraits of Querido. I needed no sketches to remind me of his every feature. His eyes; his smile; the essence of his manhood—all had left their imprint upon my soul.

Sometimes, when riding the Arab, the restive mood would find relief. I wove a pretty fancy that the master had so imbued the horse with love that the radiation reached and soothed me. Then, one day, I came upon the little Concha standing beside the Arab in the dim light of the stable, stroking his silken neck. The picture was so pretty that I watched her unobserved. I heard her say: "I know now, thou white one, why my brother so loves thee. It is because of thee *she* came into his life. I heard him tell thee so. And for this, I, too, love and bless thee."

She kissed the Arab's neck. My heart beat faster as I stole away unseen.

Came at last the day of Querido's return. Señora Valdes had planned a *fiesta* to celebrate the double event of her son's homecoming and his natal day. All day the house buzzed with preparations. It was to be a family party only.

Conchita was on her toes, tingling with excitement. "It is like a wedding!" she shouted, clapping her hands and surveying the decorations.

"Oh! If Heaven will only send me a lover! One day I shall be married and the *señorita* shall arrange the wedding feast!"

"Peace! Peace!" her mother entreated, stopping to admire the table laid in the patio—now gay with flowers, plaster saints and bunting.

Querido's groom entered to show with pride the garland he had woven for the Arab's neck. Conchita pirouetted.

"Of course! Of course!" she mocked. "The horse must not be forgotten! Oh, *señorita*, I have a secret! Such a beautiful secret! One day I will tell thee *why* my brother loves the beast."

"*Quieto, tu!*" I reprimanded, catching her in my arms and hiding my flushed face against her dark tresses.

"The presents—we have forgotten the presents!" the *señora* exclaimed.

"Come, Juanito!" she beckoned the groom. "Come, lend a hand to bring the portraits—and mind, thou dost not scratch or mar the frames!"

The portraits were brought out with many admonitions. I placed them in the archway. The *señora* looked on with folded hands and wagging head. "Oh, my Annunciata!—but thou hast spent a fortune on the frames!"

"Such beauty demands a fitting setting," I told her.

"Listen! Listen! The *señorita* calls me a beauty!" Conchita shouted. "Then, one day I shall be presented at Court! Heigho! Heigho!"

"It strikes seven!" her mother announced in a startled tone. "What said the telegram?" She fumbled in her pocket.

"For the hundredth time, *mi madre,* I tell thee the train arrives at half-past seven!"

"Aye, if it be not late!" the *señora* answered with an appealing look at me.

"It will not be late, *señora,*" the groom assured her. "I have been to the station and the *jefe* tells me the train will come on time."

Conchita clapped her hands.

"But—" Juan interjected, "a crowd has assembled at the station hearing the *señor* is expected."

"Uh!" Conchita snorted in disappointment. "Then the ices will be melted!"

My spirit drooped. My vision of the man gave place to the triumphant *torero.*

## VI.

"WHAT shall I say—how thank thee, my mother, for so much happiness?" Querido asked some hours later.

From the depths of his embrace, Señora Valdes smiled through her tears. "Thou must thank the *señorita, hijo mio,*" she replied. "But for her assistance I could not have managed. And the portraits—hast thou thanked Annunciata?"

"I will thank the *señorita* as I walk home with her," was all he said aloud.

Conchita entwined me with her arms. "Oh, do not go yet, dear *señorita!* Do not go so soon! Sing once, again, my brother—one more song that I may sleep and dream of the lover who will one day come to me."

Querido questioned with a gesture. I smiled and reseated myself.

He took up his guitar, and strumming the prelude to his song, strode to a corner of the court where only I could see his face. His rich barytone voice—untrained, but pregnant with feeling—rose now in passionate pleading, now died away in minor cadence; a love-song, crying out the heart's longing and its tormenting doubts.

I strove not to look at him. His stronger will drew my eyes to his and held them there.

Under the orange-blooms we lingered. Night's kindly mantle blotted out the world.

"Lily, my white lily," he murmured in his caressing voice, "is it a dream from which I must awaken? Tell me again—dost thou love me? Is it true? Ah, God is good."

All-yielding, I sought his arms and raised my lips to his. "Querido," I whispered, "Querido *mio*—"

"Tell me, my Annunciata," my lover said some time later, "when does thy father return? I must talk with him. In this overwhelming love for thee I must not forget thy father's rights. I will plead for an early marriage. Such love as ours cannot go long unrequited. Dost thou think he will consent?"

Something clutched at my heart. "Oh, my dear one! My father likes thee—he likes thee as a man—" I floundered.

"I understand," my lover answered after a silence. "I understand what lies between us." He lost himself in thought. The tearing at my heart had left me mute. "Were it not for my women—" he said, contemplatively—then with a gesture—"Well, we shall see, *mañana.* For the present we think only of love. This hour belongs to us. Close to my heart, beloved. Give me your lips. Ah, that God should make love such sweet torture."

We parted after many ineffectual efforts. Vibrant with love's emotions, I crept into the silent house. Noiselessly I closed my bedroom door, hoping the servants would not come to disturb me. To be alone—alone with the wondrous thing which swayed my very soul. I looked out upon the fragrant night. The stars seemed closer.

A step sounded in the corridor—then a light tap on the door.

"Who is it?" I responded reluctantly.

"Dad!" came the well-known voice.

I threw open the door. "Why, dad!" I gasped. "I didn't know—" as I kissed him. "Why, darling! What a surprise! I had not expected you until to-morrow."

My father looked at me a little wistfully I thought.

"I telegraphed that I was returning. The message is on the hall-table, still unopened."

"I've not been home since morning," I hastened to explain. "I've been with the Valdes's all day. There was a birthday feast for—for Don Armando. Every one was sorry you were not there." As I spoke I lighted a candle and drew up an easy chair. "Come, sit down, dad, and tell me about your trip." My father drew me to my wonted seat upon the arm of his chair. "Your hands are hot, Phil. What's the matter? So is your head—"

"Nonsense! Why don't you ask me to put out my tongue?" I laughed and pressed a kiss upon his forehead.

For a space he held me close, then released me and settled back.

"Well, Phil, I've some news for you—a great surprise. I'll lay you a wager you can't guess what it is." Dad smiled up at me.

"Tell me what?" I questioned with a sense of perturbation.

Dad waited a space before he answered: "You've got your wish at last. I've been ordered to India. A fortnight more and we say good-by to Spain."

My father sprang to his feet and caught me by the shoulders.

"Why—what's the matter, Phil? Phyllis, my girl! You're pale as death! Sit down." He crossed the room to pour some water, speaking as he went. "I knew you were not well! Here, let me bathe your face. You're cold. I'll fetch a peg—"

I caught his arm. "No, dad—don't go. I'm quite all right." My father scanned my face. "You certainly don't look it," he commented, stroking my head. "What is the matter, daughter? What's on your mind? Can't you trust your old pal? I thought we were never to have secrets from one another."

I struggled to keep back the storm of emotion which threatened to overwhelm me.

"Phil! Phil! You're breaking my heart!" He knelt down and drew me into his arms.

"Dad! Dad!" I struggled through the heaving sobs. "Dad! I can't go now! I can't leave him—Querido—"

I heard my father draw his breath sharply. "Querido!" he echoed. He rose to his feet and took a turn about the room. Then drawing a chair so that our knees touched, he took my hands between his two.

"Tell me, daughter," he said in a tremulous voice. "How far has this matter gone?"

And with my face pressed close to his, I told him.

## VII.

THE silence hung like a pall. Even the birds outside seemed muted. Querido, with compressed lips, waited for my father to continue.

"Understand me, Don Armando," dad said in a gentle voice, "I do not forbid the marriage, though I have a well-defined prejudice against a union between persons of alien blood and creed. But my daughter's happiness is paramount above every other consideration. It is because I want her to be happy that I am asking you to wait a year before you marry."

Querido drew in his breath sharply.

"A year!" I gasped.

My father nodded, and addressed himself to Querido: "A year will pass quickly. If, as you say, in six months you will have completed your engagements, then in six months more the notoriety attending your retirement from the bullring will have abated. Time blots out all things. I repeat I have no objection to the man—"

Querido bowed. My father continued: "There is another point to be considered—in my estimation a vital point. Although my daughter is twenty-one, she has never, to the best of my knowledge, been in love. I knew, of course, that one day love must come to her"—dad looked at me and smiled wistfully—"but, like all selfish fathers, I relegated the day to the remote future. She is all I have—"

His voice broke a little; then he squared his shoulders. "However, the point I wish to stress is the fact that this is my daughter's first love. You've swept her off her feet. You've a winning personality, Señor Valdes. Your blood is hot. I fancy not many women could resist you."

Querido raised an appealing hand, which my father disregarded.

"Now," he said, "while Phyllis believes she loves you, may it not be infatuation?"

My lover started and looked at me.

Through the blur of unshed tears I smiled at him. "I love you—I love you," I whispered.

Dad sighed.

"Well, time will tell," he said. "In conclusion I have to add, the decision rests entirely with my daughter. She is of age and of independent fortune. I will make no further objections."

My father had finished. He broke the painful silence which followed by extending his hand. My lover grasped it firmly. They held each other's eyes. Then my father left us.

I found solace in my lover's arms.

It was Querido who made the decision. Dad knew his man.

"Thy father's wishes must be respected," he said to me. "He leaves me no alternative. Ha! But those English are a subtle race! Look in what position he has placed me! We may marry, yes, at once—but against his will. Then what follows? A rupture between thee and thine, who, until I came into thy life, was thy all. And as if this were not obstacle enough—he pricks my pride. A Ramon-Valdes is welcome—a *torero*, no! Ah, my loved one— Well, never shalt thou blush for me. When I take thee to wife, I will come as thy equal."

"Darling, don't—"

"Hush thee, hush thee!" He silenced my remonstrance with his lips and crushed me in his arms.

"Ah, my love—my love—how can I let thee go from here? It will be as if I were shut off from the face of God. Thou wilt be true? Thou wilt wait for me? Yes, yes—I know thou wilt be true."

"I will wait for thee," I whispered. "I will be true—Querido *mio*."

## VIII.

"WHAT will you do whilst I am away today, Phyllis?" my father asked after a protracted silence.

We were lunching at the palatial Ritz in Madrid, whither we had come on our way to England.

Long silences had usurped the place of our former gay companionship. Despite my efforts to throw off my depression, a constraint had grown up between us. From time to time I felt my father's eyes upon me. Always tender, he had exerted himself to make the separation from my lover less poignant. There was a wistfulness in his eyes as if he half regretted the obstacle he had raised. But the subject was taboo.

"How will you pass the day?" he repeated, rising from the table.

I lifted my shoulders.

"Sorry I can't take you with me," he continued. "Why not order a carriage and drive out to the Gardens—or, better still, let me ring up young Wainwright at the embassy. He'll be delighted to entertain you."

I shook my head.

"Don't care to, dad," I answered, forcing a smile. "Anyway, I have some shopping to do—mementoes I've planned for friends at home."

Dad patted my hand. "I'll be back in time for dinner," he said as he left me.

I lingered over coffee. Observing me alone, the *maître d'hôtel* came to the table. We had known the genial Italian when he was still a waiter at the Carlton in London. It had pleased him to be remembered, and he lost no opportunity to shower favors upon us.

"Will the *señor* return for dinner?" he inquired. "Yes? I am pleased. Perhaps there is something special I may prepare—"

When the momentous question had been disposed of, the *maître* regaled me with bits of local gossip: the improvements in the Spanish capital since his last visit; the amiability of the English-born queen; the popularity of the young king; the races; the bullfights— Ah! Had the *señorita* heard of the midweek tragedy? No? The newspapers were full of it.

He extracted a folded paper from his pocket and laid it before me.

"Such a pity!" he said. "Another distinguished *diestro* gone—the third to meet death by the same bull. *Sapristi!* That is a bull with a charmed life, surely! A Miura bull, bred on the hacienda near Seville. And to-day was to have been a gala event. The king and queen had announced their intention to be present—their last op-

portunity before their departure for Santander, where they go to spend the summer. But now everything is in the air because of the matador's death. God rest his soul." He crossed himself. "It is not easy to get a matador at short notice. This is the bullfight season. But the officials have announced that they hope to secure the renowned Sevilliano—"

I caught my breath.

"No doubt, *señorita*, you have heard of the redoubtable Querido? And have you seen him fight the bull? No? Then, perhaps you will honor me by accepting the loge placed at my disposal? The loge is a prize, situated as it is so near the royal inclosure—"

"Thank you," I stammered, rising, intent on making my escape. "Thank you, but I could not deprive you—"

He mistook my polite remonstrance.

"I shall be honored," he assured me. "With your permission I will go to inquire the latest bulletin, and if the matador has been secured I will send the tickets to the *señorita's* room."

With a bow he hurried out.

My knees trembled as I made my way to the lift. I dared not trust myself to look at the paper clutched in my hand until I reached my room. Once inside, I read the vivid details of the goring which had ended in the *torero's* death. The bull, it said, bore a charmed life. Three men had met death in their efforts to dispatch the great beast. The purse had been doubled as a bait to the matadors. It was hoped that the renowned Querido might be able to cancel his engagement in Seville . . . *Please God, no! No!*

Always when black thoughts of my lover's ever-present danger assailed me, I sought refuge in prayer. "God protect my beloved—keep him safe from harm." Thus I prayed now. From my fervent supplication the telephone aroused me. The *maitre* —informing me that the bullfight would take place—an official announcement had been issued. Querido would arrive in time.

I looked at my watch. In less than an hour he would face the bull—the bull with a charmed life. I must prevent it. I must seek him out—plead with him. What though they deemed him a coward? But would he withdraw? No; it would be useless to plead with him. Why, why had I ever left him? Why had I placed my father's wishes before my love? Oh, kindly God, protect him—my beloved—

Three times I donned my hat and veil—and three times removed them. The impulse to go to the bullring rose up and receded. I dared not trust myself to go alone —to watch his danger. And yet to wait—wait through those agonizing hours—uncertain, tense— No—better to be near.

From the tablelands a hot wind was blowing. Whirls of dust pierced the thick veil beneath which I hid my face. The carriage moved at snail's pace. Equipages jammed the avenue. Motors honked. Horses clanked their bits. The sallies of gay women bruised my raw nerves. How dared they laugh and jest, forgetful of yesterday's death—to-day's dangers?

"Barbarians!" I hissed. "Savages—lusting for blood like Rome of old."

I had shrunk at the thought of entering the great amphitheater unattended. Now I shrank lest a chance acquaintance might find me out. But in the good-natured crowd I went unnoticed. Only here and there bold eyes sought to pierce my veil.

The band was playing. Men and women humming—laughing—greeting one another—exchanging badinage. There were children, too—small tots, lisping the name of the matador.

I followed the attendant down the steps, groping my way through the crowded aisle which led to a loge immediately above the great arena. Only one chair was occupied. The tall, gaunt man with ascetic features seemed oblivious of my presence. Instinctively I knew him for a priest disguised as a *paisano*. And when a moment later he raised his sombrero to mop the moisture from his brow, I caught a glimpse of tonsured pate.

With nerves taut and senses tuned to the highest pitch, not a detail of the panorama but limned itself upon my brain. To my right and at the center of the sea of faces which stretched on all sides was the royal inclosure, carpeted, gay with flags and royal insignia. The band stopped playing. A

ripple of expectancy—craned necks—a concerted rising, and the trumpeteers flared the entrance of the royal guests. Through the door at the rear of the inclosure a group of officials preceded their majesties. Human voices vied with the blare of brass. The heavens echoed with wild salvos.

Regal in her white gown—her blond hair dressed high and topped by the mantilla. the alien queen shared the tumultuous welcome with the boyish king. When at last they were seated a hush fell upon the assemblage.

Holding the traditional key conspicuously in his hand, the *alcalde* rose and went to the balustrade. The bugles blared. The great gates at the left of the ring opened wide, and to a swinging march the glittering pageant entered.

Behind my veil my eyes strained for a familiar figure. No—not in the first line, nor of the two that followed. Ah-h-h-h! Never could I mistake that graceful figure. Taller by a head than the others—lacking their swagger—he walked alone.

"Querido! Querido! Querido!"

In that moment, with the air rent by cheers of welcome, a revulsion held me like a vise. Something of my father's aversion to a bullfighter imbued me.

"Querido! *Bello!*"

A hot flush swept me from tip to toe. No! I could not love a *torero!* It was the man I loved, and not the gold-decked stranger cheered by a blood-lusting mob. I would not stay! I had been mad to come! In my frenzied effort to escape I overturned the chairs which blocked my way.

But something stronger than my will held me back. I sank into a seat. The music stopped. A man was speaking—the *alcalde* going through the formality of delivering the key of the bullring to the *toreros*. Followed some handclapping—more cheers. "Querido! *Bello!*"

"He looks pale," one said. "Is it that he knows the dangers, and fears?"

"*Que tonteria!* The man is skilled. He has a wrist of steel—and where hast thou seen such legs?" another scoffed.

*Danger and fear.* I leaned forward. He was smiling, yet with a certain seriousness bowing to the occupants of the royal box. The band took up the march; the procession moved on to encircle the ring.

Now I saw the picadors range themselves about a section of the ring—saw the blindfold horses quiver, intuitive to their fate. The band stopped playing—a running fire of comment—a hush—and *el toro* plunged through the open gates.

For an infinitesimal period he stood still, rolling his bloodshot eyes from side to side as if to take measure of his foes. Then throwing back his great head, still raw with wounds, he bellowed defiance. The next instant he was racing like the wind toward a *capote* waved tauntingly at the far side of the ring. With smiling nonchalance the man who held the cape stepped nimbly aside. The impact of the bull against the wall sent the watchers scurrying from their seats. The crowd tittered.

With a clutching at the heart, I saw Querido unfurl his cloak and glide forward. Like one hypnotized I watched his cool deliberation—the graceful movement of his arms. As the bull plunged by, it seemed he scarcely moved and the handkerchief he waved in his hand was split in half where the horns had cut it.

The crowd roared approval of the daring feat. Now, while the lesser *toreros* engaged the bull's attention, Querido fetched a chair. Seating himself thereon, he began to wave the *capote*. The bull charged. Without rising from his seat, he deflected the onslaught *and left a wreath of roses hanging on el toro's horn!*

The crowd went mad.

"Querido, the fearless! Querido-o-o-o!"

"Hah! This is a day of days!"

"In truth, the man deserves his reputation!"

"If now he does not overreach himself."

"God loves the brave."

Clammy with fear, I watched on. Only when the picadors entered the fray did I close my eyes. I could not look upon the barbarous cruelty to the helpless horses. But even with sight shut out I was not spared. Voices high in excitement recorded every move.

"Gurh-h-h-h! He lifts the horse like a feather!"

"The rider is unseated—"

"He's safe. What a bull! Look how he tears the poor beast to ribbons."

"Well, that one is finished."

"No doubt he will be cut up and sold for cow's meat. Haw-haw!"

"Now come the *banderilleros*. Ooff! That was a pretty piece of work—two barbs in his neck!"

Shouts of approval.

"A few more so well placed, and the bull's neck will come lower."

"That remains to be seen. Ten barbs did not prevent the beast from tossing poor Limeno, who died this morning. May he walk with God—*pobre*."

It seemed that I must scream—*scream!* My dry tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. God in heaven—that such things could be!

"Hah! What has happened?"

Chairs scraped; feet scuffled; a rumble of voices. The crowd rose in their seats and craned forward.

"Whose down?"

"A *banderillero*—he stumbled. Look—the bull is trampling him under foot!"

The crowd sucked in their breath.

"Name of God! What is the matador doing? See!"

I strained forward, rending my veil aside.

Like a flash Querido raced across the open space, flaunting his *capote* full in the bull's face, seeking to draw him from his victim—and having attracted his attention, raced back, pursued by the maddened beast.

As the bull shot by, Querido turned and sped back to his fallen comrade; raised him with one arm and with the other waved his cape.

Foaming, dripping with blood from the barb wounds in his neck, the bull made straight for his prey. Weighted by the burden my lover carried, it seemed sure death. A scream gurgled in my throat. Querido swayed, and as the bull dashed by he tossed the cape full in its face and left it hanging on his horns.

Pandemonium reigned. Hats tossed on high; women shouted; men danced on their seats; bouquets catapulted through the air.

Under cover of the *banderilleros* who engaged the bull, Querido carried the wounded man to safety outside the ring. It was an act of daring dear to the Spanish heart. The welkin rang.

The queen rose and stood at the balustrade. And as Querido recrossed she leaned forward, smiled, and tossed her bouquet at his feet.

The reverberation of the cheers rocked the mighty structure.

It was gracious little acts such as this which had endeared her to her alien kingdom.

Modestly my lover caught up the flowers and bowed acknowledgment. His eyes swept the boxes. He stiffened; his gaze focused on me. Only then did I recall that I had uncovered my face.

With a smile of infinite tenderness he held my eyes. A fleeting moment and he had moved away; and as he went I saw him raise to his lips the hand which held the ring I had placed upon his finger at parting. Querido *mio*.

What followed was phantasmagoria. The living part of me had left my body and entered the arena, thirsting for blood. The bull must die—die! The bugle sounded for the *muerte*.

"Now we shall see," a voice said with a smack of relish.

"The beast's strength is not yet spent; his head is still too high."

Sword in hand and gently waving the *muleta*, Querido faced the bull, who, as if conscious of the matador's intent, whisked his head from side to side. The sun glinted on the blade. A flash, a lunge—*el toro* tossed his head; the blade snapped in half. The horn had ripped Querido's sleeve from wrist to shoulder.

"Hah-h-h-h!"

Another sword was quickly passed, and he raised the *muleta;* a stream of red drenched the hand which held it. I gripped the balustrade.

The blade shot out and went home. With a shrill bellow the bull rose high in the air. Querido swayed and crumpled to his knees. The salvos blent with a gasp of horror, *for in his dying frenzy the bull had charged the fallen man and impaled him on his horns!*

My piercing scream rent the air. The

world gave way beneath my feet; a darkness closed me in.

IX.

"AH, *señorita*—are you better now? Can I help you to your carriage?" From a haze of curious eyes the ascetic face bent close. Like a knife cutting through live nerves, memory engulfed me. I struggled to my feet, gripping the priest's arm.

"Take me to *him*," I gasped between my chattering teeth. "Take me to Querido!"

The padre crossed himself.

"You mean— Oh, God! No, no! Not dead! I will not believe it! Take me to him."

He checked the questions on his lips and led me up the aisle.

"Hurry! *Hurry!* Querido, I come."

With strength born of desperation I fought my way through the jabbering crowd, striking, clawing, running, dragging the priest with me through the street. A tortuous path—then through a small door and up a flight of steps. Hurrying figures. "Querido—take me to Querido."

In a bleak room where only a shaft of sunlight seeped he lay, a priest intoning the last rites, *toreros* on their knees praying. I brushed them by. Oh, my beloved—so white, so still; his white shirt stained with blood which gushed with every breath from the gaping wound below his heart! I threw myself upon my knees and gathered him in my arms.

"Querido!" I called. "It is thy Annunciata! Beloved, canst thou hear my voice calling thee back to life—to love? Querido! *I will not let thee go!* It is thy wife who bids thee live—heart of my heart!"

The eyelids trembled under my lips—the glazing eyes opened and looked into mine. He smiled.

"Annunciata *mia*," he breathed, a world of love in the faint whisper. Then a great sigh shook his torn and bleeding form, like the soughing of a breeze. His eyes closed.

"Querido! Thou shalt not die! Father, Thou which art all Life, I claim his soul! Pray, padre, pray! You who are his friends—pray! God is love. God is life. There is no God but love. God is life. God is love. There is no life but God—"

"The ambulance, *señorita*."

The padre raised me to my feet. "Come, *señorita*," and he sought to lead me away.

I waved him aside. "I go with him," I said.

The doctor raised his hand in remonstrance.

"*I go with him!*" I repeated.

Who dared to refuse me?

The gong clanged; the crowd gave way. Like a wind cloud we raced with the bearer of the scythe—his chill hand in mine, my lips close to his ear, crooning words of love and faith: faith in the Great Unknown.

Close I clung to the stretcher's side as they bore him into the house of pain. White-garbed forms—noiseless like wraiths; the ascetic bed; the eerie light which flickered beneath the image of the Holy Mother. Whispers; grave faces bending over him; forcing a draft between his clenched jaws; now a sad-eyed nun seeking to unclasp my hand from his.

"Peace! Peace! I stay with him!"

My raw nerves shrinking as they cut away the tinseled garb.

"There is no hope," they said.

"You lie! You lie!" I hissed. "God is not a fiend! *My* God is love and life."

Through measureless time I watched, keeping tryst with the soul that lingered as if loath to go alone.

Out of the maze of shadowy forms my father came, haggard and drawn.

"Phyllis, my girl," he whispered.

"Sh-h-h-h!"

"Darling—I have brought the famous Leithoff. All that can be done by mortal hands he'll do. Come away with me."

I brushed him off.

Some one was speaking to my father. I strained to hear.

"There is one chance," I heard the surgeon say. "A transfusion of blood—but we must act quickly. The flame burns low."

The speaker looked at me. "I must ask the *señorita* to withdraw," he said.

I rose and bared my arm.

My father groaned. "No, Phyllis, no! Doctor, I forbid it!"

I laid my fingers on his lips. "Hush thee, hush thee, *mi padre!* My life belongs to him. I am ready, doctor."

"Phyllis—I can delay no longer. I must return to England. You'll come with me, of course."

Dad was standing at the window with his back to me. From the depths of my pillowed couch I listened.

"Don Armando is out of danger," he went on. "His mother will remain to care for him."

My father turned from the window and came a few steps toward me. "Phil, it tortures me to see you so pale and listless. You're not gaining strength the way you should. You'll recover more quickly once we're home."

I dared not meet his eyes. Too well I knew the blow I had in waiting.

"Dad," I answered, with an effort to control my voice, "*I can't go.*"

Only the ticking of the clock disturbed the silence which followed my pronouncement. At last my father crossed and stood beside the couch.

"Does that mean, Phyllis, you purpose to break your promise—your promise to wait a year? Have you and Señor Valdes reached this decision?" His tone was chilling.

"Señor Valdes had no voice in my determination," I answered, wounded by the formal way he had alluded to my lover. Then, yielding to my impulse, I struggled to my feet and grasped him by the arms.

"Dad—dearest of fathers," I said, smiling through my tears, "what will you say to your proud bairn when she tells you—that—that she asked Armando to marry her, and he refused? Hah! Hah! Haa-a-a!" The hysteria which had threatened burst like a spring freshet.

Dad pressed me back upon the couch and sat beside me.

"Now, tell me what has happened."

And when the flood of tears had brought relief I told him.

"Have you never thought, dad, what these tortured days and nights have meant to me? Do you think I could again leave him and face those long months in India, knowing his danger? No, dad, no—you must not ask it. Oh, darling, I *do* love you. You were my all until he came into my life."

Dad swallowed hard. "Go on, Phyllis."

"Yesterday, you know, I went to see him. He was not so well. There was a lack of spirit, a depression. At last he said: 'Thy father tells me you return to England.' That little sentence told me volumes. It pierced my heart. Then, dad, then and there, I made my decision. 'No, Armando,' I answered, 'I do not return to England. As soon as thou art strong enough we will be married.' He tried to speak, but failed. Dad! If only you could have seen his face, his eyes.

"'But, wait, Armando *mio*,' I went on, trying to look stern. 'We will be married upon one condition—thou hast killed thy last bull.' Armando smiled. 'That is a promise easily given, my lily. There is no longer necessity to earn money for my mother and the little Concha. Has my mother told thee of the inheritance from the cardinal, her kinsman?'

"I nodded. 'I know, too, that the advocate's letter reached her on that gruesome day when we were fighting for thy life—and since thou wilt not share my fortune, proud man, I am happy for thy sake that thy kinsman died. Now, thou art my own, beloved.'

"He drew me into his arms and kissed my lips, my eyes. You know, dad. You were once a lover. Then, quite suddenly, he released me and held me from him. 'Annunciata—tell me—does thy father know? Has he absolved me from my vow to wait a year?' he quavered. My eyes told him the truth. It was then, dad, he refused me —*me*— a Cadogan! Hah-ha! Hah-ha! What would my grandam say to that? Dad, aren't you ashamed of me? Ha—"

"Steady, my girl, steady—"

Dad gripped my hands. And, hovering between laughter and tears, I continued: "'Is thy word more to thee than love?' I stormed. Armando straightened in his chair. 'I am a Ramon-Valdes—a man of honor,' he replied. 'Oh, my Annunciata,

heart of my heart, blood of my blood—though I lose thee, I cannot break my word!' This from the despised *torero!*"

My father rose and measured the room—back and forth he paced, lost in thought. "I wonder, daughter," he said at last—"I wonder whether you realize what this means to me. I had counted on this last year together—even hoped you would forget him—yes, I must confess it. Have I been selfish—cruel? You are very dear to me."

He turned away to hide the moisture in his eyes.

I sought his arms. "Darling, hold me close—best of fathers—why should we ever part? Are you bent on India? You have loved Spain—we've been happy there. Ah, dad—I want you both."

Some time later when he had dried my tears and blinked away the dewdrops in his eyes, dad took out his watch.

"I wonder if there's yet time. What are the hours for visitors on Sunday?"

I hurled myself upon him. I laughed, I cried.

"We've fifteen minutes if we hurry," I gurgled like a happy child.

"But are you strong enough? These fainting spells are far too frequent. Can't we keep it until to-morrow?" my father pleaded.

"To-morrow—*mañana!*" I fairly shouted. "Darling dad, I'm not yet a Spaniard. *Now—now!*"

Three days later, by special dispensation, we were married. It was a simple wedding in a hotel room whither Armando had been brought. The *maître d'hôtel*, I'm sure, caused a famine in flowers. They were everywhere. And for my bouquet a spray of lilies. By a miracle the lilies had been found, since it was long past their span of life.

"An angel came down to bid them hold their blooms for thee," my lover whispered when he saw them in my hand.

Señora Valdes and the little Concha were present—the *señora*, soft-eyed and regal in stiff silk; and Conchita—a rosebud bursting into bloom, proudly conscious of the part she played as flower girl. I was gowned in Spanish lace. Dad said I was ravishing—but dad was always prejudiced.

Querido—pale and gaunt; somber of mien.

"Well mayest thou look grave," I teased. "Thine is a responsibility not lightly faced. *Thou hast yet to meet my grandam!*" Oh, I was gay! My heart caroled like a bird set free.

I had almost forgot the noted surgeon who had elected himself the groom's attendant.

"Come," he said, when we had left the altar and the little group had pressed about us to bless and wish us happiness—"come. Señor Valdes—you must sit. You are not yet strong, remember. That you have lived to see this happy day is a modern miracle."

"It was the will of the good God," Señora Valdes said, and crossed herself.

Dad pressed my hand which rested in his arm. "It was love," he said—"it was her love. Armando, that snatched thee from the grave."

My husband looked at me. Oh, the message in his eyes! Querido—Querido *mio!*

***THE END.***

# Secret of Powder Basin*

## By EMERSON HOUGH

***Author of " The Covered Wagon," " 54-40 or Fight," " The Magnificent Adventure," etc.***

### *WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I.*

DAN POWERS, late captain of escadrille, is jobless in Chicago and within two dollars and fifty-nine cents of being broke. In a popular-priced restaurant his gaze is instinctively drawn to a young woman patron, and she responds with a half-startled glance. In that flashing moment the young bachelor is lost. The beautiful girl leaves ahead of him; he is delayed in paying his check, and thus loses all trace of her. Powers now calls on Hard-Boiled Burlingham, once a colonel, A. E. F., but now a millionaire oil man, borrows one thousand dollars from him, and goes fortune-seeking toward the West. He settles on a homestead in Powder Basin in the Idaho mountains. Far up the valley are the Ballantynes, a family of Eastern "pilgrims" who are ranching under great difficulties. Annie Ballantyne, the niece, is a young woman of high courage. She exhorts her relatives to remember that their ancestors were Scotch Highlanders, and she imitates for them the drone of the bagpipes.

"It's the pipe of Ballantyne!" she exclaimed, breathless. "Three hundred years! They've never whipped us yet!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### UNDER IRON.

BATTERSLEIGH proved no bad prophet as to the willingness of the two Thompson boys to function as neighbors. Those hardy young ranchmen regarded the building of a two-room shack as one of the simplest of human enterprises. The process of getting up the fireplace and chimney out of the adjacent country rock, and of laying up the walls out of logs already notched went on as a matter of detail.

Dan Powers felt a strange feeling of pride in the growth of his rude little habitation. It seemed so firmly to take hold upon the soil—a soil which one day would be his own. It was no unpleasant week which the four

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men spent on the highlands at the foot of the lake.

"Two more days and we'll have the shack done, me boy," remarked Battersleigh one morning at breakfast when the two met after smoothing down their blanket beds and executing their regular morning ablutions in the icy waters of Targee Creek. "Soon we'll all be sitting tight on the only sheep crossing for forty miles along the outlet—we'll hold them out of all the cañon country behind ye, which is where old Sanders really wants to get.

"And whisper—I'll tell ye the gulch they call the Dry Cañon in back of your desert entry is not always dry, and is never dry clear to the head. 'Tis not much of a spring, but there's water up yonder, and we should be ingineers enough to run a contour down to your bench land.

"Then ye can prove up on your desert claim as sure as ye can on the homestead. Eight hundred acres of land, all inside the shake of a lamb's tail, so to speak, is not so bad even in these days, especially when ut comes to selling ut by the front foot, as part of the risidence property of Franklin City.

"Ut took some close classifying in the land office, I'll admit," Battersleigh chuckled, "to put on a desert entry right against a homestead, and get by with them both, but stranger things happen every week in that land office. Not that Sanders won't make a fight, because he will. But possession is nine points of the law with a sheepman.

"Once yer house is done, much as I'll miss ye here, me lad, I'm fearing ye'll have to move over yon. Ye can come over every day or so—wheniver ye know there's no sheep in the country."

"Of course, what we ought to do," said Dan, "is to fence in all that land along the lake shore. But I've no money for that."

"Tut, tut!" said the old man. "If ye notice, things have a way of gittin' done, after all. For instance, when I tell the Thompson boys you want a fence there to keep the sheep out, they'll build ut for you and give ut to ye, rather than ut shouldn't be there."

Powers looked at him soberly, recognizing the sublime faith of the frontier. He did not laugh, but nodded his head in assent to it.

They had their breakfast dishes carefully washed and dried and were replacing them in their little cupboard when they heard hoofbeats in the door yard and through the window sighted a man who swung out of his saddle and threw down his bridle reins.

"How are ye, Ed Stanley?" said Battersleigh, accosting the stranger. "Come on in and have a cup of coffee—we haven't cleaned the pot as yet. Where're ye stoppin' now, since ye sold out the ranch?"

"Humph!" rejoined Stanley. "I'm stopping right there on my own place, and I don't see no way for me ever to get away. I allowed to sell out and get out; but Sid, over in the town, never told me who was buying me out.

"Now you both know that last summer was dry as a powder horn—this here basin surely earned its name. Then come last winter. Look at the hides on the fences.

"Now the spring started in cold and late, and I well knowed what that meant. We can't even break out here at nine cents on the hoof no more. The big outfits are trying just to save their breeding stock. Why should they? There's no hope for a cowman here.

"Things may change next year, but what's next year to me? I had a chance to get out and I got out.

"Now, here I am, not out at all! That fellow Sid has rung in a girl on me in this here trade—the finest, handsomest girl that ever set foot in Idyho. How could I tell anything about that? I didn't agree to sell out to no such girl like that.

"And here moves in this bunch of pilgrims, plumb tenderfeet, every one of them. The girl is twenty-two, twenty-four years old, pony built, and got eyes like a antelope. She's got an old man that wasn't fit to work, and now he's down with a stroke of some sort. Last time I saw the old woman she was so sick I s'pect she's dead by now. There's a boy that don't know which end of the saddle to put on front.

"And that girl looking at me with that sort of eyes, and thanking me for this chance I've give her to buy my ranch! She tells me they done sold their home in Ioway,

and come out here to start over again where land is cheaper. Why, hell, I'm a murderer, that's all!"

Powers pushed the coffee pot toward him across the top of the stove, and after a time Stanley went on:

"That's how I've given possession—I've give possession to everything there was, including the former owner of the place! That's me. I'm living in the barn, and cooking my own meals in the corral, and trying to give them people some kind of a square deal. They don't know nothing about this country.

"It's this way: I've got to marry the girl! I offered them a thousand dollars cash for their trade, and she wouldn't take it—said they didn't have any other place to go, and they'd have to make it go here or nowhere. I don't see no other way out of it. And I don't want to marry no girl. It 'd be a imposition on both of us.

"I'm too old, and well, that's a different sort of a girl. Now what in hell are we all going to do? Us folks in here haven't never give a good family the worst of it, but these folks are plumb helpless. I'll marry her if there ain't no other way, but somebody's got to, that's shore."

Ed Stanley cast a troubled gaze on Dan Powers, lithe and sinewy youth.

"Mr. Powers," said he. "You're located on that claim down at the foot of the lake, ain't you?" Dan nodded.

"It's a good homestead you've got, too, the best around the lake. It's good for twelve dollars an acre as soon as you get your title. But now what I come down for this morning is this—to see you. Batty can't work cows, and them three or four dudes that's down at the clubhouse on the lake couldn't do as good as he could. Everybody round the store is busy right now. I don't know that you're any good, but I thought I'd find out."

"Enlisted from Texas," said Dan Powers. "Dad had a bunch of four thousand head when I was a baby. Rode all my life, and roped some."

"Well," grinned Stanley, "that's good news for me. I've got to have help up there on the ranch. I ain't sure we'll either have to ride or rope very much—what I really need is a collar-and-elbow wrastling champeen. That bunch of pilgrims saw me twist one bronc and throw one calf, and they hollered bloody murder.

"The old woman was the worst. She said they owned them cows now, and that I shouldn't muss 'em up, throwing 'em with a rope. They ain't got no squeeze gate in the corral, and I can't catch 'em and hold 'em alone. It's time them calves was branded, and all the old cattle ought to be vented into their new brand.

"Oh, they've got a brand of their own, all right. I figured it out for them and got it registered and got the blacksmith in town to make the iron. This here girl, now, is running the O-A brand, named for her. The boy said to me one day, telling how sick the old folks was: 'Looked like to me,' he says, 'we ain't got nobody, only Annie.'

"So I called my old place the Only Annie ranch. And that's the honest-to-goodness-est, truest, describingest iron in either of these two basins. Powder or Centennial, and I know every brand in both. If it ain't only Annie up there, I'm a liar.

"So now," he concluded as he pushed back his cup, "I want a hand to help me brand that bunch of cows. I've rid all my back range and got in all I sold 'em—and maybe one or two odd head more—and they're in the corral. I can't do the work alone, and there's no one there to help me."

"I'll go up with you, of course," said Powers.

Battersleigh mocked him. "My God! How far the rustle of a woman's garments is audible."

A trifle nettled, the young man made answer that no one need concern himself about D. Powers and any pilgrim from Iowa. Then he turned to Stanley. "How do I get up there?" he asked. "Do you want a real cow-puncher to walk to your house party round-up?"

"Git on top of my bronc," said Stanley.

"I won't set you on foot," Powers replied, "but if you don't mind I will ride around to the store. I'll have to buy a pair of overalls if I go up there with you. I don't mind seeing how it feels to fork a bull once more."

Taking no chances about the gentleness of

the equine, he stepped out to the yard and checked his mount, then swung up, right hand on the saddle horn and his back to the horse's head. Something in the way he picked up the long reins, flirted them between his fingers and tossed them over the back of his left hand, seemed to show horse work was not unfamiliar to him. He jogged off, shoulders hunched, feeling for a match. Stanley followed him with his eyes, grunting.

"Shoves 'em in clean to the heels. That feller's rid before. If I see a man ride up on his toes in a oxbow, I know he's a dude, and I wouldn't hire him. Say, who is this fellow, Batty? He ain't no city man."

Battersleigh sat in the door, pipe in mouth, looking out over Stanley's shoulder.

"That young gintleman, Captain Daniel Powers, is me friend and partner," he said. "He's very wealthy, and of fine connections among important business people in the East. He's only here timporarily, because he loves the country, the same as us. He's to edit the Franklin City *Daily News*, among other occupations.

"Ye're entirely safe about the pony-built pilgrim with the antelope eyes, ye may rist assured of that."

What with one retort and another, all in good temper, for the two had known each other for a long time, they put in their time until Powers rode up again.

"Good pony, neighbor," said Dan, swinging down. "Now you ride on up to the branding pen, and I'll be there in an hour or so. Batty, I wish you'd explain to the Thompson boys why I can't help on the house to-day."

Powers found the old Stanley corral to be located something like a quarter of a mile from the cabin which was used as a residence. By this time the animals, which had been held in the corral overnight, were hot, thirsty and uneasy.

"I put 'em all in my old round pen," said Stanley, "so we could get at them better. I make the count thirty-seven head—fourteen shes and a lot of yearlings, and now we want to set them in the brand as fast as we can. Wish we had more help, but there ain't a one of them pilgrims worth a damn."

"On our way!" said Powers. "Where do you want me—rope or iron?"

"If you insist, you can go inside," grinned Stanley.

"Close riding!" grumbled Dan, looking at the little horse corral.

"There ain't going to be no riding at all about it," said Stanley, "I told you them pilgrims seen me spill just one yearling and the old girl let out a yell that I was ruining their cattle. They wouldn't stand for us to bust a critter the way it ought to be. I ain't never learned how to make a cow-horse throw a critter easy, have you?"

"I have not! So I suppose you want me to go in there and hug those calves and ask them please to come out and get a hair singe?"

"That's what. Take 'em in your arms, lay 'em down gentle and pull 'em out easy, the way their hair runs. These is modern cow methods."

"But, man, some of these yearlings will weigh four hundred pounds!" protested Powers. "I'm no collar-and-elbow champion, even if that's what I'm signed for. If you'd let them out and give me a rope, I could do the rest."

"Sure you could, but she's got to go on as she lays. I promised the girl I'd go easy with them calves."

"Oh, all right," said Dan, taking off his coat and putting on his gloves. "Then I won't treat 'em rough."

"Ain't you going over to the house?" inquired Stanley, hesitating.

"Not to see any girl. As quick as we get done with this reconstruction and rehabilitation work, I'm going to pull out for home. I'm busy. I'm building a house down there."

He threw down a bar of the corral, and, rope in hand, stepped inside the round pen among the half wild animals; a mixed lot, some "fours" already in the Stanley brand, and so on down to the last year's crop of calves which Stanley had never "got around" to brand at all.

On these latter Dan Powers began his work. Gently as he could, he cut two or three of them out from the others and urged them to circle around the edge of the corral. At last, with a quiet flirt of the loop just

ahead of a calf, he tightened up, threw it, and piled on top of it as it lay.

"Nice work, son!" called out Stanley. "Hold him down. You'll do fine!"

Between them they finally got the heavy youngster subdued, and taking each an ear, hauled him outside.

"The fire's not hot yet," said Dan, "but the sun is. If you ask me I'll say this is one poor way to run a cow ranch."

"Well, here comes son to help us," replied Stanley. "He'll be worth about five cents. God bless our home!

"Howdy, son," he added as the young boy of the family joined them. "Feeling pretty strong now?"

"Sure," replied the youth. "I'll help all I can." He stood shyly regarding the tall young stranger whom he had never seen before. "How do you do, sir?" said he.

"This is Mr. Powers—he's got a claim down at the lower end of the lake," explained Stanley. "Now, son, you watch the fire, and keep that iron hot enough so it's about the color of a green cherry. It's almost ready now."

"You put that hot iron right on them?" asked Amos Ballantyne. "Why, you'd burn them sure!"

"That there suspicion has a good foundation," said Stanley. "You watch. If you're ever going to be a cowman, you've got to begin some time. How's all the folks?"

"Aunt's sick in bed to-day. The fact is, there isn't anybody only Annie and me. She told me to say that she was going to have lunch ready for you after a while, and that she'll call us all. We thought maybe I could help a little bit. She didn't know there was going to be anybody else here, though."

With a sense of delicacy the boy drew Stanley to one side.

"Annie would want to know how much we're to pay for this help, of course."

With his eyes he indicated Dan Powers, and Ed Stanley grinned pleasantly.

"Well, you tell her this man I've got is a champion cow-wrangler and he comes high. Tell her his time's worth about a thousand dollars a day, but seeing it's her, we'll make it seven hundred and fifty, providing there's any pie for lunch!"

He was testing the iron, and Amos lost interest in other things as, under the cowman's practiced hand, he saw the iron do its work relentlessly on the first of the yearlings.

"Gee!" said he. "So that's how!" His face showed a horrified interest.

"That's how!" grunted Stanley.

"If only we had any kind of a squeeze gate," said Dan Powers, wiping the sweat from his face, "we could brand them standing up, one—two—three. I'm ashamed of you for laying out the job this way, Stanley. That calf kicked me black and blue."

"I'll help," said Amos. "What can I do?"

"Climb up on the fence and shoo them past," replied Dan. "Maybe that 'll save a little time." Amos proceeded to obey the best he knew.

Powers flipped the noose underhand once more, this time under a big roan which he had picked out as the next victim and at last snatched both legs from under it as he sat back on his heels in the dust of the corral. The three of them piled on top of the creature and finally succeeded in dragging it out, fighting every inch of the way.

"Where did you learn to throw a rope, son?" asked Stanley. "Real ropers never learned inside of a fence."

The young man only grunted, professionally modest, although his white teeth showed in a dusty smile. He really was not unhappy, for this was man's work, much to his liking.

They kept on thus until the number of calves left was so small that they hid among the older animals and were hard to cut out. The entire bunch by this time was excited, hot and uneasy, so that they made no pleasant companions.

Dan singled out one alert, white-faced yearling, which dodged in and out through the dust cloud, but one thing or another balked his cast until at length, exasperated, he sprang at it bodily, caught it by the neck and bore it to the ground. Just as he did so the young boy perched on the fence, taking literally his instructions to keep the remaining animals milling around the corral, innocently flung out his arm with a shout which startled the older cattle direct-

ly to where Powers lay sprawling. Then there happened one of those things which can happen in handling cattle.

A four-year-old steer, with heat and excitement, came directly at the prostrate man as he lay holding his capture. Powers felt the weight of a half ton of beef when a heavy hoof came down on his ankle as the beast swerved aside.

He turned over convulsively, and at length sat up, looking down at his foot!

## CHAPTER X.

### AMBULANCE SERVICE.

THE bone of Dan Powers's ankle had snapped like a pipe stem. He swung sidewise as he caught the pain of the break, and raised a hand to Stanley, who came hurrying over from the fire, crawling under the lower bar of the corral.

Dan nodded, and hobbled out, resting his weight on the shoulder of the yearling, when Ed Stanley, laying hold of the ear, jerked it to its feet. They led it out, struggling, between them, and Stanley threw it outside the gate and sat on its head.

Powers was leaning back against the log corral, suddenly pale under the sweat streaks of his dusty face.

"What's wrong?" asked Stanley, suddenly looking up. "Did he kick you hard?"

"That's not it," Dan answered. "That big steer stepped on me. Busted that ankle where I was shot—it never was any too strong since then."

Stanley cast loose the white face and hurried to his side.

"Oh, hell, now!" he exclaimed. "Hold on till I get you easy—here, set down on the coats and let's see."

He eased down his man and pulled up the leg of the new overalls which Dan had bought that morning. It was not difficult to see the ghastly nature of the hurt. At the edge of an old scar, where the bone had once before been broken and had pierced the skin, the protruding end of the newly broken bone showed almost ready to come through.

Ed Stanley sat back on his heels in the hot sunshine.

"That looks bad to me," said he. "That's plumb bad, if I know anything about it."

Powers was lying back, his arm across his eyes. Stanley bent and picked him up, clumsily, but gently, and carried him across the trampled ground to a clean bunk beside a little spring which broke out near the edge of the road. He himself crawled under the wire fence and stood in the middle of the road, holding up a hand. A car was coming down the road, and he thought he recognized its occupants.

"That's the clubhouse car," he called out to his patient, who lay just inside the wire fence.

The car pulled up at his signal. The driver followed Stanley, crawling under the wire, and approached the spot where Powers lay, still with his arm thrown over his eyes.

"A steer stepped on his leg over in the corral, doc," said Stanley. "It's busted his ankle, and 'twas bad enough before. There's no place to take him here. I thought maybe you wouldn't mind carryin' him down as far as Battersleigh's place at the crossroads. He's living there with Batty. His name is Powers—Dan Powers."

"Holy Moses—boy, is that you?"

Something in the gruff tone of the speaker made Dan Powers suddenly open his eyes. Imperturbable as he usually was, a flush came across his face that had nothing to do with the pain of his injury.

"Home again!" said he at length, with an attempt at a grin. "So this is Paris! For a minute when I was looking at the wire I thought it was No Man's Land again. Same old Red Cross, same old doctor. How are you, colonel? I've been wondering where you were."

Powers sat up on the grass.

"Didn't Battersleigh tell you I'd come?" ex-Colonel Burlingham demanded. "Why haven't you been around to the clubhouse? I was going to come over to your place this very day. Never heard from you. Just learned where you were. Took my advice and came to Powder Basin, eh? Well, sorry she's using you so rough."

They got Powers under the wire and into the car, where Stanley did all he could to ease the jolting of the journey to the gaunt

house where Battersleigh and Powers still were domiciled. They helped Dan to a place in his own bunk, where the doctor could complete his examination.

"This ought to have a cast," said Burlingham, professionally. "There's no way of making one, but I've noticed it's practically impossible to kill a man in the Western mountains. We could do surgery out here that we wouldn't dare think of doing in France. This valley is one big antiseptic room, my son, and lucky for you it is. The chances are you'll get over this all right. If we were back East, I wouldn't promise."

"Will it knit fair?" Dan inquired anxiously. "Will it be as good as new?"

"By a miracle it might be."

The two looked at each other steadily for a moment.

Hard-Boiled Burlingham, as gentle as a woman inside his shell, at length got up and hung his coat on the nearest nail.

"I was going home to-morrow," he remarked. "I've got a little oil enterprise that I'm going to pull off before long. But the nature of my original oath when I started out in medicine as a boy requires me to stay here and see you through."

"You've already lost a thousand," said Powers, his face white now. "What's a million, here or there?"

"It looks as if you'd wished yourself on me a second time," the older man retorted, smilingly; "I'll have to sit down and see you through whether I want to or not. I don't want to practice medicine—don't like to—and don't have to. I'm done with it. I came out here to have a rest and a good time! Now look at you!"

## CHAPTER XI.

### REGARDING ANNIE.

FOR weeks Powers lay in bed, and then began to hobble about the place, attended by the solicitous but wholly inefficient Battersleigh, and visited betimes, professionally and socially, by his friend, Dr. Burlingham. The eccentric millionaire found pleasure in his frequent calls at the Battersleigh mansion at the crossroads. Sometimes he would sit for an hour and say nothing, or again might have long periods of conversation.

One morning he sat, pipe in mouth, near the door, looking out. Once in a while he chuckled quite to himself, as if enjoying his reflections. At length he turned and cast a remark across his shoulder to Dan Powers, who sat with his leg stretched stiffly out before him.

"Wonderful country out here for making money," said he. "For that matter I never saw one that wasn't."

"Your present line of practice doesn't seem to indicate that," replied Powers. "Show me."

"Oh, I've a new profession now. I'm an artist. Sign painting at reasonable rates."

He reached down and picked up a bit of board on which he had been painting some large letters by aid of a marking brush and a pot of lampblack. He regarded his work with a pursed lip of criticism.

"Not so bad," he announced with his head on one side.

"And what is the idea?" Dan inquired idly.

"You ask me that, when you've been living here for days as no other man in the country ever did live! Chicken, pie, cake—real bread, real butter! You know where it came from."

Powers nodded. "Yes, I'm in her debt. It's too bad that I was asleep the last time she came here."

Burlingham was reaching in his pocket for tobacco. "But now, it being pretty fairly safe that you're going to have a good leg out of that after all, let us pass to the really important problems of the day. What I was going to say is this:

"That girl up there was actually going to sell chicken dinners—real honest-to-goodness chickens, with real bread and real butter, and real coffee, all made on the spot—for six bits. She apologized for charging so much!

"Now I told her that she must forget all about six bits and charge two dollars, nothing less. These motor fiends who come through here will break their necks to get something to eat. Every one of them has been starving for a hundred miles before he

hits this valley. You can go south to Salt Lake and north to the Arctic Ocean from here, and not find any human food.

"I counted a hundred and forty carloads of people going by here yesterday. Every one of them had a haunted look—and every one of them had money.

"Now, here's my sign up at the forks of the road at the head of the lake near the O-A ranch—I'm going to paint a lot more and have one at every fork of the road around here for twenty miles. This is the way it reads:

**ANNIE'S CHICKEN DINNER**
**$2.00**

**ANNIE'S BISCUIT & COFFEE**
**2 BITS**

**ANNIE'S ICE CREAM**
**4 BITS**

"Ice cream!" ejaculated Powers. "How come?"

"Well may you ask how come, my friend! The reason is that this Annie person is the one and only human being in this entire and complete mountain valley. She does her own thinking. I told you I didn't furnish the idea of this new business at all. All I do is to paint the signs and set the prices.

"This girl's got a better business head than any rancher in this valley. She figures that hay at twenty-five or thirty dollars a ton won't make any money in beef at nine cents a pound on the hoof. Right soon after you all got done branding her stock for her, she sold the whole herd down to about a dozen cows. She's got hay enough in sight to run them next winter. The boy can milk, and Ed Stanley turned over a whole log house full of ice that he put up about twenty years ago—ice is the best thing this country does in the winter time.

"That girl came out here—didn't have the first idea about what she was going against; landed here absolutely green and helpless. That was last spring. Now she's in the middle of a practical business. These other people round here are howling and starving. If I wanted to start into business out here I'd see if I couldn't buy into partnership with that girl."

"But she must have a lot to do up there. Everybody sick."

"Nobody's really sick up there," rejoined Burlingham. "The girl is sound as a bell, and the boy will bounce an ox once he gets his growth. The old man will be around by next year. Nobody can stay sick out here—you can't kill a human being in these mountains; hasn't been an honest death out here in a hundred years.

"Of course the old lady—she'll live to be about four hundred years old—and of course, for every day of the four hundred years, she'll have a new disease and claim she's at the point of death."

Burlingham fell to smoking again, and then continued:

"The girl's awfully sorry you got hurt up there, and she's done everything in the world a girl could to square it. Don't you suppose she's got troubles enough?"

Dan Powers frowned. "It was my leg; and I'm not blaming anybody but myself that the steer stepped on it."

After a time Burlingham spoke once more, apropos of nothing that had been said.

"You said some fool thing to me about your being engaged to a girl back East, didn't you? Suppose you brought that city girl out here and put her down on your homestead yonder. How long would she last?"

No answer.

"Oh, I recollect several things better than you perhaps think. What did you tell me that girl's name was?"

"Geraldine," said Dan Powers, quite soberly.

"Well, all right. Let's tie a can to Geraldine. It's all very well for a mawkish boy to take on a sentimental attachment of that kind when he's just starting out in life, but what you need to be out here is a real man, and what you need to help you is a real woman, and one that can make good out here, not back there.

"I'm strong for that girl up there at the head of the lake. I'll bet you anything you like that you'll marry that girl some time. It stands to reason."

Dan smiled wearily.

"Isn't this conversation getting rather personal?"

His eyes, somber now, looked wistfully out through the window across the wide and pleasant valley.

Burlingham went on: "Evefy time I see Ed Stanley he tells me he doesn't want to marry that girl, but he's afraid he's got to. He's laboring under a sense of duty. I'm not putting it up to you as a sense of duty.

"As to making a living," he resumed some time afterward, as though he had not ceased to speak, "why not out here as well as any place? It never did make much difference where you set a man down. He took his problems with him wherever that was, and the problems of success are very much the same, no matter where you are. That's truer to-day than it ever was. It's no great amount of difference whether you start here or in New York. It's up to you. Some sell beef at nine cents on the hoof, and some make ice cream at fifty cents a plate.

"I am for human beings, my son, wherever I find them—human beings who are trying to get along in the world, and who are proving themselves fit to survive. I've got six girls or so of my own, some of them in college, some in Europe and some married. I want them all to marry for love. But, here's where I come in. The only course of true love worth while in the world is when like marries like and fit marries fit. The angels upstairs can take care of the eugenics of it, but why fly in the face of Providence? How about that girl—"

Powers, a trifle bored, remarked: "You might give me a general topographical description. If I am to engage in holy wedlock with this young person I should first like to know something more specific about her looks. You must remember I've never seen her yet, although it's been a sort of hide and seek between us."

Burlingham fell into a certain thoughtfulness before he went on.

"When you come to it," said he, "it's rather hard to describe a girl, isn't it—because you leave out all the soul. A man might sit across the room from a girl and go away with the notion that she was about the finest human being in the world, but come right down to it, he could hardly tell you what she really looked like, or what she wore.

"Since you ask me, I would say that the general contour of this young woman is compact, medium and sound; eyes are gray, brows dark; hair either red-brown or pure auburn, I don't know which. Wrists and ankles small and thoroughbred: hands showing blood; neck and carriage of head showing blood. Carriage of shoulders and general posture showing sound bone—no rickets during infancy.

"Evidently and obviously she's an educated young woman also. She doesn't in the least belong here. But she is here: and being here, she's making good right here and not somewhere else. Well, then—"

"Oh, very well, then!" Dan interrupted. "On your way home telegraph for a minister and a marriage license. Do you suppose the girl will come down here to have the ceremony performed, or have I got to go up there in a flivver, or wait till my leg gets well? Of course, I leave all those minor details to you. There couldn't be any doubt that any girl like that would jump at the head of a homesteader with one short leg, maybe, and a debt of a thousand dollars, and less than a hundred dollars left in cash."

He spoke so bitterly that his companion knew that he was touched on the raw.

"Don't worry about yourself any more than you can help, son," Burlingham suggested. "I told you I'd see you through and that this leg would be as good as the other. You can have more money if you want it, and will take it. For myself, I've made just so much money that I've learned there's nothing in the world in making money by itself for itself.

"What I most need now," he went on, "is some sort of a geologist's hammer. I've lost mine somewhere. I've been studying this valley for more than twelve years. Did it ever occur to you that this is an odd shaped valley? Flat like a saucer, very scanty water shed, odd looking little pockety mountains all around?"

"I haven't got around to geology yet," said Dan Powers. "Surgery and matrimony and homesteading are keeping me busy enough right now."

"Good night!" said Dr. Burlingham. "Don't take it ill, what I've said to you—I'm just telling you what I'd do if I were in your place."

## CHAPTER XII.

### GERALDINE.

WHAT Dan Powers did that night when he found himself alone, and heard Battersleigh snoring peacefully in the adjacent room, was to draw his cracker box up to the little pine table, at which he sat with his injured leg gingerly extended underneath. Two candles, upright in tin cans filled with sand, furnished him illumination, while a fountain pen and some odd sheets of paper gave him the remaining equipment necessary for the purpose that then held him.

He sat for a time motionless, his chin on his clenched hand, staring at the wall. Indeed, the walls fell apart, changed and whitened as he gazed. He was within the enameled cubicle of a little city café. He could see just across the room from him a young girl, gentle, quiet, self-composed, beautiful, simple in every way.

As though in a picture of some master hand he could see the droop of her heavy hair, the tender chin resting upon her clasped hands as she sat. Almost he could see her breathe, could see the flutter of her very eyelids. And so presently Dan bent over his paper and began to write:

DEAR JERRY:

I shall have to write you again to-night to tell you how I am getting on. The ankle is going to be as good as new.

Our new house now is practically done, although we haven't got the sash yet. Battersleigh, my partner, is at the present time peacefully in bed. He had been very kind to me, and I have been very kind to him, or I would kill him, because he snores. We live on trout which we catch in the creek; bannocks, which we bake in the skillet, and cottontails which we shoot in the brush. This is the life, my dear! Do you think you are going to like it? Ah, Jerry, dear!

But I've been different ever since I saw you that first time, that night in the café. When I saw you I knew what the world was all about, and what life was all about. It came over me all at once that I had been just idling and trifling and drifting. That's not the way for a fellow to do. I resolved to go out in the world and make my own way and be somebody. It was every bit of it because of you.

At times it's awfully hard to get along without you. I see you about everywhere I look. I can see you now, sitting across the room there against the wall. It's a white wall now, not one made of logs. I can see the little hat you wore when I first met you—the shadow of it against the wall. I can see your face, such a fine chin, such a straight nose, such a clean line to the forehead! I don't know who taught you how to do your hair, but it couldn't have been more becoming—ah, Jerry dear, I'm afraid you're always going to be absolutely perfect to me!

I saw your hands—don't you remember how you leaned your chin on them? A thin ring on one finger—not on the dangerous finger—I remember that ring perfectly.

I remember everything about you. Did you think, when you went away, I ever could forget you? There's no other girl in the world for me, and I'll never look twice at one again, but you.

Twice? When shall be the second time? Ah, Jerry, I saw you only once. Where did you go? Where are you now?

Wherever you are I am,

Yours always and forever,

DANIEL ALLISON POWERS.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MUNICIPAL MATTERS.

BATTERSLEIGH chided his companion for being late at breakfast.

"Lookit, now," he said. "'Twill all be cold, and I'm pointing out to ye that the hind leg of a young rabbit is quite as good as chicken, besides bein' industriously far more economical. I'm hearing that chicken is two dollars a plate up at the head of the lake.

"Which, by the bye, reminds me," he continued, "ye've been socially remiss with that young lady up there. We're deep in her debt for cake and pie. It requires the fair hand of woman to put that mysterious sustainin' support in a pie crust, which 'll make it reach clear across a tin plate in a continuous arch. So it seems to me the least ye could do would be, anyway, to write her a nice little note, do ye mind, and say to this young lady: 'Dear Madam—Your pie of

recent date to hand, and contents carefully noted and in reply I beg to state—'

"But as near as I can learn ye've not begged anything to state; I think ye should."

Powers looked at him in sudden contrition. "You're quite and entirely right, Batty," said he. "I'll write that note this very morning, and you can take it up with you the very next time to go."

And write it he did, immediately following the breakfast. It was rather a formal note, all things considered, and lacking the personal touch of correspondence with those whom we have met.

Mr. Powers was not quite recovered from his late trifling injury. He was very deeply sensible of the courtesies he had received from Miss Ballantyne during his slight incapacitation. He begged to state that he was now about to be temporarily absent on his homestead, so he hoped she might not be further inconvenienced through any misapprehension.

Mr. Powers hoped very much that Miss Ballantyne would not have the slightest concern of the little mishap he had received while in the pursuit of the small neighborly service which it had given him the greatest pleasure to render. And Mr. Powers begged to remain, hers very faithfully.

"So that's over with, Batty," he remarked. "Go in and get the letter—it's on my table there."

Battersleigh went in to his partner's sleeping room and picked up the sealed letter which he found lying on the table—in fact, picked up two sealed letters.

Dan had enclosed his earlier and longer letter to Geraldine because he had not had the heart to destroy it. But how should Battersleigh know this? And why should Battersleigh really be able to concentrate his mind on such matters as these, when there were more important things to trouble him to-day?

"What's the matter, Batty?" inquired Powers as he noticed the old man striding up and down, head bent forward. "What's up?"

"It's sheep that's up," replied Batty. "There's five thousand head of Sanders's sheep coming out of the mountain into this valley any day. He's got fifty thousand head this year in lower Idyho. He's had messengers trying to break in east of the Tetons with his bands—into the sacredest of all the cow countries that there is left. He's got them out from Utah to the Canady line. He had a forest permit for two thousand head on the reserve above—which, of course, entitled him to run five thousand head.

"Ut's that last bunch that's coming down now into this lower country. They've fed ut out and are coming into the valley. Sanders made ut plain enough he wants that range back of your claim yonder. If we try to hold him out ut means trouble. Five thousand sheep had got to eat, and Sanders won't take any chances. But the bettin' is ten to one he'll have a gang with him that's used to takin' chances."

"All of which means," Powers remarked, nodding quietly, "that the quicker I get over on my claim, the better it's going to be?"

"Just that, me boy. The Thompson boys both know ut. They'll move over and help ye hold the fort; and so will I."

"All very well," said Powers. "I believe I'd rather welcome a little social activity. Have you got plenty of ammunition?"

"Sure I have."

Powers yawned. "And when is all this going to happen, Batty? Homesteading is lonesome work when you come right down to it. I was just wondering in which way I might best direct the activities of my resourceful mind.

"I'll tell you what we'll do!" he added, suddenly; "we'll start our daily paper. While you're on scout duty I'll be getting out the morning edition."

"'Tis what we've always needed," said Battersleigh, seriously.

"Precisely," Powers leaned back in his chair with perfect gravity.

"I mean to establish a broad editorial envisagement," he continued. "Of course, we've got to devote more of our activities to the industrial possibilities of Powder Basin: Hides, beef, hay, jack rabbits, cotton-tail rabbits, sage hens, fried chickens, ice cream, doughnuts—we must put before the public in an unprejudiced way a fair

statement of our unlimited natural resources.

" If you don't mind, I believe I'll let you cover the foreign cables and the British Parliament. But we've got to have a household department to make our paper welcome to the thousands of women readers in Powder Basin. I would like to explain to all the world how simple it is to run a shack for eighteen months on a hundred dollars when you don't know where you'll ever get another hundred."

He hobbled across the room and drew out from behind an oilcloth curtain the typewriter which he had discovered among Batty's earlier possessions.

" Venerable machine," said he, tentatively touching a key or so. " You have come down to us from another day! You remind me of the aviation corps of the A.E.F. With plenty of wrapping paper and a little carbon I think we can get out a circulation of a half dozen copies. Let's go—ah, let us go!

" You stick around here for a day or so, Batty," he went on. " Help me move over to the shack. I reckon I can get down as far as the boat if I take it slow, and I'll carry the rifle if you'll tote the linotype and the rest of the plant. I'm sorry to leave this place, of course, but business is business."

Dan looked with sudden interest at the little structure of his new home when he had nobbled up the bank. The raw proof of recent building operations lay about—chips, bark, odds and ends of this and that sort, a few tools which the Thompson boys had left when they last departed. There was a rude door in place and a sash for at least one of the windows. His neighbor had installed a little stove, and knocked together a rough table for him. Why, all this was his!

The little log house was shielded by a shoulder of the hill from a full view of the flat along the outlet which made around the corner of the bluff; but just now the two heard the sounds of hammering. Powers hobbled to the crest of the ridge and looked down.

The two Thompson boys, industrious as ever, were busily engaged in stringing wire along the line of posts which marked the edge of Powers's homestead. They were working on the flat across the outlet, and it now was obvious that the homestead straddled the stream and covered the only available ford for a considerable distance below. Above lay impassable willow-covered marshes along the lake shore.

" Our barbed wire entanglements," said Powers to Battersleigh, " just finish off this strategic situation."

" In a few hours the boys'll have that fence completed," the old man assented. " The man who cuts ut then'll be committin' trespass, and if I know them Thompson boys, such tresspass will be unfashionable. But now I'll lave ye here, me boy, for ut's time I keep a look-out for Sanders and his band, from up the road."

" All right, go on back, Batty, to your place. I suppose the boys'll be up for lunch after a while. I've got to go and pull the time clock."

And so, in sheer desperation, fighting off his melancholy as best he could, Powers sought relief in make-believe, as had always been his way.

He pulled a box up to the edge of the table whereon reposed Battersleigh's ancient typewriter—he himself at one part of his military career had learned a certain facility with the keyboard.

He began now with a standing head for the Franklin City *Daily News,* which he did in his largest letters. A top line set forth that the sworn circulation of the Franklin City *Daily News,* less review copies and sheets damaged in the press room, was five copies; that the journal was first class; that its purposes were the industrial advancement of Franklin City and of Powder Basin.

The publishers' prospectus stated that the new daily would give full attention to national and international affairs, aided by a strong corps of foreign correspondents, prominent among whom was Colonel Henry Battersleigh, late First Royal Irish. A fiction page, filled with the highest priced writers of the country, likewise was promised.

A city news service was announced to be under the supervision of a competent jour-

nalist fresh from metropolitan connections, aided by a corps of intelligent reporters. And so forth and so on, until Dan Powers, tongue in cheek, almost believed what he wrote.

He did not know how long he had sat when he heard the Thompson boys coming in to get their own lunch.

He greeted them and told them the news of the possible invasion by Sanders' sheep band. The boys made no comment on that, but looked at each other.

Powers, the better for a cup of tea, went back to his labors. Had his editorial on the industrial development of Powder Basin been preserved, it might have been useful to any agricultural secretary in the capital city of Washington.

Mr. Powers estimated that at least fifty thousand goats, each of vast lacteal possibilities, might easily be ranged within or near the limits of Franklin City, the which, properly handled, annually could produce a million pounds of Roquefort cheese at fifty cents the pound. Attention also was gravely called to the revolutionary developments in the dairy recently established at the head of the lake, and backed by large Eastern capital, whose rapidly advancing ice cream industry alone bade fair to put a new complexion upon the entire cattle industry of the Western country.

Next, coming to a matter long in mind, with the utmost gravity, he announced that Powder Basin was simply serving as an island floating on an undiscovered sea of petroleum. He casually stated that a prominent Eastern capitalist now residing in Franklin City purposed putting down an exploratory well at a very early date.

For this latter statement Dan had no reason in the world beyond a chance conversation with Hard-Boiled Burlingham, in which the latter had told of his own long studies in the geological formation of that country. Powers knew his friend's curious bent, although he himself had no knowledge whatever of geology: but his memory, impishly exact, now caused him to smile as he brought to mind something of the jargon of a prospectus he once had read.

"Our expert," he wrote, "points out the surface indications of the carboniferous age. The general dip of the strata is to the south and southwest. There is an elongated dome which gently drops to the northeast. In other directions the dip is from one to ten per cent. On the west the dip is from one to four per cent. South, southwest and southeast the dip from the summit of the underlying dome is from seven to fifteen per cent, although the summit at the edge of Franklin City seems to be nearly level.

"In order that this may be better understood, it should be explained that oil is found only in rocks which may be called sedimentary, such as sandstone, limestone, or conglomerate. These deposits were spread over the sea bottom by the usual fluvial agencies. The ancient rivers carried other dead plants and these, together with animals now extinct, were buried in the floor of the forgotten sea.

"In such conditions carbon unites with hydrogen. Thus is formed the hydrocarbon, petroleum, which is one of the essentials of modern civilized life. Fossils always indicate that at one time they lay near to what was then the surface of the land. When they were buried in the sediment of the ancient sea there were distilled from the vegetable and animal substances minute globules of oil, which seeped down and became buried in the underlying sands, clays or conglomerates.

"In order to explain how oil deposits are made," he went on, "we must remember that oil is lighter than water, and hence always tends to rise above water. In this way it may get into the porous parts of overlying rocks. If these rocks remain flat horizontal, the oil does not free from the water, because it has no place to go. On the contrary, if overlying rock be thrust into a dome or folded up into an anticline, oil perhaps representing the drainage of a very large area may rise to the top of that dome. Of course, the dome may lie far below the surface of the earth as we now know it.

"Gas is lighter than oil, and if gas has been formed below, it will upon opportunity rise up through the oil. It is, therefore, natural that in drilling, quite often we first find gas, then oil, perhaps at length water below that.

"Analyzing all these definite requirements, as pointed out by our expert on the ground, it is obvious beyond peradventure that we are here directly above an oil field of unknown extent and richness. Preliminary exploration indicates that the overlying rock is here folded into a great anticline, below which lies untold wealth, such as no man may measure in the wildest flight of his imagination. The early freeing of that wealth assures such a future to Franklin City as may claim no parallel in all the stories of such development in Western communities."

Thus far all Mr. Daniel Powers's writing sounded to himself more or less familiar. He chuckled as he read it over, and went forward to the next step—which he recalled perfectly as set forth in the prospectus of Oklahoma Gulf and Texas.

"The drill is the only thing which can set free this wealth! How deep must the well be? Not even our expert geologist can answer that question with exactness. In the middle Mississippi Valley oil sometimes is found within two hundred feet, or again quite often, the drill may need to go thirty-five hundred feet in order to tap it.

"In Louisiana and Texas wells quite often are three thousand feet deep, although in Arkansas gas recently has been struck at sixteen hundred to two thousand feet. The relative inexpensiveness of the great Oklahoma fields is too well known to require comment.

"Our exploring company is prepared to go to a depth of five thousand feet if necessary, for it is realized that the elevation of Powder Basin is even greater than that of some of the successful mountain oil fields, such as those of western Wyoming. In a word, our men have proved their faith by their investments. We think that it behooves others to show their faith in like manner."

For a time Powers sat back and looked out of the window, wrapped in the luxury of his own dreams! He half believed that what he had written was the truth. In a corner of his mind there lurked an unformulated wonder about certain things Hard-Boiled Burlingham had said and done of late.

For just a moment, as he sat alone in his little shack, the young man sought a trace of the vision of an older man; a touch of that imagination which commends one man to success, whereas its lack leads other men to failure. He wondered.

But presently he forgot industrial matters. He turned to his fiction department, and in brackets wrote the announcement of a serial which would be published in the Franklin City *News* under the name of The Girl at the Silver Dot.

This latest high example of American literature, he assured his readers, was fresh from the pen of a rising young author who, for unavoidable reasons, was obliged to remain anonymous. When Dan again began to write, something in his story reminded him of something else he had written not long before.

He raised a hand to a pocket, feeling for the letter which he had written to Geraldine. He remembered then that he had left it on the table in his room. But since he felt now much as he had the night before, he went on in much the same words.

"It was night," began the story—"night in the city. The streets lay black under the flickering lights. Algernon Montmorency turned into a side street and made his way to a tiny café, whose lights seemed to beckon to him.

"A girl—a young girl—was seated at a table across the room from him. It was not alone her beauty which drew the attention of Algernon Montmorency, which filled his soul with indefinable longing."

And so on, until he had told to himself once more the sweet and intimate story of the time when he had met the one woman of his dreams—and lost her forever within the hour of the meeting.

"There seemed to steal toward him from yonder silent figure," he wrote—this was sheer description—"some strange influence which he could not fathom—an appeal to some sense in his own being of which he had never known. He knew that never again could any other woman awaken in him feelings such as these."

Powers paused now before he pushed back from his labors. After all, he had failed to divert his thoughts, to ease his

melancholy by mockery of melancholy. He was sad enough as he did his first lines.

Alone, staring at the night, he stood, framed before his concentrated consciousness the picture of a face he had seen but once, and now was never to forget. Then he pushed back the cracker box and crushed the pages together.

The truth was that Dan Powers was very, very lonesome, and very much in need of something to keep him from going morbid.

"By the way, fellows," he said to the Thompson boys that evening when they came in, "I've just been amusing myself by making a bluff at running a newspaper here, because I couldn't do anything else. Help yourselves to sample copies. I don't know how we can circulate the thing—unless we nail a copy on the sign post at the fork of the road, or down where our fence corners cut into the flat."

The Thompson boys, always devoid of a sense of humor, and always strictly matter of fact, looked at him shyly, folded their respective copies of the Franklin City *Daily News,* and put them in their pockets. The next day they nailed them on the sign post at the road, which literal-minded act on their part had consequences that at the time no man could have foretold.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE GENTLEMAN FROM JACKSON'S HOLE.

AT the head of the lake Annie Ballantyne and the boy Amos stood in the door yard watching the advancing dust clouds which for a long time had been coming from the mountain into the road northward.

"Look at them come!" exclaimed Annie. "I'm not going to open up the restaurant until they're all gone."

The last of the great band of sheep hardly had passed before the noon hour. Annie was busy about her multifarious household duties when Amos came breaking into the room.

"Shooting—down at the other end of the lake, Annie! You can hear it plain."

She stepped to the door. The faint sound of an occasional shot still could be heard.

"Somebody's out after ducks ahead of the season," she ventured. "Well, it's none of our business. Get the cart ready, Amos. We'll take the baskets over and open up now. Maybe somebody will come in."

She stood, a very comely figure in the frank light of the morning. Her garb, following the way of the outdoor young woman of to-day, was not so feminine as we once were used to demand, but her figure was feminine forever, slight and boyish as she seemed at first glance in her riding habit. The well-cut breeches of gray tweed were luxuries of another day which she had never foregone, as were the boots, which showed use.

Her jacket was brown, of soft leather, with brown velvet cuffs and collar, and to match these dark facings her little hat was of brown velvet. A striking figure enough, her fame spread rapidly and her curious business grew.

She was at her own place in the little cabin at the crossroads, a half mile from the house, when an hour or so later the whir of a motor eased in front of the door. A traveler made his way in, a short, fat and genial young man in duster and goggles.

"Is this Annie's place?" he asked. "I've heard of you for fifty miles."

"I am Miss Ballantyne," rejoined Annie, unsmiling. "What can I do for you?"

He laid off his cap, and took a seat at the counter, leaning across familiarly.

"Say, it isn't really true that you've got ice cream up here?"

Annie made silent answer with a heaped dish of her product. He made a mock of rubbing his eyes.

"Is it real?" he asked.

"Some call it very good," she answered quietly.

"Say," he went on, reaching in a side pocket—"something I picked up down there, nailed on the sign post. Maybe you'd like to see the news."

He laid on the counter the crumpled sheet of the first issue of the Franklin City *Daily News,* which, magpie-like, he had taken from its place on the post where it had been left by the literal-minded Thompson boys.

"Can you beat that?" went on young

Mr. Simpson. "The fellow who wrote that is a nut, of course. I got to reading it while I was waiting for the sheep to clean out. They was all over, down there on the flat. Did you hear anything up here? Some fellows across on the hill got to shooting into the sheep. Sanders was wild—Sanders is the fellow that owns them. Four fellows was sitting on the hill; must have killed a couple of hundred sheep. Do you know who that nut is down there?"

"I think some one told me his name is Mr. Powers," replied Annie. "But"—with sudden access of interest—"do you think he's in any trouble?"

"Surest thing you know he's in trouble! Well, let them fight it out together. Take along the stuff if you want it—he's crazy."

Annie folded the sheets and handed them to Amos.

At that moment the light at the doorway suddenly lessened. There stood, leaning against neither side of the door, a slender man, young, dark, thin to the point of cadaverousness, and burned unnaturally brown by exposure to the elements. His garments, those of the Western settlement, were covered with dust. He was unsmiling as he stood, his thumbs resting on his belt.

"Don't move," he said quietly. "Put your hands up, all of you."

The fat young man whirled about, his eyes goggling. His hands went up into the air as he half arose from his seat. He went suddenly pale. Never other than tactless, he was worse now. "You might be Dick Washburn!" said he.

"The healthiest thing you can do is to shut up," the stranger observed quietly.

"My name's Simpson—Henry Simpson. I'm from Ogden." The fat young man tried ingratiation.

"I don't care who you are. Keep quiet and stay where you are."

He turned toward Annie, who, pale as a ghost, was looking at him with what seemed to him, all at once, the most wonderful eyes he had ever seen in all his life.

"I'm sorry," he said again. "I'll pay you double. I'm awfully hungry." He pushed a bill across the counter toward her.

"You'll have to take your change." Annie found her voice at length. "I'll get you the best we can. We didn't open the place until just now—I wanted to wait until the sheep got by."

"They're a bad lot," he smiled faintly. "That's your car outside?" He turned to the fat young man. "When I've had a bite to eat I want you to drive me down the lake."

"Well, all right, all right," ran on Mr. Simpson. "I'll run a jitney for you, neighbor, and you needn't peel anything off of that roll for me either."

"If I wasn't feeling better after the coffee," commented the young man at the corner of the counter, "I believe I'd fix you so you couldn't talk. Go on out, now, and get in the front seat of that car and be quiet. I'll be there in a minute."

He picked up the hat, which he had removed when he first spoke to Annie.

"I'm glad I came in here," he declared. "You're the first woman I've seen in more than a month, and maybe the last one I ever will see—I don't know. Of course, word will get around in here—I can't help that. But please don't let anything get out to the telegraph wires outside—you understand?"

There was something simple and straightforward in his speech, and so free did he seem from either pretense or bravado that Annie Ballantyne could not accept him in the rôle with which he seemed to be identifying himself.

She watched the dust cloud of the car as it sped, visible above the trees along the curving road, for more than a mile. Suddenly she caught Amos by the hand, and they started running toward the house.

"Uncle!" she exclaimed. "Uncle John"—when at length she hurried into the door—"you and Amos look after things. I've got to go down the lake. There's trouble down there. I'll be back. Amos, come and help me get the motor down to the boat."

A part of the property which Ed Stanley had turned over with the sale of the ranch was a little outboard motor which he himself sometimes used on his ancient rowboat in navigating the rather great distance of the lake. Finding this in a shed, Annie and Amos between them managed to install it at the stern of the boat

By some miracle of grace the ancient motor caught. The echoes of its chugging might be heard far and wide. Annie motioned the boy back.

"No, Amos," she said—"go on back and take care of the house. I've got to go alone."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FLOCK MASTER.

IT was perhaps ten o'clock in the morning of that day before Dan Powers had finished his morning labors indoors and walked out to take the air. He hobbled down to the bank and stepped into the little boat which the Thompson boys had left lying on the beach; sculled around the point of the bluff and across the outlet to the place where the two young men were finishing their work at the corner of the fence.

"Well, friends," he said, disembarking and joining them, "she begins to look more like something, doesn't she?"

"We've got her about shut in," said the older Thompson boy. "And I don't reckon we got it done any too soon, neither."

The other boy, a sturdy youngster of seventeen years, with brown arms corded like those of a man, was looking out across the flat across the road. A slow dust cloud was approaching, and this all three of the homesteaders watched for some time.

At length they made out one of those vehicles commonly known as sheep wagons, a wooden house on wheels, fitted with stove and table and bunk, which affords the wandering herder his home, wherever he may be. Under the steady plodding of the stout team of horses this vehicle at length reached a point opposite them on the road. Then it turned off and headed directly toward them, across the open flat.

"That's Sanders's wagon!" exclaimed the older Thompson.

"Yes, and that's Shang Nelson driving," Powers observed. "He's the man that drove Batty and me out from the town when I first came here. He's the one that first advised me to take this homestead—said Sanders would stake me for it if I liked."

"Well, you've got it," said the older Thompson boy.

"Yes; but not for Sanders," Dan replied quietly.

The driver turned into the nearest trail which led to the ford, now running scarcely a foot deep over the gravel, but cut off by the newly constructed fence. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, nor paid the others much attention when at length he pulled up.

Silent, unabashed, and quite unafraid, he reached into the front of his wagon, took down a tin pail and came up to the fence where the others stood awaiting him in silence.

"This is something new, ain't it?" said he, motioning to the fence.

Powers said nothing at all.

"You see it," the older Thompson conceded at length.

"Well, I'm goin' to camp. I want to water my stock."

"You can't come across this fence," the young Westerner said quietly.

Dan Powers still held his peace. The younger Thompson stood looking meditatively at the sheepman, never letting his eyes deviate.

"Is that so?" grunted the newcomer. "Some news—shuttin' off the ford. We'll see about that. I allow to camp here and water here, both."

"And you allow to run your band across the ford here and back into the hills, don't you? They're coming soon?" Powers's voice now was low and even. "You'd better go, friend. This is my line here, and I've fenced it. We don't want sheep in here, and we're not going to have them."

"Wonder what the boss 'll have to say about that!"

"No odds what he says. You know, and he knows, he hasn't got no land in here leased." Thus the older Thompson.

"He told me that was his land across the outlet," argued the driver, turning to Powers.

"I filed on it for myself," Dan explained. "Your boss can't buy that claim now for all the money he's got."

"And you're cuttin' the ford where people have always crossed. There's feed

in there for a month. You want to keep five thousand head of sheep out of there while people back East are goin' hungry?"

"I'm used to that talk," rejoined Powers. "But I'm no philanthropist myself. Now, listen. We're not looking for any trouble, and hope you're not, but if I were in your place I'd move on down the flat. We'll feel safer when you're around the corner of the hill, and you'll be safer. So, go!"

A slow and sullen wrath filled the driver now as he looked at the men who leaned against the fence, motionless and silent. Making a feint at an unconcerned chew of tobacco, he turned with no more than a snarl, and began to hook in his team.

"Sanders 'll settle this with you," he shot back at length, having climbed up to his seat.

No one answered him, but they could hear Shang Nelson's snarling execrations as he turned his team and passed across the flat toward the road.

"We've got to play it on through now," remarked the older Thompson to his brother. "Run on across now and get Batty, and tell him to bring his gun."

It was more than half an hour before they saw the figures of young Thompson and Battersleigh coming across the lake by boat.

"Ye stood him off, the haythen?" began Battersleigh. "Do ye suppose Sanders will fight?"

"He'll bluff first," said the older Thompson.

Four miles away a cloud of dust was rising, rolling down the mountainside. There were other dust clouds approaching the road, where the sheep were being driven down to the lower country. It would be an hour or two before all the bands reached the flat.

Rolling down the road, uniting in a struggling mass which covered more than a mile, the string of dirty gray animals scuffled on, bleating dully. Their thousands of sharp hoofs cut the roadway itself, leaving behind a repoussé surface which would remain long ineffaceable. Like locusts they swept forward.

Sanders himself was not with the herd as it first appeared. He was coming into Powder Basin over Targee Pass in a buckboard driven by one of his own men. He knew that his cook wagon would be in advance, and knew where the rendezvous for his men would be that night. No doubt existed in his mind that he would cross a good portion of his band beyond the outlet that evening.

Andrew Sanders was one of the heaviest sheep holders in his State. No one knew how many head he owned, but he confessed to fifty thousand, scattered in different bands where he could find range. He was reputed to be in or near the millionaire class; was president of two banks in two lower cities of the State; had held a seat in the State Legislature, and was mentioned more than prominently as the next Governor of his State. Alert, aggressive, successful in all his enterprises, he had gone into sheep when he found them more profitable than cows; and he was not in sheep to lose the game.

The first of his outriders, following the trail of the sheep wagon, turned toward the old ford, where it was agreed the camp should be made. They found, between them and the water, a tight strung wire fence, new built, the chips of the workmen lying still uncurled by the sun.

Across the outlet, sitting below the crest of the bluff, a little more than two hundred yards away, were four men in a silent and motionless little group. Across the knees of each of these lay a rifle. The sheepmen understood.

"Bill," said one to another, "ride back and find the boss. It looks like there was a little hell to pay."

Sanders by this time had driven down as far as Battersleigh's house at the crossroads halfway up the lake. It is well enough for a sheepman to have friends; but Battersleigh was not at home.

Sanders gave that little thought, but proceeded to help himself to anything he could find to eat. He had not been long thus engaged when he heard the sound of hoofs. One of his riders flung at the door.

"Well?" inquired Sanders, coming out. "What is it, Bill?"

"Come on down," said the man. "We can't get to the water. Some one's fenced the ford."

"What's that?" began Sanders, frowning. But then he stopped to think. "Oh, that's all right!" he said. "That's that young fellow I was trading with. I've bought that homestead, but I guess he didn't understand. Tell him I'll be right down to square up the papers with him. Go on back to the wagon."

"The wagon ain't there," said the rider. "It's gone on down the flat."

"I told Shang to make camp there at the ford. Now ride on down and get him back."

Before this time the sheep, hot and thirsty, had rolled in a packed mass, hundreds deep, along the flat. The wire fence soon was strung with a gray blanket of wool torn from them as they were crowded against the barbs. The trained dogs had hard work to handle them.

There arose in the hot air an unceasing cloud of dust, accompanied by the muffled bleating of the creatures, uneasy and half ready to stampede, but now held by their own numbers against the wire. It was this situation which Sanders found when at length he reached the flat and edged through to where his men were standing.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" he demanded angrily. "Why haven't you cut that wire?"

He himself climbed over the top of the fence and strode to the edge of the stream, where he stood looking at the four men who remained silently watching at their stations on the slope beyond. He seemed not so much sheepman as prosperous citizen now.

Andrew Sanders had been a cowman once, and he still wore an excellent pair of Texas-made boots that had cost him more than fifty dollars not long before—high heeled, much stitched in the leg, and showing enormous care at their tops. His hat was that of the cowman come to town. An opulent watch chain crossed his waistcoat. His figure had gained softer lines than when he rode the range.

Rather a prosperous and somewhat imperious figure he stood, as, not addressing any individual in particular, he called out unceremoniously:

"Come on across here, and hurry up!"

He could see the boat lying at the other shore of the stream.

Neither movement nor sound marked the four figures who sat in line.

"Damn it, come on down!" cried Sanders again. "You want me to wait here all day?"

But still he got no answer, and a sudden rage seized him. Saying nothing further, he walked back to the fence and motioned one of his men to him.

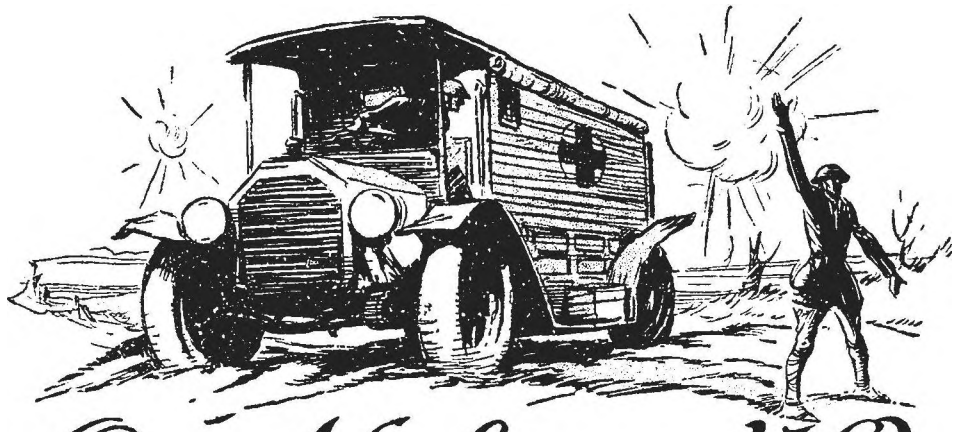
"Throw me a pair of cutters," he exclaimed. "I'll see about this!"

A moment later, setting the jaws of the pliers at the top wire of the fence, he clinched down the handles. The tight strung wire sprung back and coiled in the grass.

"Push them back!" he exclaimed to the man. "Wait till I get a few panels down. Then you fellows with the horses get on each side of the gap. You'll have all kinds of trouble with this wire if you ain't careful. Look out, now!"

He turned back to resume his work, but suddenly sprang away with an oath. His face was bleeding. The top of the fence post, shattered by the rifle ball which came synchronously with the crack that he had heard, was thrown into his face splintered. It was the warning.

***TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.***



# One Night in '18

**By LARRY BARRETTO**

IT had been a bad day at Boeschepe—shelling of all the back roads and feeling out the artillery positions in places where they could not possibly be, but where, by way of exceedingly faulty concealment, the shells were sure to land on a detachment of non-combatants; repair stations for the motor trains, a field hospital, or like as not a staff headquarters, which by all the rules of war should be as completely safe as if it were in Paris, or south.

Altogether it was very hot—airplanes searching the roads for possible troop movements, when the only things moving were the luckless ambulances which couldn't wait for the shelter of night to bring out the wounded, flying low and machine-gunning every open space with a calm disregard for the anti-aircraft gunners who occasionally, very occasionally, opened up and dotted the sky with casual puffs of black and white smoke before they retired to their dugouts to curse the luck that had thrown them helter-skelter into this particularly moist part of Flanders.

The ambulance company on the hill in back of the town did not like it a bit. For one thing they were very much exposed; the farmhouse made an excellent target, and if the Germans missed that there was the windmill to correct their sights by. That morning a shell had exploded in a corner of the barn, wrecking completely that particular corner and ruining three duffel bags which had been left there under a pile of straw by their owners for safekeeping. Little had been found of the contents and that little would be set down by the Salvage Division as a total loss.

"It's only by the grace of God that I wasn't in there instead of the kitchen, hunting around for a clean shirt to replace this measly thing," said Malone, the chief sufferer.

"It's only by grace of your swinish appetite, you mean," retorted the sergeant brutally. "If you're not eating you're sleeping. Have you finished painting those red crosses on the tops of the cars as I told you?"

Malone wandered sulkily toward the front yard, bearing the fragments of a leather puttee. They had been his pride and dearest possession. He had meant to wear them on leave, providing the M. Ps. were not too vigilant. Now he wondered if any of them would ever have a leave.

There had been a period of comparative quiet, that is, quiet for that part of the

front; now the shelling began again. It sounded like thunder or surf—a heavy, unbreakable roar, with now and then the *thrumm thrumm* of lighter shells. At intervals one broke in the village of Boeschepe below. It made a horrible screeching noise before it landed and was followed by a cloud of dust and mortar which rose and hung lazily in the air. The French batteries were not returning the fire.

"Don't those swine never stop to eat or nothin'?" asked Mason fretfully. He was sitting among the relief drivers who were waiting their turn to take over cars and drive up to the lines.

"Just you wait till you get up where something's really doing," hinted Golden, the chief mechanic, darkly. He had recently returned from repairing an ambulance which had been disabled on one of the roads beyond and therefore spoke with authority. None of the other men had yet gone on duty. The section had only arrived yesterday.

"There's a town up there called Westoutre," he continued, "compared to which this town looks like lower Broadway on Monday morning. And beyond—" He stopped abruptly and ducked. A handful of pebbles flung by the infuriated Mason had whizzed past his ear.

"Whatcha mean talkin' about Broadway when we're here!" demanded that indignant individual. "I know when I was well off without you remindin' me of it. Great guns, it gets worse an' worser. There we was in the Verdun sector, sittin' on the top of the world with nothin' to carry but ratbites an' sore-throats, thinkin' we was seein' the war an' livin' easy. Next they haul us out in the middle of the night, shoot us across country at top speed, and land us here in this hell-hole without even a puptent to crawl under. Now you begin tellin' about a town called West Toot what is worse an' where I gotta go. I'll go all right, but don't rub it in."

"Well, I'm just telling you anyway," returned Golden. "Nothing to get sore at."

"It would be a privilege to drive a car," remarked Bugs, so called because he had the soul of an insect. "I wish I could."

A chorus of groans and howls greeted this statement. Bugs's small frame swelled until his over-large uniform almost seemed to fit, and his face, very dirty and unshaven, turned red.

"Well, I do," he persisted. "You'd get pretty damn sick, too, sitting around camp, making out requisitions, helping the sergeant and getting provisions from the frogs. When everybody's driving and doing their bit I'd like to be doing something worth while, too."

"Oh, God, listen to the flag-waving," said Adams, who was as ugly as original sin, and to whom personal cleanliness amounted to a passion. Lately he had been unable to gratify it and his temper was going under the strain.

Bugs's eyes filled with ready tears. "You big stiff," he rejoined bitterly, "I wish you were a shrimp like me, instead of being a first-class driver before you joined the army without a nerve in your body. Then you'd know."

"It's all right, Buggsy," Golden comforted him. "You're doing your bit every time you make out the little old pay roll for us. You just keep on being company clerk. How'd any of us get to go into Paris if you weren't around to get our jack. I'd like to know."

"Paris!" said another scornfully. "If you ever see Paris again it'll be in a funeral procession. Sweet cookie, what a noise!"

A shell had landed uncomfortably close.

How Bugs Baker had ever got into the army was a miracle. It would have seemed that no reputable physician with his eyesight unimpaired could have passed him, for he was decidedly undersized, his feet were flat and his chest had no expansion at all. His spirit was no more robust than his body.

The first night it had been his misfortune to tread heavily on the toe of one Buddy Winthrop while in mess-line—a youngster from another section, at least as small as Bugs, who considered that he had a reputation to make. Casting his plate of slum directly before him where it came in sudden and greasy contact with Bugs's uniform, Winthrop had sailed in. Bugs took it standing up, sitting down, and eventually flat on his back, until the fiery Buddy was hauled from his chest and admonished.

Immediately Bugs's status was placed. He became company clerk, general chore boy for the outfit and—Bugs. His one attempt to learn to drive a Ford ambulance had been disastrous to the fence with which he had collided, and thereafter he was kept off the cars by orders of a profane and inexperienced lieutenant who had visions of reimbursing the government out of his own pocket for all the damage his men did.

Eventually, after many false rumors, they had found themselves on a sailing list and in due time, without so much as a ripple from a submarine had landed in France. If Bugs had not exactly endeared himself to the other men he had at least been accepted, and had managed to make himself useful on the trip across. Practically every one else had been violently seasick. After yeoman's service to his suffering fellows his lot became easier, and he was known as Buggsy. Adams may have been thinking of this now.

"After all you're a good little shrimp, Buggsy," he said, "and I always remember how well you speak French. If it wasn't for you I'll bet we wouldn't get any food from the frogs at all. Those gluttons try to hog everything."

Bugs smiled wanly at this mention of his accomplishments. It was in vain that he assured himself five men were needed behind the lines to keep one man in them. He wasn't behind the lines, that is, not so very far, and the spirit of emulation is strong. If, he thought, he had been stationed at Brest or Romerantin it would not be so bad. Here, at the front, with everybody on the job, it was distressing to be just company clerk. Worse, they had sized him up right. He, Bugs, could never take his place as a driver; why, he couldn't even change a tire decently let alone do any road repairing. Until now he had accepted his lot philosophically—it wasn't in an insect to want to fly too high—but these last two days, with their attendant excitement, had lit a tiny spark of revolt in him. He stared gloomily down the hill into the tortured village of Boeschepe.

The sergeant reappeared from the passageway leading through the gray stone farmhouse.

"Everybody out front and help Malone get those crosses painted on the cars," said that worthy. "If we don't give him a hand we'll never get them done in time for the next shift this evening."

They rose obediently.

"I was just going to help the cooks," said Adams, it having suddenly occurred to him that by this move he might not only avoid some work, but at the same time rustle enough hot water for shaving. "They want me to peel potatoes."

The sergeant fixed him with a cold eye. "They don't want any help and there aren't any potatoes—we ran out of them yesterday. If I find you in the kitchen bothering Ritchie or Clark I'll report you to the Loot. All out to the front yard.

"Suffering guns, that's what comes of having a school-teacher for a top," muttered Adams. "He's so used to watching the kids we can't get away with anything."

There was truth in this. Before the war called him into service, Rivers had been instructor of mathematics in a private school. He had never got over the habit. His human qualities might be lacking, but as a disciplinarian he was all there. His penetrating gaze never missed anything, and when he spoke it was to reprove.

The men filed through the farmhouse, deserted by its owners in the face of a German advance, past the kitchen where Ritchie and Clark, newly installed, were beginning to get supper, and out to the front yard. Here Malone, mounted on the top of an ambulance, was languidly painting crosses. One by one the men began to help him.

The noise was growing less or else they were getting used to it. Rivers unslung a pair of German field-glasses which he had purchased for a price from a French soldier, and studied the five German balloons that hung suspended on the horizon. He wondered if they could see him. From the kitchen an appetizing odor floated out.

It came without its usual scream of warning—a terrific explosion, nerve-shocking and appalling, that flung them cowering to their knees. Tiles were torn loose from the roof of the farmhouse and one dented the helmet which Golden was wearing. There was a rain of twigs and small branches from

the trees. Malone, on the top of the ambulance, clung to it as it heaved for a moment like a ship; then he slid to the ground. A sharp, acrid smell came and vanished. Only the stone windmill stood unmoved.

White-faced, suddenly conscious that they were alive, the men rose to their feet. Some one laughed nervously.

"My God! That was close," said Mason. "It sounded like—"

"Look!" cried Bugs. And again: "Look!"

Out of the front door ran Clark, bent almost double, his hands pressed close against his abdomen. For a few steps he came on, headlong, eyes staring, and then fell. To Bugs, horrified, his face had become suddenly a sick yellow, and his mouth, distended, gaped foolishly like a fish. Behind him came Ritchie, upright, with a useless gas-mask clutched in one hand. His throat above the open collar of his blouse was laced with lines and specks of red which grew in that moment of running until they were splotches, spreading downward.

Straight for Bugs he ran, his eyes blind, unseeing, pitched forward against him and dropped at his feet. Bugs staggered and caught Adams's arm for support. Incapable of moving, clutching each other, they stared down at Ritchie. Already his face was suffused.

The sergeant's cry pierced them.

"Quick! Stretchers! An ambulance! Start a car can't you!"

There was a rush for an ambulance and stretchers. Others lifted the two men in, mauling them badly in their haste. Golden sprang to the driver's seat. Another man crawled in the back, kneeling between the two men on the floor of the car.

"Take them to the dressing-station at the bottom of the hill," called Rivers as the car swept down the road.

Before all this activity Bugs stood mute and helpless. A feeling of nausea swept over him; he wondered if he was going to be sick. Dumbly he stared down at the spot, slightly stained, where Ritchie had fallen. Even when Rivers touched him on the arm he did not speak, but moved away mechanically.

A hurried investigation was made of the back yard. Directly in front of the kitchen windows was a huge hole, perhaps ten feet in diameter. The walls of the house were spattered and pierced and the kitchen itself was a wreck—a litter of broken dishes, overturned chairs, and a tin pail from which water squirted in a thin stream from a hole in its side. It was still more than half full.

"They broke all the good enamel plates we bought," cried Malone.

"I guess we're men enough to use our mess-kits then," said the sergeant.

And this was typical of the lucky services which rode. Men going to the front loaded up on articles of every description. "All the comforts of home!" was the cry. By stealth and cunning some hauled in their ambulances two straw mattresses, and reserve duffel bags filled with souvenirs and knitted uselessness were common. Pyjamas, even, were not unknown. These enamel plates had cost the outfit good money in Paris.

The sound of another shell broke their mournful meditations, and the ruined kitchenware was forgotten.

"They've got our range!" cried Rivers. "We've got to get out!"

Forthcoming events proved his words true. In an hour nothing remained of that comfortable farmhouse but an ugly shell.

Installed behind a stone wall some hundred and fifty yards from the hill they awaited developments. The cars were saved, the truck, and whatever personal belongings could be grabbed in that last wild rush. Sadly they watched the rest disappear under succeeding crashes.

"Where do we go from here?" asked Mason at last.

The sergeant was recalled to his duty. "I will go and reconnoiter," he said primly.

Shortly thereafter he returned. "The lieutenant had gone to Dunkirk in the car," he announced. "The French Loot is taking it easy somewhere with his frog friends. We are going to move into the house at the end of the street leading into the town." There was a howl of protest. "The *médecin chef* says it is safe and we'll take his word for it."

"They told us the farm was safe and see what happened," complained one of them.

"Ritchie is dead, Clark has been operated on, but he won't live," said Rivers. This news silenced the men. "Now I want every one to get on the job and do his duty. We've got to realize that this is war and not play. Before to-morrow morning I expect some one else will be bumped off; that's what we're here for, you know. The *médecin chef* tells me that they expect a big attack to-night. The cars will be coming off duty soon and the reserve drivers must be ready."

"Get off your lip; you're stretching it," muttered Malone.

A car drove up, dust-covered and with its pasteboard sides pierced with shrapnel. The driver, stiff and exhausted from twenty-four hours' work, got down. Not even their news could stir him out of the abyss of his fatigue.

"It's a judgment," he said indifferently. "Last week I told Ritch that the boches would drop a bomb in his soup kettle if he kept on serving us such rotten grub."

"But you don't understand!" cried Bugs shrilly. "He's dead!"

The driver turned and stared at him. "Kid," he said, "I've been seeing nothing but dead men all day."

The sky paled into evening colors, the sun went down, dropping behind Mont des Chats like a plummet of white metal. The other cars came in, were replenished with gasoline and departed. The question of food arose, and the sergeant held a conference. Who were to be the cooks?

"I was a waiter once in a Quick and Dirty," volunteered Malone.

"Good! You'll be head cook then till we can get some more out from Paris. Mink will have to be second cook; he's laid up with his bum ankle anyway and he might as well be useful."

"That leaves a car without a driver," objected the corporal. This was a problem. The sergeant considered all possibilities.

"Bugs, you'll have to go," he said at last. "We've got to keep the cars moving. Do you think you can drive?"

Bugs began to shiver with excitement. This was such unexpected fortune that he doubted whether it could be good.

"No, but I'd like to try," he gasped.

The harassed Rivers accepted it as settled. "Oh, you'll do all right. Just keep going. Say, you got the pay roll made out for next month, haven't you?" he asked sharply.

Bugs paused a moment, then agreed that it was done.

"Very well, then," said the sergeant with relief, turning away. "It doesn't make much difference what happens."

"Not to you it doesn't," thought Bugs with a sudden sinking feeling.

## II.

THOSE roads which had been very quiet during the day became very much alive now that night had come. From Steenvoorde, from Proven, from Watou and towns beyond as far back as Cassel a mass of artillery, infantry and fourgons struggled forward in the dark. The roads were churned deep into greasy mud in which wheels slipped and spun without advancing. Men, forced to the ditch by the passing of horses, wallowed waist-deep in holes of black liquid which had a deceptive crust over them. The air was filled with cursing no less vivid than the flares from the guns firing in a great semi-circle in the direction of Mont Noir and Mont Rouge.

Frequently something happened forward and the serpentine lines became motionless until the obstacle was removed. In such moments the infantry took to the fields; the mounted detachments, not having the gift of advancing through a forest of hop-poles, remained where they were.

Bugs, at the wheel of his ambulance, was making poor time of it. Each moment he expected to be unpleasantly crushed into eternity by the heavy gun carriages which passed, their wheels scraping the sides of his little car. Whenever the traffic halted he stalled his engine. This was on an average of every fifty yards. By the time he had got out and cranked the car, which bucked forward nervously, the line was in motion again and a half dozen French artillerymen were trying to push him into the ditch with profane comments.

The shiny sides of his vehicle had become much dented, a mudguard was crushed down

almost against the wheel, and sundry scratches ornamented the hood.

"If I ever get back they'll court-martial me for this," Bugs told himself. And the thought came to him that somewhere ahead death might await him. This brought consolation. They couldn't do much to a dead man.

The traffic halted again, and Bugs, precariously skirting the edge of the route, arrived at the cause of it. A fourgon had slued across the road and now blocked it entirely. The bearded French driver sat on his seat with an air of resignation as if for him the war was ended. A couple of artillerymen argued the best way out of the difficulty. Bugs gathered that they advised sending for the colonel. Mason, with his ambulance parked close to the offending truck, fumed impatiently, yelling at intervals: "*Mouvez*, you cheese! *Mouvez!*" He greeted Bugs with relief.

"Hey, Buggsy! You here? Tell this cuckoo to get outa the way, will you? I told him a dozen times, but he don't get me. You try it. How the hell we goin' to get to post with him blockin' us?"

"What shall I tell him?" asked Bugs doubtfully.

"Tell him to get the hell outa here. Tell him Foch is wounded an' we gotta go after him. Tell him anything!"

Bugs cleared his throat. "*Espèce de salaud, va t'en foute,*" he began dutifully. "*Monsieur le general Foch est blessé—*"

The driver of the fourgon was jolted into sudden action as if a seventy-seven had exploded behind him.

"Sacred name of a pig!" he cried. "What is this!"

His hands gripped back on the reins so quickly that the horses, heads strained up and jaws frothing, backed wildly across the road. The rear wheels of the wagon sank into a mud hole, the body tottered for a moment and then toppled over on its side. There was a snapping of traces and the horses stood free. From the blackest of the mud came a sputtered cursing.

"Good boy!" exclaimed Mason. "You told him! Come on now. There's a clear road."

Wheels almost touching, their cars raced along the open stretch. Behind them the artillery train moved forward again.

They had come to the outskirts of Westoutre, its gaunt, shattered walls illuminated fitfully by the flames from some burning farmhouse behind it halfway up the slope of Mont Noir, a dark mass stabbed now and again with flashes from the guns on its sides. It was necessary to drive carefully here—four camions almost blocked the road; all other traffic had curiously disappeared. The drivers from three of the trucks had gone also. The fourth remained. He sat on his seat, slightly bent over the wheel, dead. His mouth hung open and he seemed to be smiling.

"What are they burning the houses for?" yelled Bugs nervously above the roar of the guns, wishing he had not seen the dead driver.

"The boches set 'em with shells. They're gettin' ready to advance. I bet we'll all be dead by morning," Mason answered.

"I'll bet I won't!" said Bugs to himself with determination, forgetting that a scant half hour before he had found the thought of death preferable to court-martial. Every would-be suicide should spend an hour in a morgue.

"Here we are," called Mason.

They drove into the courtyard of a house, rather larger than the rest, from whose curtained cellar windows faint gleams of light shone. Leaving their cars they opened the door and went in.

An odor as of iodoform greeted them. There were other smells, too, less pleasant. A row of wounded were stretched on the floor and a doctor with a white apron tied over his uniform was examining them, applying a bandage here, snipping away a sleeve there with the scissors tied to his waist. Four brancardiers were preparing to depart with their blood-stained stretchers. The second sergeant, who was in charge of the evacuations for the night, came forward. He rubbed his eyes and yawned. The odor of cognac was strong on his breath, for which he was to be envied.

"It took you long enough to get here," he grumbled. "The last bunch have been taken out. These ain't ready yet, so you two will go on. We've got a coupla calls

up the line." He consulted a road map. "Mason, you go to Canada Corners. That's what they call it, anyway. Here"—he indicated with a smoke-stained forefinger—"you drive through the town till you come to the second road to the left, and then you turn there and keep on going till you come to it. I think it's only a coupla houses, but some one will stop you before you go too far."

"You bin up there?" asked Mason uneasily.

"How the hell would I get time to go up there with all this work here?"

"I don't see no work," muttered Mason. "Anyway, I don't like it. Golden said this morning they was shellin' hell an' gone outa the place. I bet the Germans have got it by now. Want me to be captured?"

"You oughta be ashamed of yourself, thinkin' about your personal safety when they's poor wounded needin' you!" rejoined the sergeant loftily. "On your way now."

Mason faded through the door. A moment later the sound of his motor was heard.

"Bugs," said the sergeant, "I gotta job for you. There's a bunch of men to be taken down from somewhere up near the top of Mont Noir. It's a post they call three hundred an' something, I forget what; but that won't make any difference 'cause this is how you get there: You go through this dump here till you come to the second road to the left, then turn there an' keep on going up the mountain till you get to it. You can't miss it."

"That's just what you told Mason," objected Bugs. "How can we go to different places by following the same directions?"

"Now none of your lip," warned the second sergeant, becoming irritable. "I know what I'm doin' better than you do. Didn't the frog runner tell me how to get there? Shake it along now or I'll have the loot put you on kitchen detail for a month."

"If the runner told that boob in French I'll probably be in Germany to-morrow," thought Bugs bitterly. Nevertheless, he made his departure as speedily and as unobtrusively as possible.

It was easy going through the town of Westoutre; for the moment the enemy guns were turning their attention elsewhere, and Bugs soon learned to avoid the piles of masonry that half blocked the road. But beyond he came upon trouble.

Three or four roads led off from the main one, slipping away until they were lost in the darkness, but none seemed to be going to the left. It seemed easier to keep going than to turn and find the road he might have missed, so Bugs drove on. Presently he came to another village. Here, in the square opposite the broken remnants of a church, his blood turned cold in his veins. At one side was an ambulance, and as he passed it a white figure rose suddenly, dripping with water, from what might have been an ancient stone horse trough.

"Glory!" thought Bugs. "I'm shell-shocked!" His hands, clammy with fear, retarded the gas violently and the engine of his car died.

The figure made waving motions, and leaping from its protecting bath, made for the ambulance.

"Go away!" cried Bugs, his teeth clicking. It occurred to him that this might be a French ghost, and he tried to think of something conciliating to say to it in its own language. Adams came up to him, stark naked and sulky.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" he asked. "You look as if you were seeing things."

"I am," answered Bugs, recovering quickly with this proof that the apparition was human. "What are you doing without any clothes on in that horse trough?"

"I ran out of gas and I've been waiting here almost an hour for some one to come along and get me in. It's the first chance I've had for a bath in three weeks, so I took it."

"Suppose you got bumped off," said Bugs reprovingly. "You'd be a nice sight out here without a stitch on you. I'll give you some gas. Got an extra bidon in the car." He busied himself with the side box. "Where are your wounded?" he asked.

Adams grinned. "Sittin' pretty in the ambulance. I offered to give any of them a bath that wanted it and one bird fainted. I guess they don't like water the way we do."

The delivery of gasoline being effected they parted, Adams denying any knowledge of a post called three hundred and something on the top of Mont Noir.

"I'll just keep going," said Bugs gloomily. "Anyway, I'd rather be captured than have them see what I've done to this car."

The road became narrower and steeper. From one side of it now shot splashes of flame and the staccato barks of the seventy-fives. An officer with a tiny flashlight consulted an artillery map, the glow from the torch lighting for a moment his strained young face. A group of slightly wounded men came down the hill holding on to one another for support. Nobody paid any attention to the lonely ambulance.

Around the corner he came upon a man in an English uniform, his collar turned down, his spirals slackly rolled. When he saw the car he began pointing with a swagger stick he carried, now toward the east, now toward the west—then straight down.

"He's an artillery shark giving signals to fire," decided Bugs respectfully, and he stopped his car with violence. They might be shooting low, and death from the mouth of a French gun did not appeal to him.

But no report came, and while he was nervously waiting for it the soldier with the swagger stick disapeared. After a while Bugs drove on. It was queer, he thought, to see the English uniform, but perhaps their lines joined with the French at this point. Anyway, there was a British hospital at Remy Siding, and the various nationals were closely mixed in this threatened sector in Flanders.

He had arrived at the top of the hill and still no post for wounded in sight. Instead, by the roadside lay twelve corpses neatly placed in a row, awaiting burial when the fighting should die down. Through the trees below were flashes of fire and a heavy, confused roaring sound. The odor of gas floated up. Dim figures seemed to be darting forward.

"Hot dog!" muttered Bugs. "I'm right in the middle of it. The next open space where I can turn round without dumping this bus over I'm going to get out." The desire to see New York again became overpowering.

He fingered his gas mask and decided not to put it on. "I can't drive, anyway," he thought, "and if I wear this thing I'll be blind."

But the road grew narrower and narrower with no place to turn. Bugs became desperate. Fear rode beside him and dulled his brain. Thrice he tried to reverse the engine and thrice he stalled the car. He thought of abandoning it and saying that the Germans had captured it. Rivers wouldn't believe that story. The car which he had longed for, had dreamed about now became an incubus that was likely to prove his death. It refused to go anywhere but forward. His hatred of it became deadly and personal. Let him get out of this mess and he'd never drive again. He would be company clerk and nothing else. They could send him to Leavenworth before he'd go to the lines a second time. He thought seriously of asking to be transferred to medical corps work in some base port, than which nothing could be more disgusting. He wondered if there were some foul leper hospital where they could use his services.

Before him was an open spot on which had once been a barn, now burned to the ground. The heavy log floor was still smoking and creepers of flame glowed in the cracks. Part of one wall stood, smoldering and leaning forward at a dangerous angle. To Bugs it meant salvation. He took a chance. With eyes closed and nostrils stinging from the smoke fumes he swept his car over the hot floor in a semicircle and out to the road again, without crashing through into the cellar below, without popping even one of the four tires. On the way home, and without reversing! Immediately his spirits rose.

It was easy to follow the road back; even the engine had stopped coughing spasmodically. He bumped into shell holes and bumped out. Narrowly he avoided craters and did not care. Shells whistled above him and exploded with dull roars; they sounded like music to Bugs. He was not going to see Berlin before his friends! A few hundred yards and a voice hailed him. It was the lieutenant with the flashlight.

"*Ambulance Americaine?*" he shouted.

Bugs stopped.

"The German swine have located us," said the lieutenant. "Three of my men are wounded. The gun is *caput*. You will carry them, yes?"

"Put them in," said Bugs.

In triumph they reached the outskirts of Westoutre. Once again they were halted.

"Hey, buddy!" called a plaintive voice. "What section? Oh, it's you, Buggsy." The speaker leaned against the side of his ambulance disconsolate and fatigued. "Where the hell am I? I bin lookin' for my post half this blasted night with the whole German army chuckin' shells at me, and the rest of the time I bin tryin' to get back to West Toot to find out where I go. Every road I take has a sign up sayin' 'Ralentir.' Where the hell is this town Ralentir? I can't find it on the map."

Bugs exploded into laughter; when he was able to stifle it he explained to the aggrieved Whiffletree: "This is Westoutre right here. Ralentir is French for 'Slow up.' Oh you poor boob!" His hysterical laughter rose again. "And you've been spending the night looking for Ralentir!"

"I hope a shell croaks you," muttered Whiffletree. "Say, Bugs, you won't tell the section, will you?"

"No, I won't," answered Bugs, suddenly magnanimous. To be requested not to do anything was amazing: usually he was commanded with profanity.

III.

THEY were back at the dressing station. The second sergeant disappeared, but the French doctor and his stretcher bearers were watching with interest the antics of an English soldier with a swagger stick. He pointed it one way and another, beckoning in the darkness for something to come forward or halt.

"Ask the English comrade what he is doing and where he is from," commanded M. le Major. "Two of my stretcher bearers found him near the main road and brought him in."

Bugs questioned the man.

"I am directing traffic," he said after a time.

"I see," rejoined Bugs politely, peering into the darkness of the empty lane: "but why direct it here?"

"Why not?" answered the English soldier indifferently, and continued his semaphores.

"I think he is crazy," explained Bugs in French.

The doctor lost all interest. "*Ah oui, coucou!*" He tapped his head significantly. "Shell shock. There are plenty of them to-night. Well, put a ticket on him and take him back to the *triage* with the others."

The soldier who had left his wits somewhere in the direction of Mont Kemel made no objection to this procedure. Comfortably installed in the back of the ambulance with the three wounded Frenchmen he appeared quite happy, more so than his companions who from time to time were obliged to duck violently in order to avoid being speared on the swagger stick. Driving cautiously through the blackness Bugs prepared to pilot his load back to the hospital.

For at least half the way all went well. Then from the interior of the ambulance arose a clamor, curses, groans and the heavy thumping of a body on the floor of the car. Bugs placed his mouth close to the small window behind him.

"What's the matter in there?" he called.

"My eye!" wailed the oldest of the Frenchmen. "That abomination of a stick has put it out entirely! What foulness to be wounded twice in one night!"

"Never mind," said Bugs consolingly; "you won't have to fight any more."

But the noise increased fourfold, and they were all shrieking at once.

"The Englishman! He is escaping! Quick, the Englishman escapes!"

Bugs dismounted, and with trembling legs ran to the rear of the ambulance. The soldier was very husky, and if he should take it into his head to go away from there— Nothing in the Ninety-nine Articles of War had told Bugs how to act in this situation. It was true. Already the demented one was more than half through the canvas flap. Only the vindictive grip of the blinded soldier about one ankle prevented him from departing entirely.

As Bugs arrived this last impediment was shaken off and he fell into the ooze of

mud. Bugs leaned over with soothing words to help him to his feet. A heavy fist shot up and caught him in the pit of the stomach. Gasping his agony Bugs fell forward bearing them both to earth. Something—a hand had grasped his ear and was trying to tear it from his head.

"You ungrateful hellion!" yelled Bugs. "Leggo that ear!"

Desperate with pain, his hand closed on the monkey wrench in his breeches pocket and with a smart swing he brought it down on the stranger's skull. Immediately the beginner of violence lost all interest in the proceedings and went to sleep. With the help of the wounded men Bugs dumped him in the ambulance and continued on his way.

"I hope I haven't killed him," he reflected. "After this I'm going to wear earmuffs."

They had arrived at last at Boeschepe. Bugs superintended the unloading of his car and turned it around hurriedly, unaided. Now that he was here it didn't seem a good place to stay. There was still the score for the damaged ambulance to pay, and the thought of what might be the penalty for nearly killing an allied soldier dazed him.

"I'm going back after some more wounded," he called to the corporal who appeared tardily at the door of the hospital.

When next he returned it was daylight. The lieutenant was now in charge. To him went Bugs with sagging shoulders, fearing the worst.

"I've nearly put the car on the blink, sir," he said, hoping to get it over quickly. "Look at her; she's just about a wreck."

The lieutenant glanced casually at what had been a smart and shiny new ambulance the day before.

"Oh, that's all right," he replied, mellow with his trip to Dunkirk and some pleasing secret news. "It 'll still run. I've had headquarters on the phone about the cooks, and they say we can have anything we want."

"How's the poor Limey shell shock?" asked Bugs, hoping he had died before he could tell the truth.

"Shell shock nothing!" said the lieutenant. "When he was coming to from that crack you gave him he raved in German like the old he-devil himself! Some damn spy sneaking around spotting our artillery positions and acting crazy when any one came near him. He must have got out of the English sector. Good work, Baker." He smiled broadly. "The *medécin divisionaire* is much pleased. Because of our losses yesterday morning and the way in which the evacuations have been handled so far he is going to recommend me for a decoration."

"Yes, sir," said Bugs, outwardly correct. Inwardly he cried: "Sporting in Dunkirk all day and hasn't seen a front-line post yet! These bums get away with murder!"

"It has been hinted," continued the lieutenant, watching Bugs closely, "that there will be other decorations. If so I shall speak for you."

"He's a prince!" thought Bugs. "I hope he gets the legion!"

The mathematical sergeant appeared. At sight of Bugs he became very red.

"Get off that car, you low-lived liar!" he yelled. "What the hell do you mean by saying the pay roll was made out when you haven't even started it? Suppose you'd been killed! We're going to get our money if we have to lose the war!"

The spark of revolt in Bugs broke into flame. "Make out the pay roll yourself, Rivers," he cried. "I'm a driver now!"

Aghast at such insolence from the worm of the outfit, Rivers waited for his officer to speak.

"I guess you are," said the one in command thoughtfully. "But before you start you'll need some breakfast."



## FOOL'S GOLD—By J. Allan Dunn

will be next week's Novelette. It is a graphic tale of crime and retribution, with a desert background in which the locale takes toll from the killers

# The Doom Dealer

## By DAVID FOX

***Author of "The Super-Swing," "The Man Who Convicted Himself," etc.***

***WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PARTS I and II.***

THE SHADOWERS, INC., an organization of reformed criminals devoting themselves to the prevention and detection of crime, is retained by Miss Arabella Wyatt, an enormously wealthy resident of a little New York town, to inquire into the death of her fiancé, Ogden Ronalds, at the altar as they were about to be married. She suspects his death was not due to heart disease and has discovered that paste gems have been substituted for her valuable family jewels. Rex Powell, leader of the Shadowers, Phil Howe, Lucian Baynes, Clifford Nichols, George Roper, and Henry Corliss, experts in various phases of crime, find that they are being shadowed, and capture the spy, a queer looking fellow without ears. Henry Corliss, medical expert, takes charge of the investigation. The Shadowers prepare to cover all Millerstown in their efforts to learn whether Ronalds's death was murder. Ronalds had met Miss Wyatt while he was resting in Dr. Weir's sanatorium. Rex makes arrangements to be admitted as a patient, in order to investigate Weir. Judge Tompkins, Miss Wyatt's financial manager, is also under suspicion.

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### THE MESSAGE FOR GEORGE.

WHEN Rex opened the main door of the suite occupied by the Shadowers the next morning the chair behind Ethel's desk was empty, and no cheery "Good morning" greeted him. The panel connecting with George's elaborately appointed séance chamber had slipped aside, and through it there came the sound of Phil's voice raised in half-rueful accents.

"Gee, it's tough to be left behind even for a couple of days, doc; but if Luce isn't kicking, I'm not."

"I'll have all I can do with those fake jewels," Lucian's drawl announced. Then as he caught sight of the last comer he exclaimed: "Hello, Rex! Henry has just been assigning us the parts we are to play."

He was standing beside the ebony table

*This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for February 24.*

upon which the huge, opalescent crystal rested on its black velvet cushion. George's long legs swung from the dais of dully glimmering metallic stuffs against the opposite wall. Phil, at his feet, was playing Canfield with a pack of marked fortune-telling cards, while Cliff lay stretched luxuriously on a divan, and Henry squatted upon the floor of the open medium's cabinet like a fat, modern idol in tweeds.

"Morning, everybody!" Rex advanced smilingly. "You all look mighty comfortable!"

"I am far from comfortable, in my mind at least," Cliff asserted when the greetings had subsided. "I view with horror and loathing the bleak prospect before me, but I am a willing martyr to the cause."

"You see, Rex," Henry explained, "Cliff can't do anything more with those letters until he has some specimens of handwriting to compare with them; so I am sending him on ahead by a different line to the junction three miles from Millerstown. As an artist in search of a place where he can paint in solitude, he is going to scout around and buy or rent a secluded farmhouse ready for immediate occupancy, which will be our headquarters. We'll keep our earless friend hidden there."

"You are going to include him in our expedition?" asked Rex in surprise.

"There's nothing else to be done!" Henry retorted. "We can't very well croak him. None of us can be spared for long to guard him in town here, and I daren't trust any one else—even Pink-Eye's boys—if they're not right under our hands. He's too important a factor in our case."

"Has he talked yet?"

"Not a word. Phil will guard him, and Lucian do all he can to trace the maker of that junk jewelry until Cliff wires them in code that the farm is ready. Then they will bring that freak, well doped, with a couple of Pink-Eye's best strong-arm guys in a limousine, and drop them at the farm."

"That's some car, too, I'll say!" Phil broke in. "Latest model Francetta, with the sweetest motor in the world, long lines, dark mulberry body, and from hubs to lamps she looks the money!"

"Miss Wyatt has given me what Luce calls '*carte blanche*' for expenses, Rex, and we're going to do this thing right," Henry continued. "Lucian will descend upon Millerstown in style with his chauffeur as a millionaire mill owner looking for new sites. He will naturally consult Frank Dilworth, who is, Miss Wyatt told George yesterday, the largest owner and dealer in mill property in that part of the State. Do you like the idea?"

"Splendid! That takes care of Dilworth as a suspect, insures Lucian's introduction to the leading men of the town, and possibly to Miss Wyatt herself, as a mill owner," Rex replied. "Phil can hang around the garage where he puts up the Francetta, and get in with another element in the town."

"I thought you'd get it!" Henry chuckled. "The early afternoon train will take Miss Wyatt and her maid home. The next, which does not get in until midnight, will drop two passengers most inconspicuously for the hotel. They will be strangers to each other, of course, and a most ill-assorted pair; our efficient young beauty expert and a certain superannuated professor—"

"Ethel?" interrupted Rex. "But will she be prepared so soon? She said two days at least, if you remember."

"She has informed me that the high priestess of the imported dress department at Louisette's—there is nothing chary about our Ethel's ideas—discovered her to be a perfect thirty-four—whatever that is—and, to use her own expression, she walked into her new outfit. I have arranged with Miss Wyatt to patronize her immediately."

"But I mean the beautifying treatment!" Rex expostulated. "What is it—electricity? Suppose she bungles it! Is she capable?"

"'Capable'?" Henry interrupted in his turn. "Those clever little fingers of hers know massage tricks that Cleopatra forgot, and she has the patter down to the last word. George will keep a paternal if unobtrusive eye on her in the hotel."

"George?" Rex glanced at the gaunt, ministerial figure on the dais.

"A rôle after my own heart!" George assured him. "Retired college professor, emulating Wordsworth and Dr. Johnson by

writing a book on unique epitaphs and going all over the country to collect data for it, nosing around graveyards and looking up records.

"Rather a pathetic figure—stoop-shouldered, near-sighted, a little deaf, and forever dropping precious notes and manuscripts out of his shabby brief case. He will go to Judge Tompkins—who is by way of being the town historian, Miss Wyatt assures me—for the biographies of the people whose names he has chosen from the local cemetery to immortalize in his work. He is likewise a spiritualist—not a professional one, but if he discovers any kindred souls he might hold a séance in somebody's front parlor. Baby! How his control would respond!"

"May I offer a suggestion, Henry?" Rex turned to the latter. "You recall the name of Ronalds's friend, Amos G. Benedict? I had a chat with him last night that was illuminating, but the only point we need go into now is his opinion of Judge Tompkins.

"He called the judge a 'land pirate'; said there was no telling what fat pickings he had had all these years from the property Miss Wyatt so trustingly left in his care; and intimated that the prospect of turning it over to her husband—and incidentally rendering an accounting—made him view her marriage with anything but favor. In fact, Benedict asserted to me bluntly that if there had been any suspicion of foul play about Ronalds's death he would have looked first to Judge Tompkins!"

"Great Jehoshaphat!" Henry rubbed his shining bald pate excitedly. "Besides Dr. Weir and the minister himself, Judge Tompkins was the only man near Ronalds at the altar when he fell! Don't forget that, George, when you're getting the dope on the dead ones from him."

"That possible aspect of the case was already in my mind, my dear Henry!" George responded with dignity. "I have been hauled ignominiously before too many of these country justices not to know what avaricious old birds of prey they are!

"By the way, Rex, Haynes Corners is only ten miles on the other side of Millerstown from the junction, but Miss Wyatt knows of nobody named Cox living there."

"What about Ronalds's personal effects which were left to Weir?" Rex asked.

"Scarfpins and other jewelry to the value of under five thousand dollars, and a ring worth ten which Miss Wyatt had given him. Weir insisted upon her taking it back."

George shrugged. "The rest was merely the contents of his apartment in town—small library of first editions, a few good rugs and bronzes, and odd pieces of old furniture."

"His apartment was on the corner of the first floor, and had two entrances, the main one leading to the lobby and the other to an alley on the side street," Phil volunteered unexpectedly.

"Henry sent me up there last evening, and I lost seventeen iron men to the night porter and the house valet shooting crap. They both worked there at the Mandeville during the five years Ronalds had that apartment, and I tell you there was something funny about that guy."

"How 'funny'?" Henry demanded. "You haven't told us yet—"

"Aw, he was too good to be true!" Phil exclaimed disgustedly. "No dames ringing him up or dropping in to see him; no parties—not even a quiet little game now and then. And prohibition didn't mean anything more to him than the Sullivan law. I said to myself that the poor simp couldn't have known he was alive. Then I remembered that second entrance on the alley, so convenient, and I began to wonder was he maybe extra cagy.

"I made some joke about it, and the valet remembered all of a sudden that he'd always had two or three suits nobody ever saw him wear, yet they needed pressing once in a while. A little later on the porter said Mr. Ronalds had been a terrible sound sleeper; a fire broke out on the third floor one night, and he was the only tenant in the building who couldn't be roused.

"They had both been strong for him, though, and swore he was the best tipper who had ever lived in the place. That got me to thinking, too. A guy don't tip so

high unless he's paying for something that isn't in the lease. And saints are usually tightwads!"

"There's something in that," Henry observed thoughtfully. "Rex, did you see those two Interstate fellers, Jarvis and Cadwalader, who went up to Millerstown for Ronalds's wedding and stayed for his funeral?"

"I have just come from them," Rex nodded. "Ronalds got in there through Benedict's influence. That shows singular ingratitude in making Weir his beneficiary. He had an unquestionably clean record behind him in smaller banking concerns, and he proved to be among the most efficient of the high-salaried men employed by the company."

"Did you—" Henry hesitated. "Did you take any steps toward getting that letter of introduction to Dr. Weir?"

"I have only to telephone and it will be in my hands inside of an hour!" Rex twitched himself spasmodically, and his voice took on a thin, high, quavering note. "On the personal recommendation of Mr. Ira Voorhees and with a letter of introduction from Mr. Luther P. Ormsby, a new patient, Redmond Eustace Parr is prepared to present himself for treatment at Weir's sanatorium."

The rest of the short, wintry day was a busy one for the Shadowers. In Phil's taxi Henry himself trailed Miss Wyatt and her maid from the Bellemonde to the station, and from a discreet distance saw them safely aboard their train. A later one, which pulled out just as the early twilight was settling down, bore in the Pullman a slender young woman whose glossy nut-brown hair made her fair skin seem almost dazzlingly white by contrast and whose severe but chic traveling costume had "Paris" stamped all over it for feminine eyes to appraise.

If she were inwardly seething with excitement, her calmly self-possessed manner did not reveal it. When in the dining car she passed a gaunt, elderly, bespectacled individual it was with no apparent sign of recognition, although a close observer might have noted a slight, impudent wrinkling of her small, retroussé nose.

The elderly person dropped his fork, staring in utter stupefaction. Then a smile of reluctant admiration lighted his thin, ascetic countenance, and beneath his breath he apostrophized the fortunately empty seat facing him in words that ill accorded with his scholarly appearance:

"Hot dog! She's going to get away with it!"

The long night ride seemed endless as the young woman sat yawning daintily over a book recommended to her as sufficiently highbrow to pass scrutiny. It drew to a close at last. When the porter assisted her to alight in the piercingly cold semidarkness of the station at Millerstown it was with a feeling of reassurance that she noted the stoop-shouldered elderly figure of the man from the dining car just behind.

He did not follow her into the lone ramshackle motor bus which awaited stray midnight passengers, however. As it rattled off she was aware of a sudden qualm. She had never felt so utterly alone in her life. In the wide deserted office of the old Colonial Hotel, after registering "Miss Ethel Jenks, New York," she lingered, haggling superciliously over the price and location of rooms with the deaf old clerk, until she saw the familiar figure in its old-fashioned great-coat enter the door.

Her room was huge and immaculately clean, but Ethel shivered as she crept into the massive four-poster bed and drew the covers tightly about her. Thank goodness George Roper was here, anyway, and Clifford Nichols somewhere not so many miles away, and Henry Corliss would arrive tomorrow. But Rex! Of all her employers, he was the only one whose part in this new job they were pulling off had not been revealed to her. She went to sleep vaguely disturbed.

The clear, cold sunlight of early morning, however, brought renewed optimism. Rex Powell would be all right, of course. There couldn't be any actual danger to him in this one-horse burg.

Meanwhile there was some fast work for her to do. Following instructions, after breakfast Ethel seated herself boldly at the writing desk in the hotel office, ignoring the curious glances of the commercial traveler

or two and the group of elderly men, evidently local citizens, who lounged in a corner.

She was busily engaged in addressing her sheaf of dainty announcement cards from the list which Miss Wyatt had given George of the leading ladies of the town, when, to her unbounded amazement, Mary Jane Dusenberry appeared. Her sharp features were pinched by the cold, and she bore the look of one who was being dragged by invisible chains. She made her way straight to the desk.

"Mr. Quincey, is there a young lady stopping here name of Jenks?" she inquired.

"Morning, Mary Jane," the proprietor responded. "Thar's the young lady you're askin' for, settin' at the desk."

His twanging tones carried, but Ethel did not raise her eyes until the angular, middle-aged woman stood beside her. Then it was with no flicker of recognition. Mary Jane took in the darkened hair and gasped. Recovering herself, she resumed her part.

"Are you Miss Jenks?" Mary Jane's nasal voice was purposely raised to carry to the masculine ears.

"I am." Ethel smiled with distant politeness, but her heart was beating fast, for the woman was bending near. This whole thing was not according to schedule at all! What could have happened?

"I'm Miss Arabella Wyatt's maid, and if you're the young lady she heard about in New York who was coming here to give them beauty treatments she'd like for you to call, miss. Meantime, she wants a jar of that cream—"

Slyly she slipped an envelope beneath the blotter on the desk, but it had scarcely left her fingers when Ethel as deftly palmed it.

"Very well. Miss Wyatt has been mentioned to me, and I had intended mailing her one of my cards; but you may tell her that I will call"—Ethel rose, glancing over the heads of the gaping onlookers to the clock in the office wall—"at twelve o'clock. If you will wait I will get the cream."

When George Roper, alias Professor Griffith Ranny, returned to his room after a profitably spent morning, he found a tiny folded note tucked under his door, and opened it hastily. He stared at the cryptic message, chuckled, and then as its meaning became plain to him he emitted a low whistle. He had read:

> Ahss wde ooiau aos shhe soe nsaa seoi, so do it now. One who has passed on is among us.

## CHAPTER IX.

### "IF LOOKS COULD KILL—"

THE envelope which Mary Jane had slipped beneath Ethel's fingers was sealed and blank. Once in her own room she tore it open excitedly, to read:

> MY DEAR MISS JENKS:
>
> Please tell your employers at the first opportunity that the face I saw was real. The doctor will know who I mean. Tell him that I have actually seen the man with the scar. Come to me as soon as you can without harming your plans. I had no other means of getting word to you than this.
>
> Sincerely,
> A. M. W.

Ethel's blue eyes opened wide with astonishment, for she had heard nothing of a man with a scar; but there was no time to be lost, and even as she took an attractively wrapped jar of cream from her cosmetic case and hurried downstairs the plan for communicating with George was already forming itself in her active brain.

After Mary Jane's departure, however, she forced herself to finish addressing her announcements under the gaze of the still curious loungers. Then strolling over to the desk, she asked in her sweetest manner the way to the post office, her modest, downcast glance fastening meanwhile like a hawk on the opened page of the register. The name directly beneath that which she had signed was "Professor Griffith Ranny, Burlington, New Jersey," and opposite, in small, precise lettering, appeared the room number, "32." Her purpose had been accomplished, but she paused long enough to inquire where Miss Wyatt lived and if she could get a taxi to take her there.

"Taxi? Well, now, we ain't got none o' them things in town yet, but the garage has ottermobiles to let out. 'Tain't more'n half a mile to the manor, but you might get lost, bein' a stranger here."

The proprietor tugged at his chin whiskers reflectively, and then added in a burst of evidently unwonted gallantry: "Want I should call 'em up on the telephone for you, ma'am?"

"The garage? Which one, Mr. Quincey?" Ethel asked.

"Ain't but one." Mr. Quincey stared. "Everybody gits thar ile and gas from Jim Iliff, and he does all the fixin' they can't have 'tended to themselves; runs the busses to the depot, too."

"Oh, then, I will be ever so much obliged if you would telephone to Mr. Iliff and ask him to have a nice car here to take me to Miss Wyatt's house by twelve."

Ethel beamed upon her informant. After his arrival she would know at least where to find Phil. "Please say I will want the driver to wait and bring me back again."

Wyatt Manor was a huge, uncompromisingly square old mansion of dull brick with a luxuriantly green ivy vine climbing almost to its high slate roof.

Ethel's rattling little car entered through the massive stone gate posts of an austere iron fence and proceeded up a driveway bordered by great towering bare trees between the trunks of which she caught glimpses of sere, spreading lawns and empty flower beds, bald and inartistic in their symmetrical exactitude. Stiff-legged iron dogs and deer with grotesquely branching antlers stood about, and an ugly Triton reared his head above the dry fountain basin half filled with dead leaves.

"Gee!" Ethel shivered to herself. "With all her money, and the bright lights only seven or eight hours away! Is she rooted here, I wonder?"

Mary Jane admitted her to the wide hall with its marble-topped, carved walnut hatrack, and led the way to an enormous parlor with a leaping wood fire on the hearth. There she left the visitor abruptly.

Ethel seated herself on a slithery horsehair sofa, staring about her in disdain at the heavy, ungainly furniture and the severe portraits in their dull gold frames. She wondered somewhat apprehensively on her own account what manner of woman this latest come-on of the Shadowers might be. But when the stately, gentle-eyed mistress of the house appeared the girl realized dimly that she seemed to fit in with her surroundings and they in turn lost their cold ugliness and became quaint and almost graciously homelike to her city-bred gaze.

"Miss Jenks? I suppose I am to call you that?" Miss Wyatt smiled faintly as she held out her hand.

"Yes, Miss Wyatt. We are none of us using our own names here," Ethel replied in a low, guarded tone. "You wished to see me in regard to that note? Are any of your other servants where they can hear us? Dr. Corliss asked me to tell you that you could not be too careful."

"I keep no menservants, and only three maids besides Mary Jane. They are all busy in other parts of the house. Dr. Corliss has reached Millerstown, then?"

She asked the question with undisguised eagerness, and her face fell when Ethel shook her head.

"No; but Mr. Roper is here, and I managed to get your message to him."

"I am glad of that!" Miss Wyatt shivered slightly, and the sharp eyes watching her noted her mounting agitation. "Come over to the fire, Miss Jenks, and I will tell you what has happened. You know from your employers all about the case upon which they are engaged for me?"

"Not all, perhaps—there wasn't time—but I guess they told you that you can trust me? I've worked in with them before, and we got away— I mean, they give me their fullest confidence. Dr. Corliss told me how —how the gentleman to whom you were being married died suddenly in the church a year and a half ago."

Ethel's voice sank sympathetically as she held out her daintily gloved hands to the blaze. "You can talk to me about it just as freely as you could to them, Miss Wyatt."

"I am sure I can." The older woman hesitated for a moment, and then went on: "Did they tell you that I was ill for a long time after—after my bereavement—and when I recovered I could not get a certain face out of my mind? It was that of a stranger, and I couldn't recall ever having seen him, so I could not be sure

that it was not just a—a dream left from my delirium, until last night."

"The man with the scar?" Ethel glanced up quickly.

"Yes. Our train was late, and it was nearly ten o'clock when we arrived. No one was about the station, but my car was waiting. Mary Jane and I were hurrying toward it when I saw some one standing in the shadow by the baggage truck. Something must have gone wrong with our electric plant last night, for the lights were brightening and dimming quickly in a bewildering sort of fashion, and I could not see clearly.

"Thinking it might be our local expressman, I glanced again at that figure just as the lights flared up vividly, and I saw his face!

"It was just as I have described it to Dr. Corliss and the others. There could be no mistake about it. I have seen it too often in my thoughts not to recognize it instantly."

"Did you remember then where you had seen him before?" Ethel asked.

"No." Miss Wyatt sighed and passed a slim hand across her forehead, touching the curious white streak in her hair which glowed in the firelight with a silvery luster. "I have told your employers that the face seemed to be connected vaguely in my mind with Mr. Ronalds's death, but I did not know why, for no one was permitted to enter the church for my wedding without the card which had accompanied their invitation, and—and later when the funeral took place here in this very room only intimate friends were present."

Ethel restrained a slight start and glanced about quickly, but her hostess was speaking once more.

"When I came upon him so suddenly last night the impression was stronger than ever, and I must have stood still and stared in the shock of my surprise, for the man turned just as the lights dimmed, and when they brightened again he was gone. All the way home and later when I lay in bed the conviction grew stronger and stronger that somehow the man was linked with that tragedy that came into my life.

"I felt sure that I had seen him not once but several times, and always with something—some attribute present which appealed to the senses and which was lacking last night. It was only toward morning that it came to me, a strange thing to connect with so evil a face—the perfume and the vivid coloring of fresh flowers!"

"Well"—this was getting rather deep for Ethel, and she moved slightly in her chair—"there were flowers at the wedding, weren't there, and—and at the funeral?"

Miss Wyatt shook her head.

"Of course; but that is not the only sensation, almost a memory, which comes to me, not stiffly massed decorations or set pieces, but fresh growing flowers, too, and the scent seems overpowering. If I could only think—I am sure if I see the man in daylight it will all come back to me!"

"He's here, anyway—you know that," Ethel observed practically. "I don't see how you can miss him if this town isn't any bigger than what I saw coming to your house just now. All we've got to do is to find him and bring him to you."

"But he may go away again! I have not once encountered him since my illness until last night," Miss Wyatt explained. "That is why I thought your employers should know at the earliest possible moment."

"If he leaves, the Shadowers will bring him back," Ethel announced with the serenity of utter confidence. Then she jumped as a bell clanged dolorously through the house. "Have you anything else for me to tell them, Miss Wyatt?"

"No; but do you think you can understand? It is all so very vague, and yet terribly clear to me! Can you convey that impression of the flowers?"

"I guess I can," Ethel assented somewhat dryly, and rose, for steps were sounding along the hall. "The main thing is that you've actually seen the man. If you think he has got anything to do with the things that have happened since—"

"I don't know what to think!" Miss Wyatt cast a hurried glance toward the hall. "I only know that he is inseparably connected in my mind with the—the way Mr. Ronalds died!"

"Did he look any different last night

than when you kind of remembered him from before?" Ethel persisted, although the front door had opened. "What did he have on? Was he ragged, or—"

"Oh, no!" Her hostess interrupted quickly. "He wore a heavy overcoat—gray, I think—and a soft felt hat; but I saw his face plainly. It did not have that fiendish expression of triumph that I seem to remember, but was set and stern and rather sad. However, it was unquestionably the same man. You will come to me to-morrow? It will be Sunday, but cannot you arrange it?"

They had moved toward the door, and she added the last almost in a whisper, her cheeks flushing more vividly than with the warmth which the fire had lent them, for a masculine voice, strange to Ethel's ears, sounded now just outside.

"Five dollars the single treatment—six for twenty-five." The girl raised her own voice. "That is right, Miss Wyatt. I will leave the other preparation here for you on my way to—to church to-morrow morning."

A man holding a huge, loose bunch of carnations was standing by the hatrack, engaged evidently in heated argument with Mary Jane as they entered the hall. Ethel noted that although his hat was shabby, and he wore a worsted muffler, his opened coat was lined with rich seal. Unmistakably of middle age, his face beneath the shock of red hair was round and unlined, and his figure, although inclined to stoutness, seemed lithe with the buoyancy of youth as he strode forward.

"Arabella! Why didn't you let me know you were coming back last night, so that I might have met you at the station? These are all Miles or I could find in the hothouse, but you should have had your favorite roses—"

Ethel waited to hear no more, but with a nod to the stony-visaged Mary Jane she slipped past and out to her waiting car.

"Can you beat it?" she murmured to herself as she jumped in and shut the door. "That's the other guy the doc told me about! I wonder—"

When she reached her own room at the Quincey House, Ethel found a note in answer to her earlier one tucked just under the sill. Plumping down on the side of the bed, she opened it.

"E-h-s-h-a-h-i-u." She pronounced the letters slowly aloud, her brow wrinkled with the effort to decipher the message mentally. "S-s-w-h h-o-a-h o-s-o-h a-a-s-s o-o-a-h-i-e-d-d-e."

With a little grimace she rummaged impatiently in her bag for a pencil. On the back of the envelope she scribbled again the sentence of twenty-six letters with which she had concluded her note to George Roper: "One who has passed on is among us." Then under "O" she wrote "A," under "n" the second letter of the alphabet, and so on to the end.

It was code No. 3 from the little black book on the shelf in George's own séance chamber, and he himself had taught her how to read it during their first case. Now with it as a guide she rapidly picked out the letters of the message which he had slipped under her door. As its meaning became clear her face grew longer and longer, and when it was finished she shuddered.

Nevertheless, at five o'clock that afternoon, when the clear, cold twilight had already deepened to an eerie dusk, a slender solitary figure in a smart fur-trimmed suit appeared at the side gate of the cemetery. Although a little shriek sounded upon the frosty air as something moved behind a tall monument just within, it was quickly stifled.

"Honest to Gawd, Mr. Roper!" Ethel exclaimed. "You might have picked out a cheerfuller place and one easier to find! Every hick in this rube burg has got me lamped a mile off already. What excuse could I give for wanting to know where the cemetery was?"

"What did you give?" George's long, equine face lightened with an expectant grin as he advanced toward her.

"None at all!" she replied promptly. "The undertaker sells furniture, too, and he's a nice little guy. I was looking at some chairs and small tables for the beauty parlor I'm thinking of opening—maybe—and we got to talking about funerals somehow, and that's how I found out."

George chuckled.

"I might have known you'd pull something like that!" Then his face sobered.

"But what's this about the man with the scar? Have you seen Miss Wyatt?"

Ethel told him the gist of the morning's interview, and asked:

"Is she cuckoo, or what, Mr. Roper? I've seen things in a dream, but never smelled anything! What could flowers have to do with that man?"

"That's a very interesting point, Ethel, but I think Miss Wyatt is far from going 'cuckoo,' as you put it," George replied in quickened tones. "Her subconscious mem—I mean, her mind refused to connect the thought of this man solely with the interrupted wedding and the funeral, you say, but with fresh growing flowers whose scent was almost overpowering? That is highly significant!"

"Well," Ethel remarked a little dryly, "I've been doing some thought connecting myself since morning, and I have a hunch she believes that man of hers was murdered. What's more, I shouldn't be surprised if her dope was right, considering the chances somebody took to keep her from getting to the office in New York and the way that queer-looking guy trailed all of us! Huh! I rang the bell, didn't I?"

She had been watching her companion's face in the gathering darkness, and saw that the suggestion came as no surprise to him.

He glanced down at her and shrugged.

"If she does believe that, it's our business to let her go right on thinking so—see? What are we being paid for but to 'investigate'?" He emphasized the last word meaningly, but Ethel was not deceived.

"He was croaked, all right, and that's why we're here!" she retorted doggedly. "The other guy who's making a play for her now called before I left. He says it with flowers, too!"

"Did you meet him?" The eagerness in George's tone was undisguised.

"Say, Mr. Roper, I wasn't on earth when he blew in! I got a flash at him, though, as I took the air. He's red-headed and chunky—country rich, as you could tell by the hick way he was dressed, and yet that fur-lined coat of his was worth a couple of grand, at least. He's dippy about her, or else making a mighty big play, and she acts to me as if she was about ready to fall for it; but there's one person he's cold with."

"Who?" asked George, as she paused for breath.

"Mary Jane. That old frozen-face has got as much use for him as I'd have for the district attorney! If looks could kill, he'd be as dead as the last guy who was going to marry Miss Wyatt."

"Are you sure?" They had been pacing up and down before the gate, but now George halted abruptly in the path. "She is a cranky sort of woman, you know."

"It wasn't crankiness I saw in the way she glared at him when he stepped forward to meet Miss Wyatt as we came out of her parlor. It was just plain hate!" Ethel asserted. Then with a shiver she glanced over the wall. "Gee, couldn't we get away from here, Mr. Roper? Those spooky white gravestones sticking up in the dark give me the creeps, and it's awful cold."

"I'll walk with you as far as the turn in the road, but you'll have to find your way back alone, my child. Have you made an appointment with Miss Wyatt?"

"I'm going to her house for a few minutes to-morrow morning," Ethel replied as they set off. "Is there anything you want me to tell her? She was afraid you would not understand her notion about the flowers and the scent of them, and she's terribly anxious to have you trace that man she saw at the station."

"Tell her I understand perfectly, and that I must see her." George paused for a moment in thought. "Ask her to come alone but quite openly to the cemetery early to-morrow afternoon. She will find me puttering around among the graves over in the old part, copying the inscriptions. She has been informed of the part I am supposed to be playing up here. If she were curious to know what the old professor was doing and stopped to look, it would be natural enough for him to approach her and ask her some questions about the people buried there. Get the idea?"

"I do, but I don't believe she ever picked anybody up in her life—least of all in a

graveyard!" Ethel's tone was dubious. "I guess I can fix it with her, though. Have you heard anything from Dr. Corliss?"

"You will probably see him at the hotel when you return now, but I don't know whether he will find any means of communicating with you or not."

"And Mr. Powell?" Ethel asked as the turn in the road was reached. "Nobody told me what he was going to do in Millerstown or when he was coming."

"He cannot be very far off at this moment, but I don't know when we will see him. Perhaps not until our work up here is ended."

George spoke very gravely as he took the girl's hand.

"We must each carry out the instructions Mr. Corliss gave us, and not inquire too closely into what the rest are doing, or we might interfere with one another. A chance word could give one of us away. I am sure you wouldn't want to do that, Ethel; so be careful every minute."

She promised, but as she started off pluckily down the dark, lonesome road her vague disquietude of the previous night returned twofold. It was plain that Rex Powell's part in this deal they were putting over was to be kept a secret from her. But why? To be sure, she wasn't a real member of the gang—only just working for them—and they had the right to tell her no more than they chose.

A dog howled mournfully somewhere in the distance, and something rustled in the bare, brittle bushes close by. But the lights of the first houses twinkled ahead, and Ethel kept straight upon her way with a new resolve forming itself in her mind. She was no snitcher, and she wouldn't crab anybody's act, but come what might she meant to locate Rex Powell.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CRY IN THE NIGHT.

AT the moment of George Roper's parting injunction to Ethel at the turn of the road, a tall, distinguished-looking man was being assisted from a smart little station coupé before the wide-flung doors of a great rambling old house a few miles away. The light streamed forth invitingly, outlining the sturdy form of the butler as he hurried down the steps to offer his arm to the newcomer. The latter accepted it with a jerky nod of thanks.

"Just one step more, sir. There you are!" The servant spoke with respectful encouragement. "Right in here, sir. The doctor will see you at once."

A cheerful fire was blazing on the hearth in the immense hall, lighting up the trophies of big game upon the paneled walls and playing over the lounging chairs and low tables scattered about, vying with the soft sidelights and the tall lamp on the newel post of the staircase. Despite its size, a pleasant, welcoming atmosphere pervaded it. The butler led the new patient straight into a smaller apartment at the side.

Here, too, a wood fire crackled. A great dog was stretched lazily before it on the hearth. Low lights glowed on deep-cushioned chairs and wide davenports which invited relaxation. Bookcases lined the walls, and the mellow tints of the rugs and draperies gave the room a coziness which the hall had lacked. The newcomer tottered to a chair and sank into it with no apparent interest in his surroundings. The muscles of his face were drawn and twitching, and as he sat with his head bowed upon his hand a nervous tremor shook his whole body.

His brain was coolly, keenly alert, however. That suave butler had the torso of a Hercules beneath his immaculate black coat; the eyes under the low, beetling brows were quick-shifting and narrow, and the prognathous jaw more like that of a prizefighter than a house servant. If sheer brawn were necessary in an emergency, he looked capable of handling two or three average men. What would be the next sign to present itself of the iron hand of which Mr. Voorhees had spoken?

As though in answer to his thought, the shepherd dog rose from the hearth, stretched himself, and came slowly forward with the slinking glide peculiar to his breed.

His eyes showed neither friendliness nor hostility as he sniffed at the stranger, but only an intense watchfulness. When, satisfied, he turned away, it was to crouch across the threshold with his wolflike head between his paws, on guard. He had scarcely settled himself, however, when a lithe step sounded along the hall and a deep, pleasant voice spoke in amused reproof.

"Hector! Is this the way to welcome a guest? My dear Mr. Parr, I was delighted to know that a friend of Mr. Ormsby's nephew was coming to pay us a visit."

A warm, firm hand clasped his limp, shaking one, and Rex Powell looked up into a pair of smiling, dark eyes set in an almost boyishly smooth countenance above a short, straight nose and a mobile mouth with a mildly humorous quirk at the corners. The doctor's hair was blond, but his skin was healthily tanned. His big frame in impeccable dinner clothes was borne with the unconscious poise of an athlete.

"You are Dr. Weir?" Rex spoke softly. "Happy to know you, sir, even under the circumstances which bring me a wreck to your establishment. I have been hearing the most remarkable things of you from both Gideon Ormsby and Ira Voorhees. I have a letter here from Luther Ormsby—and I've come to you as a last resort."

Dr. Weir accepted the envelope which his new patient extended and thrust it, without a glance, into the pocket of his dinner jacket. Then he drew up a chair.

"Voorhees and Ormsby are both splendid old chaps, but they have an exaggerated idea of the hospitality they received here," he observed confidentially. "As a young man, Voorhees had worked hard physically, and the strenuous mental effort of these last few sedentary years as head of his huge business had tried his brain. He wanted to rest and play, and didn't know it. He went back to his responsibilities a new man.

"Ormsby, on the other hand, grew tired of playing about several years ago, and—I hope, Mr. Parr, that you will never tell him—he took refuge from the boredom and tyranny of society in the study of Luther P. Ormsby, and what he could make that nervous system of his do to him if he gave his undivided attention to it!

"He found it was getting the best of him, and so he came up here and got interested in other things, and by the time he went home he realized that there was a lot of pleasure and enjoyment in the world still. One learned to work, and the other to play, you see. What can we help you to do, Mr. Parr?"

Rex was fully aware that during the course of the doctor's seemingly garrulous talk he was being subjected to the closest possible scrutiny, but he had schooled himself well in his part, and now he shook his head with a wan smile.

"To rest, doctor, if that were possible. I have recently been through a harrowing experience of a private nature that shot me all to pieces; can't close my eyes, and drugs and opiates are no good to me. I feel as though sleep would never come to me again."

With all the typical neurasthenic's morbid eagerness to discuss his own case, Rex launched into a lengthy and carefully rehearsed recital of his supposed sufferings, and Dr. Weir listened with an air of warm, sympathetic interest. His dark eyes contracted slightly at the mention of each telling symptom, and the new patient knew that he missed no word.

"I came to you, doctor," Rex concluded, "because I have a horror of the thought of restraint, of rules and regulations, and any enforced course of training or treatment, or the use of hypos, which I particularly abhor. Yet I must sleep or—or I shall go mad!"

He raised his clenched, shaking fists to his temples, and Dr. Weir rose with a little laugh.

"You won't find any of that here, Mr. Parr, and you've come to me in the right spirit. I can't force you to stand on your feet—no man can—but I can show you how to find them again when you feel like trying. Meanwhile you shall have absolute rest, I promise you. You would not care to join us for dinner?"

"Oh, no!" Rex shuddered his protest. "I don't want to meet anybody, talk to a lot of strange chaps—"

"I have only three other guests staying here at present with whom you would come

in contact. You'll find them interesting and good company when you want any," Dr. Weir interrupted. "I am a bachelor, you know, and we are quite informal; wear what you like and do as you please! I merely change for dinner because it's a habit."

He added the last almost apologetically. Rex realized the sound suggestion of morale beneath it. He brushed it aside with seeming impatience.

"Who are the others, doctor? Perhaps it is against your rules if your patients prefer to remain incognito, but I should like to know the manner of men with whom I must associate."

Dr. Weir's hand rested lightly for a moment on his shoulder.

"There are no 'musts' here and no rules, Mr. Parr. None of my guests has any reason for concealing his identity from the others. They are all three men of whom you have probably heard, if you are not already acquainted with them—Richard Vanderpool, Avery Yates, and Senator Underton."

"Don't know them personally." Rex shook his head, but the twitching start that he gave was not altogether an assumed one. Vanderpool, of the great steamship line; Yates, the soap manufacturer; and the fiery Senator whose revolutionary speeches had well-nigh disrupted the last administration! With such men having the freedom of the establishment, surely nothing of a suspicious nature could be going on. He added querulously: "In my present state of mind, doctor, I don't want to make conversation; I want to be let alone."

"And you shall be." Dr. Weir pressed a button in the wall. "William will show you to your room and bring you up a bite, and I'll look in on you later and leave some powders with you, just for to-night. You need not touch them, of course, unless you think they will help you."

William, the stalwart butler, assisted him up the broad, shallow stairs and to a door just at their head. Rex glanced quickly over its lock and the length of the jamb as he passed through, noting that there was neither key nor bolt. Then his eyes swept the spacious, cheerful room with the wide bed open invitingly, and a coal fire glowing in the grate.

The ceiling was a bare expanse of calcimine, for light was furnished by side brackets and a reading lamp at the bed's head. The walls were paneled in dull gray, a soft gray carpet covered every inch of the floor space, and heavy draperies of the same restful hue hung at the window.

"Your bath is drawn, sir," William announced. "If you'd like any assistance, just touch the bell here."

He indicated the brass plate in the wall beside the light switch. Rex waved him away with the testiness of the chronic invalid.

"Thanks, no. I shall be quite all right by myself."

"Very good, sir. Dinner will be served to you in half an hour."

The butler retreated, closing the door softly. Rex, left alone, paced shakily up and down for a few minutes in seeming aimlessness, conscious of even the remote possibility that he might be under invisible surveillance through some peephole or concealed aperture. His gaze sought in vain for such an opening. There was no key nor bolt on the inside of the door through which he had entered, and he saw that the one leading to the white tiled bath beyond had not even a catch or spring to hold it in place.

His baggage had been unfastened ready to his hand, but there was no indication that it had been disturbed. He searched for robe and slippers, and then made his way to the bathroom. Tubbing hastily, he returned to the bedroom and dragged himself back and forth once more as though driven relentlessly by tortured nerves. Then pausing at the window, he drew the draperies impatiently aside.

Venetian shutters were folded back on either hand. Through the opened upper sash he could see the first faint glimmering of stars in the night sky. The window itself was beaded with moisture from the heat of the room and revealed merely a blank expanse of opaque darkness.

Turning, Rex flung himself into a chair by the hearth, his glance traveling over every brick of the fireplace. No chink nor

cranny was visible in its smoothly mortared surface. He was lifting his eyes to the molding, when they were arrested midway by the mantel, which sagged a trifle from the chimney piece, disclosing a narrow crevice behind.

Rising, he went to the window again. Then, as if fretted because he could not see beyond, he crossed to the light switch in the wall and turned it, plunging the room in darkness. He had thrown his sack coat purposely over the back of a chair when he disrobed. Now he reached it in one noiseless spring, fumbled with the lining for an instant, and tottered to the fireplace, aware that he would be in the radius of the glow from the live coals.

There he stood with both arms resting on the mantel in an attitude of exhaustion, but one hand moved swiftly, unerringly to that crevice at its back. The next minute he was at the window again, rubbing upon the pane.

The dark, towering trunks of trees loomed without. He could hear the soughing of the night wind in their bare branches. No other building seemed near. He was turning away, when a tiny pinpoint of light flashed out for an instant from the ground below, darted upward in a streak across his window, and vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

Was it merely the watchman making his rounds, or had the doctor deemed it advisable to keep his latest patient under espionage from without, at least for that first night?

When at length William appeared with a tastefully arranged tray, the lights were once more turned on, the curtains drawn, and Rex was crouched shivering over the coals in the grate. He had purposely eaten a late and hearty lunch upon the train. Now, although the breast of broiled young turkey and crisp salad looked most appetizing, he satisfied his slight hunger with the bowl of broth and glass of hot milk on the tray, leaving the rest untouched. On the butler's return he remarked:

"William, the key is missing from my door. Will you bring it to me, please, or one that will fit?"

If he had expected an excuse or evasion, he was disappointed, for the man responded promptly without a change of expression: "Very good, sir."

Yet when he had removed the tray an hour passed before a knock sounded again upon the door. Then it was Dr. Weir himself who entered after Rex's weak response.

"Sorry you didn't try the turkey, Mr. Parr," he remarked. "They're milk fed, raised on the place here, and rather a hobby of mine."

"I can't eat, doctor; haven't touched solid food for days," Rex mumbled, running his hands through his hair. "This is a very restful room, and I see that you have considerately provided me with some good reading matter, but if I could get just one night's sleep I'd thank Heaven for it! I—I'm half inclined to try one of your powders, after all. Do you see how weak even my will has become?"

"It isn't weakness to be amenable to common sense, my dear fellow!" the doctor responded laughingly as he drew a small box from his pocket. Taking out two folded papers, he extended them to his new patient. "That tedious train trip was a bore, and you are further disturbed by finding yourself in strange surroundings, but you will be more composed to-morrow.

"Take one of these when you feel like it, and the other in an hour or two if you are not sleepy by then. They are quite harmless. By the way, William said you asked for your door key, and he has searched all over for one, but there isn't such an article in the house. Nobody ever locks a door here, and your key must have been lost long ago. But on Monday I will have a man over from Millerstown to supply one for you."

Without quite knowing why, Rex felt it incumbent upon him to tender an excuse.

"It is merely a habit, I suppose, doctor, but I never sleep without a locked door—haven't in years. I have been an almost constant traveler—but I don't want to talk about myself just now. I think I will take one of these immediately, since it will not take effect for an hour."

He tottered to the bedstand, poured out a glass of water with a tremulous hand,

and, standing so that the doctor could watch his every move, he unfolded the paper, raised it to his lips, and apparently swallowed its contents as a few grains shook down upon the front of his robe. Then he crumpled the paper, returned to the fireplace, and flung it upon the coals, where it blazed up and was gone, together with the powder, which in reality he had not tasted.

"I will leave you now." Dr. Weir turned to the door and paused. "I have a houseman who is almost as much of a night owl as you profess to be, Mr. Parr. If at any hour you desire anything, I think you will find him awake to answer your ring. Breakfast at whatever time you like. This is liberty hall, you know. Good night."

Rex responded, smiling wanly. When the door had closed behind the doctor, he opened the window wide, turned out the lights and went to bed.

Why had he felt almost apologetic that he had not dined more heartily when the doctor mentioned it, and what had impelled him to utter that superfluous explanation when the import of the subterfuge about the door key was so plain? He lay watching the dying glow upon the hearth and marveling at himself for falling so easily under the spell of his host's personality. Weir seemed indeed like the "big, blond, good-natured boy" of Voorhees's description, with only those oddly incongruous dark eyes of his to strike a note above the merely pleasantly commonplace in his appearance. If his easy, informal manner were professionally assumed, it was well done. His psychology as applied to the average hypochondriac would be sound. The brawny pseudo-butler, the alert, powerful dog, the keyless door, and the watchman on guard below—surely these were not remarkable in a sanatorium which catered to nervous disorders!

Rex strove to recall in detail his two brief conversations with this man in whose hands he had placed himself, but his thoughts grew hazy and nebulous. Though he fought against it, he realized that sleep was fast overtaking him. He had meant to watch until dawn to see if any one came through that unfastened door and for what purpose. He had trained himself, in the old days when safety from the law hung in the balance, to far longer vigils than this. If he had taken the powder which the doctor gave him it would account for this creeping lethargy which benumbed his faculties, but not a particle of it had passed his lips.

He rose and made his way to the window, breathing the fresh, cold air deeply. Then temporarily aroused, he paced the floor, but it was of no avail. His eyelids grew heavier and heavier, and at last he stumbled over to the bed once more. Perhaps if he permitted himself an hour's sleep—

Was that some one creeping softly around the foot of his bed? Rex opened his eyes cautiously, but the coals in the grate were quite dead and the darkness was impenetrable. Was the door ajar? He could not tell, although the sudden draft of frosty air from the window seemed to indicate that it was. Surely he must be dreaming, or else the nerves which he had so grossly maligned were going back on him now, for the sensation of another presence was poignant and the slithering sound of those footsteps grew nearer and nearer.

He closed his eyes and forced himself to breathe heavily and regularly as one deep in slumber. While he lay motionless except for the slow rise and fall of his breast he fancied that for an instant a light flashed across his closed lids, but he dared not trust his own perceptions.

Imagination or reality, it seemed that some one was fumbling about the wardrobe and the dresser. The creak of leather came to him as if his bags were being moved about, while the footsteps appeared to be passing and repassing around his bed. But it was all vague and chimerical, and he drifted off into unconsciousness once more.

How long he slept Rex did not know, but when he awakened again it was to find himself sitting bolt upright in bed with his scalp tingling and every nerve tense. A peculiar vibration hung pulsing upon the air, and even as he waited it came for the second time—a hideous wailing cry that rose high in the shuddering darkness and

then ceased as abruptly as though two hands had closed about the throat which emitted it.

Was it the howl of a dog or the choking scream of a human being in mortal agony? Rex tried to drag himself from his bed, but his limbs seemed weighted with chains. He could only wait impotently for a repetition of the horrible sound.

None came, however, and as the minutes lengthened drowsiness descended again over him and gradually he relaxed upon his pillow.

The wintry sun was high when he came to himself and lay staring about in bewilderment. There were his bags as he had left them, his clothes on their hangers were visible through the half-opened door of the wardrobe and the toilet articles were still spread carelessly on the dresser. Had those sly footsteps, that light flashing across his closed eyes, the hideous cry in the night been all part of a distorted dream?

There was an odd, dry taste in his mouth and his head felt congested, throbbing hotly as he rose. His ears buzzed, a cloud covered his vision and as his limbs gave way and he sank down suddenly upon the side of the bed the truth was borne in upon him.

Well might the doctor have smiled when he assured him that the powders were harmless! He had not depended on his patient's tractability in taking them to insure him a night's repose, but the broth, the milk! In spite of himself Rex Powell had been drugged!

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SECRET CONCLAVE.

"WELL, that's over, if we can only keep him there! Are you sure your message went through to Henry, Cliff?"

The Lucian Baynes who paused in the doorway at the head of the steps leading up from the cellar was a very different looking individual from the immaculately groomed jewel expert of the Shadowers' offices in town. Dust and cobwebs covered him from top to toe, plaster streaked his hair and a swelling bump over one eye lent him a ruffianly air totally at variance with his usual fastidious appearance.

But if he was changed no less so was his host. Cliff wore a two-days' growth in addition to his meticulously clipped mustache and goatee, his nails were split and dirty and the heavy sweater and old, baggy trousers in which he was attired bore little resemblance to the artistic, slightly outré garb which he ordinarily affected. His temper, too, seemed to be on edge as he retorted:

"You got yours, didn't you? For heaven's sake, shut that door!"

"Phil's down there yet, giving final instructions to those boys of Pink-Eye's when our earless friend shall have come out of his trance. They're warm and snug on those old sofas right by the furnace—leave it to you to find modern improvements in the backwoods! But why on earth didn't you clean out that filthy hole—"

Lucian glanced down in disgust at his clothes and then helplessly about the wide, low-raftered old-fashioned kitchen.

"There's a brush behind the door and soap and a towel over by the sink," Cliff interrupted frigidly. "Dip a piece of brown paper in vinegar and stick it over that bump on your head and you'll feel more human! Serves you right if you didn't look out for that beam in the cellar! I found this place before I'd been in the neighborhood twenty-four hours and I've had enough to do since Saturday getting it in order and dragging that old furniture down from the attic, while you've frittered away your time around fake jewelers in town!"

Lucian stared, ignoring the slur.

"'Brown paper and vinegar!'" he repeated. "Since when have you become proficient in country remedies?"

Cliff flushed.

"Mrs. Simmons recommended it when I banged my own head down there," he admitted. "She's the neighbor who cleaned the house for me and cooked up all that food. He indicated the table upon which stood a huge cold roast of beef flanked by an array of pies, cakes and biscuits.

"Thank heaven for that!" murmured Lucian as he began operations with the

brush in a far corner. "I'm hungry as a bear."

"Whew!" Phil emerged from the cellar and banged the door behind him. "That guy'll be dead to the world till morning. Got some grub and coffee for the boys? I'll take it down to them."

"Slice up some of that beef." Cliff set the coffeepot on the range. "You'll find butter and cheese and a pitcher of cream in the pantry. You didn't have any difficulty in locating the place, did you?"

"No. I followed your directions after leaving the junction until I saw those three lanterns in a row on your rural delivery box out there where you left them for us," Phil replied. "How far is this from Millerstown?"

"Only two miles, but the mills and canneries stretch away on the other side and the country is almost deserted around here. That's why I decided on this house, miserable as it is—not because it happened to have a heater in it!"

Cliff glanced witheringly at Lucian as the latter turned from his ablutions at the sink, but he was oblivious.

Footsteps were crunching the frost-packed ground outside the window. In another moment they sounded upon the little porch. Phil sprang toward the door just as it opened revealing George in his shabby, professorial make-up, carrying the three lanterns which he had prudently removed from the mailbox, and an unusually well-groomed and opulent looking Henry in a fur-collared overcoat with a small brown derby set rakishly on his bald head.

"God A'mighty! It's good to see you fellers!" the latter beamed upon them. "I can tell you, Cliff, I was glad when your message came! Did Lucian and Phil bring your star boarder safely with his two keepers?"

"Sh—h, not so loud!" Cliff warned. "They're down in the cellar. Phil is going to take some supper to the chaps who are guarding that repulsive creature. Then we'll bolt the door on this side and talk."

"I'll go with him: I want to have a look at that guy." Henry turned to Lucian. "Did he give you any trouble on the trip up here?"

"No. He was unconscious all the way for his—er—nurses gave him a hypodermic last night when we put him to bed in that speak-easy Pink-Eye's pal runs across the Hudson from Poughkeepsie. They doped him again before we left this morning, but the proximity wasn't any too pleasant."

Lucian shuddered, and then added as his eyes traveled over the rotund figure before him. "Why the gorgeous raiment, Henry? Phil and I will turn up in Millerstown tomorrow, you know; what part are you playing there, managing a theatrical troupe?"

"I'm a gentleman!" Henry replied naïvely. "An efficiency expert engaged in New York by Miss Wyatt to come and speed things up generally at her mills and canneries."

"'Efficiency!' My sainted aunt!" Cliff stared. "What do you know about mills and canneries? They'll discover that you're an impostor the moment you start in to make suggestions and changes!"

"Not me, son!" Henry chuckled. "I go through the plants looking wise and saying nothing, get their typewritten reports and send them to a real efficiency shark in New York. He dopes out the answer and sends it to me by return mail. I get it all down pat, go back to that plant and make the fur fly. Phil, has that feller been talking?"

"Only once, as he was going under the dope at Pink-Eye's before we carried him out and put him in the car yesterday afternoon."

Phil poured the steaming coffee into cups upon the heaped-up tray.

"It was darned funny, doc. He was passing out of the picture real peacefully when all at once he started up and shouted: 'Damn yer, I don't trust yer! Sometime when yer don't need me no more you'll forget and leave me there!' It don't make any sense to me—say, what's the big idea?"

Henry had grasped him by the arm to the imminent peril of scalding them both and his voice shook as he demanded:

"You're sure those were his exact words? What else did he say?"

"Nothing else; just mumbled something and went out. If you're coming, bring that

other tray, doc, and look out for these stairs."

When the two had disappeared Cliff turned to George.

"Any word from Rex? I don't half like the idea of his being alone and helpless in that place if there is anything wrong about it."

"No more do I, but it was his own suggestion and he insisted that we make no attempt to communicate with him until after he had been there at least three days. This is Monday. To-morrow night I think Henry is going to try to get in touch with him; he isn't any too easy in his mind about it either."

There was an anxious note in George's tones.

"Ethel smells a rat, too. She asked me pointblank on Saturday where Rex was and what he was doing. Since he had made us all promise not to tell her I was up a tree."

"What did you say?" Lucian asked curiously. "When that young person makes up her mind to find out anything I have observed that she usually achieves her end."

"I practically warned her to mind her own business or she would give the whole show away. She took it so meekly that I shouldn't be at all surprised if she starts something." George shook his head.

"By the way, I met her again this afternoon, Cliff, and she slipped me these samples of handwriting for you. I suspect that except for the notes you will find here from prospective patrons she stole the greater number of them, for two or three are letters of an exceedingly private nature. Ethel's ethics are elastic enough to stretch over a minor consideration of that sort."

"That beautifying treatment seems to have registered a hit among Miss Wyatt's neighbors." Cliff was running quickly through the packet of papers which the other had given him.

"I shudder to think what would happen if Ethel stepped out of character for a moment in the presence of one of the good ladies and expressed herself in her own picturesque fashion, solecisms and all!"

"Don't begin to shudder yet on that score, Cliff," Lucian advised dryly. "I don't know whether you chaps have noticed it or not, but our Ethel is improving herself rapidly and I confess to an unbounded admiration for her. George, have you by any chance encountered my subject, Mr. Frank Dilworth?"

Before George could reply Phil came leaping up the cellar stairs with Henry puffing after. When the door was closed and bolted they gathered about the table. Cliff served supper to the two new arrivals from the city and while they ate he made his own report to the medical expert.

"The people had only moved out of here two weeks ago—on the first of the month—and I hired it as it stood on Saturday; took possession that afternoon, after writing you and wiring to Luce and Phil in code. I got a woman to work here to-day, but yesterday I had a deuce of a time trying to clean and straighten things alone, so it was late afternoon before I could get a local from the junction to Haynes' Corners."

Phil paused with his fork halfway to his lips and looked up sharply, but it was Henry who voiced the question:

"Did you find out anything about 'Cox,' to whom our bird telephoned just before George threw that fit in front of him?"

"All there is to find out—now." Cliff shrugged. "He went away suddenly on Saturday. Before midnight the house burned to the ground, together with two of the smaller outbuildings, although they were reasonably far off and the wind wasn't in that direction. I didn't have to go farther than the station for my information. A group of the natives were gathered around the stove there and when I asked the agent the way to Cox's place everybody talked up at once to tell me what had happened.

"No one actually suggested arson, although the inference was plain from the way they looked at one another. I lost no time in explaining that I hadn't seen him in several years, but he had written to me recently about a business matter. I allowed my manner to convey the impression that I didn't think very highly of my friend Cox. Before the next train back I had all the data you wanted."

"Who was he? Did he live alone?"

"He appeared in Haynes Corners about two years and a half ago and bought that

old farmhouse and a few acres for three thousand dollars. He painted it up and put in open plumbing, and a phone, and electric lights, but there his ambition seemed to stop, for he made no effort to farm or renovate the outbuildings. He was little and dark and consumptive in appearance and spent most of the first few weeks chasing about the country in a disreputable flivver. He wasn't at all sociable. Those who had been inclined to be friendly soon learned to leave him alone.

"Nobody seemed to know just when or from where the farmhand came. I gathered the general idea prevailed that he was a tramp whom Cox had taken in. Mike was the only name he was known by, but my informants were all sure he was a foreigner. He fixed up the barn and outbuildings, raised a few chickens and farmed after a fashion, and he drove that wretched little car with a recklessness that called down the wrath of the neighbors. These two have lived alone together ever since. Though Cox himself was often away for weeks at a time no one knows where. At rare intervals a third man was seen in the car with them. From the descriptions I take it that he was our friend now reposing in the cellar. Nobody ever saw him come or go.

"The ticket agent spoke up then and recalled the only visitor before me who had ever come by train to see Cox. It was a year ago last spring. This chap was dark, too, and spoke with an accent like a road-mender—Italian, I should imagine. He went away the next day, buying his ticket only as far as the junction. That was all the news up to last Monday morning."

"What happened then?" Henry demanded impatiently as Cliff paused.

"Mike appeared at the station with a collection of antiquated hand luggage and took the first train for Albany, saying that he was going to Canada to see his brother. Right there a controversy started, one of Cox's neighbors insisting that he had seen Mike about the place late Thursday night and again on Friday.

"However that may be, Cox walked down to the post office carrying a suitcase Saturday afternoon and said he had been called away suddenly and didn't know how long he should be gone, but he wanted his mail held. Since he was never known to have any except the circulars and advertising matter sent broadcast to farmers the postmaster—who was one of the old codgers I talked to around the stove—didn't see why he made such a to-do about it.

"Anyway, he took the train for Albany and in the evening his house went up in smoke. The neighbors turned out to try to save it, but as one of them who had been there told me—the same one who insisted he had seen Mike about late in the week—'it seemed to burst a-fire all over at once.'"

"Did you hear anybody call this neighbor by name?" George inquired.

"The postmaster spoke of him as 'Old Man Kennedy' after he'd stamped out furious because no one believed he had seen Mike. He had long chin whiskers and a wart on his nose, and he ejects tobacco juice further than any other mortal I ever saw in my life!"

Cliff grimaced in disgust.

"Did the station agent describe that Italian who came by train to see Cox?" Lucian had pushed aside his plate and his small blond mustache fairly bristled with excitement. "Jove, if it should be—"

"How could he?" Cliff retorted. "He only saw the man twice, a year ago last spring."

"And it's a year ago last spring since Miss Wyatt last saw her jewels—if they were still the real ones and not substitutes which she showed to Ronalds when she told him that the brides in her family always wore the Merrington diamond!"

Lucian turned to Henry.

"I located the manufacturer of the pearls late Saturday. You remember they were of rather a cheap grade? It was a rush order early in June through a little novelty shop on Thirty-fourth Street. I found it open in the evening and bluffed the proprietor into showing his order book to me.

"The purchaser was an Italian and he had brought the originals—a superb string and pendant—for the jeweler to note the size and color, matching the tints as well as he could with some imitations he had

there, for the customer would not leave the genuine to be copied. That shopkeeper was a rascal if I ever saw one, Henry, and he'd make a first-rate fence if he'd been a bit more shrewd.

"Finally I got it out of him that the way his customer talked showed he knew more than a little about fake stones of all sorts. There's an Italian I used to have dealings with myself a few years ago named Florio Guardini, who was a genius at faking rubies and emeralds and sapphires. He'd worked for museums abroad, duplicating Crown jewels for permanent exhibitions until some works of art disappeared. The last time I saw him he was trying to perfect a process of his own for imitating diamonds. I wondered if he could have been that customer for the pearls. The more I examined the rest of the fake stuff late Saturday night the more I became convinced that they were Florio's work. I tried all day yesterday to locate him. I traced him up to a year ago last June, and then he disappeared, dropped out of sight."

Lucian paused and repeated impressively: "A year ago last June!"

"Did this Guardini have any kind of a scar on his face?" asked Henry.

"Not when I saw him last." Lucian smiled. "Oh, I see you're thinking of that delusion which haunts Miss Wyatt?"

"That same delusion ha'nted her on the station platform at Millerstown when she got home on Friday night!" Henry interrupted grimly. "The meeting was kind of a surprise all 'round, I reckon.

"The delusion was so upset by it that he ha'nted the station agent into selling him a ticket for the furthest point north on the next up-country train—which happened to be the one George and Ethel arrived by! Have you any plan for getting on the trail of this Guardini after I'm through with you here?"

"Yes!" Lucian exclaimed eagerly. "I'd like to run back to New York if you can spare me. I can leave Phil and the car here and say I've been called away myself."

"Well, we'll see." Henry caressed his double chin reflectively. "You and Phil blow into Millerstown real early to-morrow morning, spread it around the Quincey House who you are and what you've come for and get yourself directed as soon as possible to Dilworth's office. I shouldn't wonder but you'll meet old Judge Tompkins before the day's out and remember if I should happen to be present you're to recognize me. Is there a cemetery near here, Cliff?"

"Just over the hill." The expert in calligraphy had drawn a little apart to examine the specimens of handwriting sent to him by Ethel and there was a peculiar note in his tones.

"George will be snooping around the gravestones there to-morrow, then, and he'll drop in to see if he can get a word out of that guy in the cellar." Henry rose. "It's time we started back—"

"Who is Mrs. Gilbert Dilworth?" Cliff interrupted.

"Frank Dilworth's sister-in-law." Henry looked his surprise. "Is there something about her in those letters? I ain't had a chance to see them, you know; George and I are strangers at the hotel."

"Here's a letter to some one named 'Effie.' Ethel has marked it 'Mrs. Gilbert Dilworth's maid.' I infer that Mrs. Gilbert must have had a treatment to-day?"

George nodded and Cliff went on:

"It is signed 'Sarah.' After a lot of irrelevant home news she writes: 'Was much surprised to hear about Mr. Frank taking up with Miss Arabella again. Mrs. Dilworth must feel terrible. She never liked her even before Mr. Frank got the go-by for that Mr. Ronalds. I always thought his dying as he did was queer, didn't you? Miss A. ought to be glad in spite of her money to get anybody willing to tempt Providence by standing in his shoes. I can't understand Mary Jane acting about it as you say she does, either. Mr. Frank was always nice to her, but she is the moody kind and I used to wonder sometimes if she was real right in the head.'

"The rest is immaterial and the writing totally unlike that of the anonymous letters, but there's food for thought here. Others besides Miss Wyatt thought Ronalds' death was 'queer.' What is this about Mary Jane's attitude?"

"Ethel says she hates Dilworth for some

reason," George remarked. "Jealousy, perhaps—you know these old servants! Mary Jane probably feels as though she owned Miss Wyatt and resents the intrusion of a husband in the household."

Cliff shook his head.

"She showed no such resentment about Ronalds, did she? I remember she spoke very highly of him. By the way, have you found out anything more definite about Ronalds's past?"

"I have written to Cornhill, Morrow County, Ohio, where he told Miss Wyatt he was born, and to the authorities in Columbus, where he grew up, but there hasn't been time for a reply yet," replied Henry. "Well, come on, George."

They took leave of the others and started back through the darkness to Millerstown. The wind had died, but the stars were veiled and the still, intense cold which brooded over the rolling hills seemed to presage a coming storm.

Talking in low, absorbed tones of the evening's conference, they were unaware that a small shivering figure had crawled out from beneath the floor of the back porch at their departure and now trailed discreetly in their rear, forlorn, but undaunted.

Ethel had caught a glimpse of the occupants of the kitchen when the door opened to admit her serenely oblivious escorts. Although no word of the ensuing conversation reached her ears she had discovered a chink there under the porch in the foundations of the old house which gave a clear view of the dimly lighted cellar and what lay there. Her vague anxiety increased.

So they had lied to her about the man with the funny ears! He was connected with the case, after all, and somehow they had captured him and brought him there. But where was their real leader? Why had he not come? And where was Rex Powell?

***TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.***

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## *NIGHT IN NAPLES*

THE cypress trees stand straight and tall
Against the star-strewn, purple sky;
Dark roses on the old gray wall
Perfume my trellised balcony.

Across the silver-misted bay
The towering mountain holds on high
Her torch of flame, that lights the way
To where the buried cities lie.

Far off, above the ocean's crest,
Dim ships set sail for other seas:
A scented wind blows from the west
And fills the night with memories.

I cannot sleep, for in the grove
Beneath my perfumed balcony,
Impassioned voices sing of love
In serenade, unceasingly.

O shadowy trees and restless deep,
O crimson flowers and purple height,
You will not let me rest nor sleep—
Your beauty breaks my heart to-night!

*Lena Whittaker Blakeney.*

# Exploits of Beau Quicksilver

By FLORENCE M. PETTEE

## III.—THE CLAWS OF THE WEASEL

IN the swaggerest of evening attire Beau Quicksilver slipped into his seat in the dress circle. The orchestra sounded the introductory prelude to the famous opera with its mysterious minor notes. Would they, too, that very evening sound for him some weird new prelude, not to a masterpiece of melody, but to some masterpiece of criminal cunning?

The slim figure deposited its smart high hat carefully under the seat and flecked off a few invisible motes from the immaculate gloves—gloves which would never be worn but once. As Beau Quicksilver languidly leaned back, one of his legs protruded a bit beyond his aisle seat. One wondered slightly to note patent leather shoes a shade less modish than the rest of the ultra-smart garb.

Across the aisle a cub reporter, with a sprouting toothbrush on his upper lip, tipped off his suburban companion. "D'you lamp that swell across the aisle—the fashion plate that just breezed in? Well, that's Beau Quicksilver, the dude detective. And you can take it from yours knowingly that he's a regular king pin, a famished fire-eater for cryptic crime. Slick! Well, mercury has nothing on him, since he's *it*. He's pulled more big cases in a year than all the flat-

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foots together. And fussy! Oh, my! Won't even nibble at a regular killing. Gotta have something outré—an out-and-out enigma with all the flossy frills. Otherwise, 'Nothing to it,' says he. 'Give it to some prep school kids to work out in algebra! It's the real goods or nothing!' Say," went on the write-up man, "remember that vanishing Hindu stunt he pulled a month ago? Well, that's A, B, C compared to some of the crimes he's seen to a finish. Little? Yes, but, oh, my! There's not a yegg in crookdom that can lay a digit on him. He just runs through their fingers—"

Over the way, Beau Quicksilver leaned back fagged, utterly fatigued. It had been a momentous week. Behind his half shut, aching lids, the mysterious magic of the melody filtered soothingly. Through his slitted eyes he languidly noted the stirrings of the velvet draperies in box A in the first tier next the stage.

With great unction the usher was showing in a regal dowager dame and a slender, sylphlike girl. The elderly woman would indeed have been a notable figure anywhere. Masses of silver hair were cunningly coiled above the haughty mien. The roseate hue of health and good living was cleverly blended with rouge over her high-bred features. She held a jeweled lorgnette constantly to her languid eyes. Her lavender evening gown sparkled with crystal and beading.

The young girl with her slipped with elfin grace into her seat by the rail of the box. Her dainty dress, the faintest apricot in shade, made her appear more like a flower swaying to the urge of the music than the slip of the débutante she seemed.

A pompous, fidgety man next to Quicksilver addressed his companion:

"Those two there," he was announcing in a stage whisper, "the woman in lavender and the girl in pink. That's Mrs. Wellington Denmore Rutherford—wife of the copper king, you know. And the girl is her niece, Betty Rutherford, just come on for a season here. Big money there—and power, too—"

The awed and adulatory accents of the gentleman gossip next Quicksilver merely verified the growing thought in the detective's mind. He had known instantly that the face of the woman in lavender had seemed familiar. He recalled seeing Mrs. Rutherford's photograph many times in the society columns.

A few moments later an usher entered box A hastily. He bent over the lady deferentially, but jerkily. His nervousness must be apparent anywhere in the house. Beau Quicksilver raised his glasses to the white blotch of the usher's face framed against the gray velvet hangings. He was an adept at lip-reading.

He saw the usher's twitching mouth frame itself into these words: "A dreadful thing, Mrs. Rutherford. Just had a message. Mr. Rutherford has been—" At this moment the agitated usher nervously shifted his position to a side posture. His moving lips were no longer visible to the dapper figure in the dress circle.

Hastily the woman in lavender, followed by her niece, left the box. Mrs. Rutherford's haughty, assured air was gone. She held her handkerchief before her blanched features. And the girl, not yet ossified by the pose and the aplomb of society, stumbled along in the rear of her aunt, making unconscious, pathetic little dabs at her great, gray eyes.

The two had hardly disappeared when an usher touched Beau Quicksilver on the arm. As the minor motif was reiterated by the throbbing violins, the detective reached out his hand for the card which the attendant was proffering.

On one side the card was engraved with the name:

**MRS. WELLINGTON DENMORE RUTHERFORD**

Flipping it over Beau Quicksilver read the message, cupped by his hand:

> Please come to my car at the curb before the opera house. A dreadful thing has happened. I need your advice. Please.
>
> HONORIA RUTHERFORD.

Mechanically Beau Quicksilver reached for his opera hat. He shot it under his arm

and strode out behind the usher just as the lights blinked dark and the curtain rolled up. Yet he did not begrudge the loss of an operatic evening. The melody of mystery had again sounded its prelude. And for him cryptic crime was a symphony which acted as a tonic on his every nerve.

A huge lavender limousine with an imposing monogram on the door was drawn up at the curb just beyond the main entrance to the opera house. A lavender-liveried chauffeur touched his cap and alertly opened the door. He gently and deferentially shut it after Beau Quicksilver's figure.

The two women leaned back limply against the upholstery. Mrs. Rutherford was sobbing now, her social mask dropped when away from the curious, appraising eyes of the crowd. Her head was bowed. And her handkerchief, like herself, had shrunk to a limp mass. Grief is a leveler. And evidently the proud woman before him had her limitations.

As for the girl, some of her control seemed to have returned. She sat rigidly, her tiny hands tightly gripped in her lap. She had drawn a costly evening wrap close over her slim shoulders. And she sat hunched into it, a forlorn little picture, despite the elegance of her apparel. She reminded Quicksilver of a sleek, well-fed kitten which has suddenly become surrounded by unfamiliar, terrifying things. Tragedy was an ugly stranger—and an unwelcome one.

The detective bowed low, his sleek, dark head dimly outlined in the soft, indirect lighting of the car.

"How can I serve you, madam?" he asked quietly.

"Please be seated," came in muffled accents from behind Honoria Rutherford's handkerchief.

She reached to the side of the car, extracted a bottle of smelling salts and sniffed at them as though to draw solace and strength for the coming ordeal.

"I—I j-just h-had a m-m-message—which the usher brought to my box—that Mr. Rutherford h-has been found s-stabbed to d-death in the seat of his roadster in the garage. T-they just found him."

Beau Quicksilver looked out of the window. A mental image of the violently slain copper magnate filmed across his mind. He saw the stern, frowning face of Rutherford with its thin lips and bulldozing jaw. It was a domineering face as well as a ruthless one. Its lineaments plainly bespoke a merciless nature, one which must, perforce, be beset by many enemies. A violent death for Rutherford did not surprise Quicksilver. It merely corroborated his estimate of the man.

"Have you any other particulars?" he asked quietly.

"N-no." The sob had returned to her voice. "O-only I—I've been fearing it would come."

"And why?" asked the detective, toying with a heavy set ring on the little finger of his left hand.

"H-he's been threatened with his l-life."

"Through anonymous, blackmailing letters?"

"N-no. Ugly messages o-over the phone and by telegram."

"Of what nature?"

"They just said that he could expect to d-die in a hurry—or something like that."

"Did Mr. Rutherford take no precautions against sudden murder?"

"He w-wouldn't. J-just laughed and swore at them. Said he'd like to see them g-get him. He obtained a permit to carry a revolver for self-protection. Won't you come home with us, p-please? P-price is no object. I—I don't want those bungling policemen stamping about and—seeing nothing. They will never get the answer. Won't you come, please?"

The girl, too, gazed at him appealingly, her eyes dry but feverishly bright. Already purple shadows appeared under them. And the oval face looked wan and white.

"I will come, madam," answered Beau Quicksilver.

"Oh, thank you," sobbed Mrs. Rutherford.

Then she took down the speaking tube. To the waiting chauffeur she said: "H-home, please, Flanders."

The lavender limousine started. Soon it was under smooth but rapid momentum. It swirled away from the bright lights on to the broad boulevard. Its eight cylinders

seemed rhythmically to repeat the whispering motif from the opera its occupants had just left.

## II.

THE limousine had swept on in silence for some moments. They had now left the boulevard for the pike which ran to the suburb in which the imposing Rutherford estate sprawled over some acres. It was one of the newer residential districts with sparse, snobbish mansions perched here and there at indifferent intervals.

When the car passed under one of the infrequent arc lights Mrs. Rutherford begged: "Won't you please draw the shades by you? The light hurts my eyes."

As Beau Quicksilver courteously complied the girl, too, leaned forward and thoughtfully pulled down her shades.

"Thank you," murmured the broken woman. "I feel as though I could scream at nothing."

Quicksilver leaned back against the cushions. He crossed one leg over the other. His patent leather shoes gleamed dully, like some anomaly in the luxuriously correct interior of the limousine.

Suddenly Honoria Rutherford sat up. She made a quick gesture. An ugly, snouty revolver was gripped in her right hand in a very businesslike way. Gone was her grief with its accompaniment of sham sobs.

"Put 'em up, you damned dude!" a harsh, nasal voice demanded.

"Make it quick, you tailor's bandbox!" jeered the pseudo-niece, showing the duplicate of the thirty-two in her own small hand.

Smothering a yawn Beau Quicksilver's hands went resignedly over his head. His crossed leg swayed slightly, as though he still heard the rhythm of the music. Or was it merely from the motion of the law-breaking car?

"Played you for a sucker, didn't we?" sneered the big woman. "Fell hard, didn't you? Bolted the whole frame-up, line, hook and sinker. You're a hell of a detective—you are."

Beau Quicksilver now recognized the raucous twang of the woman opposite him. Admiration colored his choler, his irascibility at his gullible stupidity. For the woman before him, wonderfully made up to resemble Mrs. Rutherford, could be no other than Lady Mag, a notorious woman crook. She had won the sobriquet from her ability to play high-class, fashionable rôles as to the manner born. It was hinted that she was a woman of education, had belonged to a decent family—before the specious lure of crime had claimed her. And Lady Mag was a wizard at make-up—as well as a mimic. She had not belied her reputation. As for the girl? Some new tool probably, an able second to foil Lady Mag's dowager parts when necessary. Beau Quicksilver ground his teeth.

Lady Mag saw the motion and laughed harshly.

"Little toy detective, eh, what? Wound up wrong this time! Yes? Listens hateful, Buster Beau! Grind your teeth all you want to, you boob! Put an edge on them. Bite yourself. For you won't bite us any longer. We're going to draw your teeth!"

"If you have handcuffs along," suggested Quicksilver evenly, "I'd recommend that you manacle my hands behind me. My wrists are becoming tired with this novel uplift movement you've staged." He stifled a yawn. "One of you can cover me while the other snaps on the bracelets."

"Nothing doing," snapped Lady Mag scornfully. "We weren't born yesterday. Don't quite run in the flapper class. Get me?"

Beau Quicksilver shrugged. "As you please."

For a while only the roar of the engine swirling along at breakneck speed enlivened the interior.

Then: Beau Quicksilver merely uncrossed his leg and slid it down toward the other high-shod foot.

There was an odd sound. With it Quicksilver bent over with monkeyfied agility. He leaned against his silk hat beside him.

There was a little gasp—two of them. The dim-lighted interior was instantly shrouded with a thick, gray mist which hid the two women from him like some odd trick of legerdemain. But over his face appeared a highly efficient, up-to-date, collapsible gas mask which he had quickly removed from the inside of his silk hat.

The bodies of his two captors lay temporarily unconscious on the cushions opposite him. Their revolvers were still tightly gripped in their fingers.

Humming a snatch of the motif from the opera, Beau Quicksilver quickly freed their fingers from the revolvers. He put the weapons carelessly in his pockets, then reached for the door of the gas-filled interior.

As he did so the car came to an abrupt halt and he was flung rudely against the upholstery.

The limousine door opened. The liveried chauffeur stood there posing a forty-four. Evidently Lady Mag had pressed a warning buzzer to the driver's seat before the gas completely gripped her.

The fumes of the gas billowed out. But the purifying oxygen outside rendered the chauffeur temporarily immune from the effects of it.

"Come out of there, you rat!" he snarled, throwing a circle of light from a flash full on Beau Quicksilver. "Step lively now, or I'll drill your ruffled shirt-front—make you a messy job for the undertaker. Get a move on!"

Sticking the flash in his pocket the chauffeur covered his nostrils with his handkerchief.

As Quicksilver automatically obeyed, the faked Flanders slammed the door shut on the deadening fumes. He breathed heavily for a bit, but kept his pistol leveled at the detective. They had driven off the main pike upon a narrow, thickly wooded dirt road. The lights of the car had been switched off.

"Now, keep 'em up," growled the chauffeur, fully recovered from the insidious effects of the gas. "Careful now while I frisk you, you damned dirty dick!"

In a twinkling he relieved Beau Quicksilver of the guns which the detective had taken from the two unconscious women.

"Where the hell did you get that gas? Did you have it parked on you? Sloppy work for Lady Mag and the Kid to let you spring that kind of a gag! Hell, that's like a couple of women! Now," continued the pseudo-chauffeur briskly, "in you go again! Try some of your own medicine!"

He yanked the gas mask from Quicksilver's face and slipped the protecting shield over his own features. Mockingly he opened the door. Roughly he shoved Beau Quicksilver onto the upholstered seat.

A suffocating blanket seemed to engulf the detective. It closed about him subtly, insidiously. It touched his respiratory organs and turned them *nil*. But, from afar off, through his benumbed senses, he could still seem to hear the poignant, sobbing note of a violin singing out the music of the world-renowned opera. And despite the darkness which was closing in upon him, his soul was filled with ecstasy at the note of beauteous mystery concealed in the melody.

## III.

WHEN Beau Quicksilver recovered consciousness gray dawn was seeping through the windows into his prison. Weakly he sat up to find himself on a comfortable couch in a luxuriously furnished room which appeared like some rich man's study. There were well-filled bookcases about; handsomely upholstered furniture, a desk with complete equipment for writing, and a big, Jacobean library table. But the two windows did not suggest a rich man's idle hour room, for they were heavily barred. Moreover, the apartment was on the third floor. It overlooked a melancholy landscape—a gray, apologizing sky and frowning, thick woods. There was one door in the room—a thoroughly efficient and heavily hinged affair. The place made an admirable prison.

Beau Quicksilver got to his feet and fished about in his pockets. Their contents had not been disturbed. With the assurance that he concealed no other weapons, his captors had left him his harmless accessories. He brought out a silver cigarette case and lighted a weed.

He paced toward the bookcase. He smiled whimsically, admiringly. He had not been wrong. The criminal circle which had been operating for so many weeks *was* directed by a superior intelligence. He had believed it before. Now the idea assumed reality. The books told him much. Among those present appeared Balzac, Voltaire, De

Maupassant. There were also Lombroso, Havelock Ellis and some of the lesser students of crime. A leather-bound set of Browning democratically rubbed elbows with Bliss Carman and Robert W. Service.

A smile of pleasure curved Beau Quicksilver's rather pale lips. So this was the lair of the elusive master criminal who had been balking him and the department for so many weeks. Admiringly he gazed about him. Smilingly he recalled the clever plan by which he had been spirited to the spot.

Why hadn't they killed him and had it over with? Why the cat-and-mouse play? Had some lingering form of death been reserved for him? Or was the master still away—that carnivorous, crafty mind whom they had come to call the Weasel?

A key sounded in the door. The heavy barriers swung open. The slight, wide-eyed girl of the night's unpleasant experience stood there. She shut the door behind her and stood with her back against it.

"You're a sick looking dude," she sneered.

"Sorry I can't return the compliment," he answered gallantly, strolling to a window and looking out.

"Say, do you know what you're in for?" she demanded.

"An unpleasant morning," he retorted, "accompanied by rain, if I'm a weather prognosticator."

"An unpleasant morning, accompanied by—a little lead pellet equipped with a silencer," she flung back. "He should be here now almost any time. He made us swear to keep you for his own special attention," she added meaningly. "He's fond of shooting, you understand—of hunting down sly, dangerous quarry."

"Lucky he doesn't get mixed up in his own gun then," answered Quicksilver, snuffing his cigarette and throwing it into the waste basket. "Pardon the weed. I'd forgotten it."

He sat down limply on the edge of the couch. His braggadocio air seemed to desert him. His slight body shook with a shiver.

"Guess the weed made me sick," he confessed naïvely. "Or the gas—or what's coming to me."

He smiled in a sickly way. His face was white. His features worked. Fear stared from his eyes. The cocky bravado of a former moment had fallen away.

The girl at the door watched him. A sneer commingled with another emotion rippled over her face.

"Not quite so perky as you were, eh, what? Throwing a shiver already. Most of them do when they see death blinking at 'em."

Beau Quicksilver seemed unconscious of her gibes. He appeared wrapped up in his own misery and the doom which was closing in upon him. His shoulders shook slightly. He turned his head away so that the girl might not see his face.

But she stepped cattishly to one side of the door. And then she saw. There were tears in the famous dick's eyes. He was biting his trembling lips. One of his hands edged for his handkerchief.

She smiled in a superior way and shrugged her shoulders.

He turned toward her. Misery was written over his woebegone features.

"I suppose you think I am a craven and a coward. B-but I'm not crying for myself. It's for Penn, my pal. I promised him that I'd never pass over without sending him a line—a few farewell words, you know." His voice broke. "I wouldn't mind being bumped off if I could just say good-by as I promised. I've never broken my word."

The woman straightened up. Some of the sneer left her face. Somewhere within her calloused, crime-soaked interior his words struck a responsive chord. Among those of the underworld who were her regrettable associates the Kid, too, was known never to break her word. Promises were a fetish with her. She began to sense the misery of the figure before her.

"Cut the cry-baby stuff! Now, how did you dope it out to get a message to him? Tell me that!"

"Well," he replied disconsolately, "I figured that some one here might take down one for me."

Craftily she backed away from the idea.

"Playing to send an S. O. S. in code, are you? Ring off—line busy! Nothing doing!"

"You mistake my meaning," answered Beau Quicksilver stiffly. "I don't set a bunch like you down for fools. Naturally, you wouldn't be silly enough to write docilely at my dictation!"

"What's the idea, then? Get to it without the frills."

"There's pen and paper on the table. Sit down at the desk and write a few lines as you'd write to a pal if you're sending a last message."

With a frown between her keen eyes the Kid considered. "Sounds twenty-two carat—and yet—"

After a minute she went on: "Well, I'll put it up to Wildcat. He's strong on keeping his word—like me."

The door clicked behind her.

With three paces Quicksilver reached the desk. His slim fingers went to his pocket. Then they dipped into the desk drawer, and away again.

He returned to his forlorn position by the window.

Shortly a newcomer unlocked the door and entered. A slim, hawk-eyed fellow stood there, of approximately Beau Quicksilver's build and height. One hand was in his pocket where an automatic bulged unmistakably.

"Well, now, what's the dope?" he rapped out. "What's this steer on some farewell stuff the Kid's been mouthing? Get it out in a hurry for he'll be here any time. And then there'll be something doing," he added.

Beau Quicksilver repeated his forlorn request as he had tremblingly stated it to the Kid. "Sit down at the desk there. Take your pen, your ink and paper and write a decent note to Penn Markham—you've heard of him."

Craftily the Wildcat considered. "Nix," he said, "on the desk paper and ink there. That listens phony. We're taking no chances on you. Understand? But I brought up a sheet of paper from downstairs—and my own fountain pen. I'll spin a few words. A guy wouldn't want to pass in his checks and break his promise!"

As he seated himself he reconsidered. "But, say, how's the note going to get to him? We don't send any one of this gang into a trap! Get me? What's the idea?"

"You're wise, all right," answered Beau Quicksilver admiringly. "I fancied you'd be. Just get one of your gang to slip out in one of the big cars to the city and drop the letter into a mail box—any mail box he chooses. Nothing shady about that, you see."

The Wildcat pondered. "That's all right," he decided. "Now shut up while I write a swan song in a hand that nobody 'll spot."

Through slitted lids Quicksilver watched him. Laboriously the fountain pen scratched across the self-provided sheet.

Then the Wildcat read the result:

"Good-by, old top. They've got me this time. I shall pass in my checks pretty soon.

"Yours,

"BEAU Q."

"Fine!" approved Beau Quicksilver. "Couldn't be better. You're a fellow that's strong on his promises, too. Much obliged! One other little thing—I've got to get that letter to him in a hurry. He's booked for California this morning. We'll have to stick on stamps enough to make it special delivery."

Frowning, the crook thought again. "Oh, all right," he said. "That's that!"

Then the Wildcat blotted the letter, put it in the envelope he'd brought with him and sealed it. He reached for the desk drawer, and brought out six stamps. Beginning at one end, he licked them thoroughly.

A surprised expression clouded his features. The letter and the moist stamps fell limply from his hands. He attempted to get up. He made a weak gesture toward his bulging hip pocket. To no avail. He slumped back inertly into the chair.

Beau Quicksilver strode to the unconscious figure. Quickly he exchanged his disheveled evening dress for the loud, sporty clothing of the limp Wildcat. He pulled the checked cap off the slumped head and down over his own ears at a rakish angle. He hunched up the collar in a rowdyish way, ludicrously like the unprotesting dupe. Then he laid the careless crook in his own soiled evening clothes on the couch as though sunk in deep slumber. Boldly he opened the door, locked it and pocketed the key.

He descended the stairs. The doped stamps he had substituted for the original ones would keep the Wildcat a dead factor for some time.

"Well?" whispered the Kid cautiously from the unlighted lower hall.

"It's all right," came the Wildcat's familiar drawl. "Going to post it myself. Keep it dark if he gets here. Tell him I've got a hunch on the bulls. Get me?"

"You've said it," she agreed, and went back down the corridor.

With a scornful roar a big car swept out of the garage. The slim shoulders of Beau Quicksilver rocked with silent laughter. But to any peering spectator they seemed merely to reflect the careening movement of the motor.

Before that master criminal, the Weasel, returned to the distant house, Beau Quicksilver and the police had already taken captive its cornered inmates. So the crafty head of a notorious criminal clique walked quite unsuspectingly into a trap instead of to the swift and silent execution he had so painstakingly planned.

And it was Quicksilver himself, still clad as the Wildcat—with a few more characteristic lines from a make-up box—who opened the door and let the Weasel step into the drawn net.

Beau Quicksilver whistled an aria from the lost opera as he donned tennis togs.

Then he answered Penn Markham, busy with the racket stretchers: "Close call? Perhaps. But there is no sport in an easy game. And I had several tricks up my sleeve, you know."

His eyes fell upon the discarded and very helpful patent leather shoes. Penn Markham followed his glance.

"Nobby little invention of yours, Quixie! Gas shoes—double shoes with a steel-inclosed space like a thermos bottle, equipped, not with a vacuum, but with knockout gas. Clever little catch, too, that will spill the gas with a kick of your foot."

Beau Quicksilver turned languidly to his discarded silk hat. It carried a double top where the collapsible gas mask had been concealed.

"Slovenly work"—he shrugged—"denting up a decent lid like this! Got to get a new one made!"

***Next Week: "THE HAND OF THE HYENA."***

# *GALES OF MARCH*

THE gales of March careen across
The fields with wild uncivil haste:
Loud couriers screaming winter's loss,
That long had held the land's white waste.

They sweep above the snow that clings,
To sheltered hollows in the hills,
A boisterous breath that shrilly sings,
Of opening streams and sun-shot rills.

They tear at shutters through the night,
As though they'd send them swinging wide,
And have one gaze where ice and blight,
Is drifting from the countryside.

They seem to sweep the drab skies clean,
And now their roars are faint and dim,
While we can sense with prescience keen,
Spring, tiptoe on wet April's rim.

*Thomas J. Murray.*

# Smoke of the Forty-Five

## By HARRY SINCLAIR DRAGO

*Author of "Whispering Sage," "Desert Law," etc.*

### CHAPTER XX.

WITHOUT PAY.

"GIT him?" the crowd yelled. "We'll git you, you bosco—you white-livered whelp—you low-down, ornery—"

And they meant it, too!

"Git your rope, Stuffy," some one cried. "We'll give that hombre a ride."

Gallup and Kent glanced at Hobe. The big foreman's face was black with hatred. "Come on," they heard him grumble; "we're goin' up there."

"He only did what he was told to do," the sheriff hurried to explain. "I swore him in. He's within the law."

"Law?" Hobe's jaw looked dangerous. "Ain't no law that 'll let a man murder his pal. To hell with your law! We're goin' to git him!"

Roddy's face paled at the crowd's answer to this statement. Kent, however, was less frightened.

"I'm tellin' you, boys," the old man cried. "Ain't no man workin' for me that touches that Basque. I wanted my girl. He got her for me."

"Well, I'm tellin' you, Kent," Hobe ground out, "it's either me or the Basque. We don't ride the same range after this."

There wasn't even the smallest bit of bluff about this. Kent realized it, too. He could ill afford to lose Hobe. "The Basque 'll go, then," he said grudgingly, "but I'll not see him hung."

"And what do you think he'd do to the girl if the crowd of you started up there?" Roddy inquired. "If he's what you think he is, he'd fix her."

"Let all of you stay back," Kent cried, elbowing his way to Gallup's side. "The two of us will go up. I want my girl, and I'll git her unharmed. What Roddy says

*This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for February 17.*

is so. You're only makin' a damned nuisance out of yourself with this talk of hangin'. Come on, Gallup!"

For a moment Kent was supreme. He was again the tyrant of bygone days.

Madeiras was keenly alive to his danger. He had sent Charlie Paul on his way; Molly was heaping coals of fire upon the Basque's head, but the thing which held Tony's attention was that angry murmur from below. He recognized the sounds. He had seen men hanged!

With a sigh of relief he saw Gallup and Kent break from the crowd and start toward him. When they reached the upper side of the little flat the Basque called to them:

"You drop those gun before you come any closer!"

"I want my daughter!" Kent answered.

"Thass always right wit' me, *señor;* but those gun—they stay behin'."

"Humor the fool," Gallup cried, throwing his rifle into the sage. "We want the girl, and I want to see Dice's body."

Unarmed, therefore, they climbed to the entrance of the mine. Madeiras met them with a surly laugh.

"Where is she?" Kent demanded.

Tony pointed to a pile of blankets upon which Molly lay sobbing. Kent knelt beside her, his bony fingers shaking as he caressed her hair.

"Come, Molly," he begged, "we'll git you home."

Molly turned from him angrily.

"Don't touch me," she cried. "Your hands are as red as that beast's there. I didn't believe you could stoop to this."

"Now, now," Kent pleaded, "you're all upset. I'll—"

"You'll do nothing for me!" Molly raised her hand here and pointed at Gallup. "You two men may take me away from here; you may make me go to the ranch, and even marry me off; but you'll do it by force! Father—I think I despise you. I see now why you got Madeiras to come back. It was nicely worked out. Well, I know where I stand. I'm no longer the fool."

The girl was hysterical. The old man thought she would fall, so helplessly did she sway from side to side.

"My own father—my own flesh and blood," she sobbed. "That you could do this to me." And with a lunge she threw herself toward the edge of the dump over which Johnny had pitched.

Kent caught her and drew her back, a dead weight in his arms.

"She fainted," he gasped.

"Won't hurt her," Gallup assured him. "Here's horses; git her down to my rig and take her home. Put her to bed and see that she don't try nothin' foolish. I'm goin' down there." And he pointed to the spot where he expected to find Johnny's body. "You come along, Madeiras. We can git down there if we take our time."

"*Sí,* I go; but I go alone. *Señor,* you are the coroner, not the sheriff. Why should I go weeth you?"

"You know why," Aaron growled.

"I know no such theeng," Tony argued. "You geeve me five hundret dollar. I keel him like I promise. You ought be satisfied."

Kent's eyes opened.

"You paid him to kill the boy?" the old man asked Aaron.

"Why not?" demanded Gallup. "We're done with him. I want to see just how damn dead he is, though. Come on, Madeiras; you can't afford to break with me."

Tony laughed softly to himself. When Kent started downhill with Molly the Basque motioned to Gallup, and they set off, too. Tony's heart was heavy. He had overplayed his hand.

The long Nevada twilight was almost over by the time the two men reached the bottom of the little side cañon into which Johnny's body had shot.

"Here's the place," Gallup called. "Tons of rock came down. I don't see him, do you? Look around."

They searched for fifteen minutes—time enough, considering the place—without finding the body. Madeiras was wildly excited over this. "Mebbe those rock cover heem up, eh?" he suggested, white-lipped.

"Naw! Wasn't he ridin' on top of them?"

"*Sí!* But plenty rock come after him. No blood, no not'ing, here. When the moon come up I deeg in these rock."

"What's the use? If he's buried, he's dead enough. You can stay here if you want to; I'm goin' back. And I'll trouble you to return that five hundred. I ain't payin' for a dead man unless I see the body."

"Thass so, *señor?*" the Basque inquired unpleasantly. He paused, then: "Thees place plenty beeg enough for two daid man."

He tossed his rifle in back of him, and with hands resting upon his hips, he faced Gallup.

Aaron felt a shiver pass through his body. The size of those hands froze his blood. He fancied he could feel them at his throat —tearing, strangling, forcing the breath from his old carcass.

Gallup's cunning did not fail him. He knew that the present was the time for quick thinking and smooth talking.

"Why are you so down on me?" he asked, apparently going off at a tangent.

"You ask that, *señor?*"

Madeiras's teeth showed white and even in the half light.

"That mortgage, eh? We can adjust that. Things can be arranged. Tobias oversteps himself now and then. But give me a little time; I'll fix that up. And now about the five hundred—you keep it. You'll be goin' away, and you'll be needin' money." Aaron rubbed his hands. "Yes," he repeated, "you keep that money, Tony."

"No, *señor,*" Tony said lightly. "You have made leetla mistak'. You tak' those money back. But you owe me somet'ing, of course. I keep *thees.*"

Madeiras had been running his fingers through the contents of Gallup's purse and now held out for Aaron's inspection the little gold snake Crosbie Traynor had worn on his hat band.

Gallup shrank back, his jaws working excitedly. The next second he was reaching for the little charm.

"No, *señor,*" Tony warned. "I keep eet."

"I didn't know it was in there," Gallup shrieked. "It's mine! What in hell do you want with it?"

"Thass fonny t'ing why I want heem, *señor.* But since first time I see those leetla snake I t'ink mebbe I lak' to wear heem on my hat ban' some time."

"What're you talkin' about? I've owned that luck piece these forty years. Who'd you ever see wearin' it?"

Tony grinned again.

"Mebbe those man what brought eet back to you, *señor.* He say the man what own eet be sure recognize heem by that snake."

"What's that? What—what man?" Aaron babbled.

"Those man what keel heemself, *señor.* Johnny Dice mebbe dead; but me—Tony Madeiras—ees steel here! You go now."

Aaron was in no position to dispute this.

Bent over, muttering strange words to himself, Gallup moved away, in his ears the mocking laughter of the Basque.

Tony kept his word with Johnny. As soon as the moon came up he set the débris in motion again. Tons and tons of small rock cascaded down upon the mass already piled in the choked cañon, but it failed to uncover the body of the boy.

It occurred to Madeiras, then, that Johnny might have crawled away some distance and be lying helpless further down the cañon. He called for the better part of ten minutes, but received no answer.

Johnny Dice was not to be found.

Hours later Gallup stumbled into Kent's camp. Only Roddy and Tobias and one or two others remained.

"You look as though you'd seen a ghost," the sheriff remarked. "What in God's name you been up to?"

"Terrible trip," Gallup moaned. "Too much for me."

"Ain't you goin' to hold an inquest?"

"Inquest, hell!" Aaron snorted. "The man's buried under a hundred ton of rock. The Basque was your deputy. That ends it as far as I'm concerned."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### TWO DEAD MEN.

FOR a dead man Johnny Dice was most active at that very moment. He was some five miles from the spot where Tony searched for his body. He was not

alone. Some one else moved through the greasewood and sage ahead of him. Stealthily, too, Johnny felt. The two of them had been circling each other for some time. Both were anxious to avoid the other, but for this very reason, seemingly, their trails kept on crossing and recrossing.

It was uncanny. Johnny thought he was being tracked. By innumerable little deductions he knew that no animal made those sounds which alternately retreated and advanced behind and before him. It was a man! Who? The boy strained his eyes to catch sight of moving shadow or strange object.

He went unrewarded. It may have been that he was less cautious than usual. His mind was still blurred from the Basque's shot. From the time Madeiras had appeared upon the tailings until the present moment, things had happened so quickly that Johnny could only grasp the essential facts.

The boy knew that Tony had whispered: "Play dead!" The Basque's every movement had been made to the gallery. The next instant his gun had flashed fire. Johnny's fall had not been acted. Madeiras had given him only a scalp wound, but the impact had been sufficient to send the boy off his balance. The ride down the moving tailings had torn Johnny's clothing to shreds, but had not so much as scratched his skin. The stunt under other circumstances would have been good sport.

He had regained consciousness there in the choked cañon. The Basque's words had come back to him: "Play dead!"

His wound, a trivial injury, had confirmed his faith in the fact that his shooting was a game. Madeiras was too handy with a gun to have missed at that distance! Something had happened at the ranch—something which would be uncovered if certain parties thought him dead. It was plain enough to Johnny.

Feeling certain that soon some one would be searching for him, the boy had crawled over the loose rock and made his way down the cañon to where it opened on a high plateau.

There he had rested—and worried about Molly. What was to stop Gallup from marrying her now? Could he depend on Tony to prevent that? Surely the Basque would not have gone to this desperate measure unless he was prepared to protect the girl. The boy had to stand on something, and he chose to do it on this hypothesis. A sensible decision.

But Johnny proceeded to make a bad mistake. Believing as he did that Tony wanted the world to consider him dead he hoped to better accomplish the hoax by hiding from the Basque; never for a moment realizing that Madeiras on not finding the body would jump to the conclusion that Johnny was buried under that avalanche of rock.

The boy's first need was a horse. Being afoot in this country rendered him almost helpless. Kent and his men would surely be watching for him, so Johnny had headed for the Reservation as his best refuge.

Half an hour back his trail had crossed that of the man out there in the blackness. It had stopped any further thought of Molly and Madeiras.

And now a very curious thing happened. A thud and the sound of crackling brush to his right made Johnny turn in that direction. As he did so some one whispered in back of him:

"Hands up!"

The other man had tossed a rock into the sage and the noise it made as it landed had claimed the boy's attention and left him an easy target.

"You turn him around now," the voice said.

Johnny did as he was bid and found himself staring at Charlie Paul. The Indian's eyes bulged. "You him, Johnny?" he cried.

"Charlie Paul! You damn near scairt me to death."

"You no dead?" the Indian asked.

"Not yet, Charlie. What happened?"

It took the Indian some time to satisfy the boy's curiosity.

"Gallup and Kent go 'way, eh?" Johnny questioned. "You sure?"

"Sure. Take horses, too. I watch; I see. All gone now."

Johnny pondered for some minutes over the Indian's information.

"Charlie Paul," he said at last. "I tell

you somethin'. You try understand him, Charlie. Savvy?"

Charlie grunted his assent.

"Well," the boy began, "everybody think I'm dead—me. You no tell. The Basque, he good friend me. He not shoot for kill. Me and him play game, all same like *viente y uno*, you savvy? So! By and by I catch him man." Johnny indicated a rope around his neck. "You no talk, eh?"

"No talk, me."

"Good. I go back on mine. Plenty grub, plenty water there. You take him money. Mebbe you go Reservation; buy two horse. No tell Thunder Bird you buy him for me. You do that, Charlie Paul?"

"I go," said the Indian. "Mebbe so tomorrow night I be back."

Sundown the following day found Charlie at the mine. Johnny had slept for hours, and soon after the Indian's arrival he determined to ride to the Diamond Bar and let Molly know that he was not dead. He could depend on her to keep his secret. To withhold the truth from her was needless cruelty.

Johnny circled the house before he approached it. A dim light burned in Molly's room. Crawling to the side window he lay upon the ground listening for some sound which would tell him she was awake. Once or twice he fancied he heard a low sob or moan. Getting to his feet he fastened his hands on the sill above him and began drawing up his body so that he could see into the room.

His head and shoulders were even with the bottom of the window when a nail tore into his forearm. The pain of it forced a moan from his lips. It had a startling effect on the occupants of the room.

Molly was in bed; but not asleep. Old Kent sat beside her. Neither had been aware of the boy's nearness until that mournful cry escaped his lips. They turned, mouths open, eyes wide.

The old man screamed as he saw Johnny. Pain and the dead weight of his body upon his arms had put a hideous expression on the boy's face. His clothes were ragged, his face white, his hair uncombed. The dim light threw shadows which only magnified his weirdness.

"Take him away! Take him away!" Kent screeched. "Don't you see him?" he wailed. "He's there—in the window. Aw-w-w!" And he covered his face with his hands to shut out the gruesome sight.

Without knowing that he did it, Johnny flung a beseeching hand toward Molly. A shriek answered him and he saw her topple over upon her bed. The men were running from the bunk-house. There was nothing left for the boy to do but go.

From the cover of the willows by the creek he could see men moving about with lanterns. Cries came to him, and above others the sound of Kent yelling:

"A ghost, I tell yuh! He's come back to haunt me! Don't laugh at me! Don't laugh!" And Kent's cry rose until it broke in a fit of choking.

"Take him inside," came an order in Hobe's voice. "He's babblin' like a child."

The old man fought them off as they tried to lift him.

"He's here!" he cried. "I heard him! Don't let him git me. Molly, Molly, I didn't do it. Gallup paid Madeiras to kill him. I swear I didn't do it. I swear—"

The old man's cries died away in a moan of anguish. The door banged and Johnny knew that they had taken him to his room.

A cold sweat broke out on him. It had never occurred to him that this construction would be put on his appearance. Was it possible that this was the very thing Tony had had in mind when he shot him? The sight of him had frightened Kent out of his wits.

What would happen if he appeared before Gallup in the dead of night in similar fashion? Gallup had paid Madeiras to murder him.

Johnny cursed Gallup as he led his horse away from the ranch.

"Reckon I'll pay you a visit, Aaron," he said to himself. "And right soon, too. I may be dead, but I'll put the fear of hell into your miserable old carcass. You'll be thinkin' of somethin' else besides who you are goin' to marry."

Johnny's one brief glance at Molly had shown him the girl tired, grief-stricken, hysterical. He wanted to tell her, now more than ever, that he lived; but to do so meant

the loss of his best weapon against Kent and Gallup. Better for her to suffer now than to be forced into marrying Aaron Gallup.

Thoughts of Crosbie Traynor came to Johnny as he rode along. What had old Thunder Bird found out? The chief would have something to say when next they met.

"Strikes me we got quite a lot in common, Crosbie Traynor," mused Johnny. "The world's got both of us figured for dead. Only I'm alive to avenge the bird that got me."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE FACE IN THE WINDOW.

JOHNNY surprised Charlie Paul on the following day by telling him that they were going to Standing Rock.

"Me still dead man," the boy said in answer to the question in the Indian's eyes. "We stop this side the Rock. Nobody there know I be in your camp. Mebbe so, come night time, we go into town, play ghost, mebbe scare some man, eh?"

Charlie grinned and shook his head. "Ah, nah," he said, "me no ghost."

"I be the ghost, Charlie," Johnny told him. "Gallup paid Tony to git me. I'm goin' to play the dead now. You go down and git the horses. I be ready pretty quick."

This talk of ghosts was "bad medicine" in Charlie's eyes, but he agreed, nevertheless, to do as the boy ordered.

The two traveled far from any road, and so slow was their progress that night found them still some miles from town.

Low hills came close to the northern limits of Standing Rock. The Indian knew a spot among them where he decided to camp. It was a little after nine o'clock before they reached it.

"Leave our stuff here, Charlie," Johnny advised. "We eat, then we go see Gallup."

The Indian answered with a shrug of his shoulders. He favored more direct action than this business of playing ghost. His way, under the circumstances, would have been to pot Aaron as he slept.

Johnny thumbed his gun just as they were ready to leave. Charlie smiled at this. Maybe the night held something of interest, after all.

"Ghost no have gun," he laughed mockingly.

"No," Johnny chuckled. "All same I take him. You watch sharp till we cross railroad."

He knew that once across the tracks they would be in little danger of being seen. Gallup's house was one of the few on that side of the Espee main line.

When they had left the railroad a hundred yards behind they dismounted and began walking through the sage toward Aaron's place. The three or four cabins they had to pass to get there were in darkness. A light burned in an upper window of Gallup's house.

"Tobias and him countin' up the day's profits, no doubt," Johnny thought. The Indian heard the boy muttering. "'Bout time I begun doin' a little countin' up myself," Johnny went on. Aloud, then, to Charlie he said:

"You git ahead now. No noise, no tracks, you savvy?"

Again the Indian answered with a nod of his head.

In ten minutes they were lurking in the shadows beneath the lighted window.

Aaron's house was a story and a half affair, and the lighted window at least ten feet from the ground. They could hear the murmur of voices, but the closed window kept them from understanding a word of what was being said.

A stone's throw away the lights of the Palace Hotel burned brightly; Johnny turned a wistful eye toward it. In a way it was his Times Square—his Broadway. He wondered who was facing Scanlon to-night. Something whispered to him that his evenings there were a thing of the past. Gambling with him had been an art, but it was a sorry accomplishment, one that would be of doubtful value to him in the days to come.

Unknown to Johnny, this reasoning was based on the fact that subconsciously he saw himself treading the future at Molly Kent's side.

A through freight thundered by as the

two men waited, undecided as to their next move. Charlie looked blankly at the boy. "How you get up there?" he whispered.

"I'll tell you," Johnny answered, an idea breaking on him. "I stand on your shoulders, Charlie, you know, like this"—the boy stooped and then arose, clasping the legs of an imaginary man. "You understand?"

Again that unemotional nod from the Indian. Getting down upon all fours, he waited for Johnny to climb into position. The boy straightened up, using the side of the house to help him retain his balance.

"Move along," he whispered. "Stop when I signal."

They had only ten feet to go. Charlie felt Johnny's legs stiffen as the boy came abreast the window. The Indian stopped.

"Steady," Johnny warned as he pressed his face to the glass. He started as he beheld Gallup's companion. It was Tony Madeiras!

The Basque seemed to be having the best of the conversation. Tony had his hat on, pushed back from his forehead, his black hair curling out from beneath the brim. Something strange about the hat caught and held Johnny's attention. It was the little gold snake snapped in the hat band.

"Traynor's luck piece or I'm a liar," Johnny gasped to himself. "Where in God's name did the Basque git it?"

He could see that Tony was enjoying himself. He knew Madeiras's manner when things were going his way. A smile all insolence wreathed the man's face. His eyes were contemplative, cruel. Gallup cowered before them.

There was money upon the table between the two men. The Basque pushed the gold pieces to the floor with a sweep of his hand.

"Money mean not'ing to Tony Madeiras," Johnny heard him say. "Thass leetla theeng—money. You tell me 'bout those jail at Carson. Ha, ha! Those jail be nice place for you, too, *señor*."

"Don't be a fool, Madeiras," old Aaron whined. "You can't send me down there without goin' yourself."

"I go eef I have to. I'm strong; jail ees no nice place for old man like you. Me, I do not try to keel Johnny. I just crease him, I t'ink. Those rock, they keel him; but judge, he say we keel him just the same, I guess. Now what you say—you steel try marry those girl?"

Aaron did not answer.

"As sure you try those trick," Tony went on, "I go see the Señor Kelsey"—the district attorney.

"You will, eh?" Gallup cried. "Like hell you will!"

His hand came up from under the table, a pistol, black and ominous, held rigidly. "You'll tell nothin'!" he screamed as he leveled his gun at the Basque's head.

A blood-curdling yell broke from Johnny's lips as he saw the old man's finger tighten on the trigger. Gallup jumped. His chair crashed over as he kicked it out of his way. The Basque's eyes rolled until their whites showed.

What was that in the window—a dead man's face?

"*Hola! Virgen santa!*" Madeiras shouted, and he made the sign of the cross. "Johnny! Johnny Dice!"

Gallup's palsied hand pointed his gun at the apparition. Johnny contorted his face and laughed diabolically. The old man's finger pressed the trigger and shot the window pane to bits, but the boy was gone. He had beaten the gun by an instant.

Charlie Paul had felt the boy's legs grow tense. The next he knew Johnny was on the ground beside him. A moment later they were lost in the night.

When they found their ponies the boy permitted himself his first laugh. "That yell of mine," he said, "wasn't in the play. No, sir! Madeiras was up there. Gallup would have killed him in another second.

"Good old Tony," thought Johnny. Molly was safe! Madeiras was a hero. He was making a Judas of himself for his pal's sake.

"Guess we don't go back there pretty soon, eh?" Charlie chuckled.

"Surest thing!" exclaimed Johnny. "I know now that he'll scare. We have plenty fun along that man, Charlie."

Madeiras seemed inclined in the same direction. Even seeing the ghost of Johnny

Dice had not robbed him of all sense. When Gallup turned back from the shattered window he found himself looking into the Basque's gun.

"I tak' those peestol now, *señor,*" he said.

Aaron was too dumfounded to object. "Did yuh see it?" he demanded. "It was him!"

"*Madre de Dios!* Of course I see heem," the Basque spat angrily. His hands flashed out and caught Gallup. Lifting him off his feet he hurled him down the room.

"I ought to keel you!" he growled.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE GUN SPEAKS.

THE following morning found Kent in Standing Rock closeted with Gallup. Kent was a nervous wreck. Molly had refused to speak to him; his men were sullen, aloof; Tobias had been back about the notes, and to top it all the specter of Johnny Dice walked beside him wherever he went.

"You been seein' ghosts, too?" Aaron asked.

"You know, then, eh?" old Jackson answered miserably. "I saw him as plain as I'm seein' you, Gallup. The girl did, too. I'll never forget how it moaned. I used to laugh at men who believed in haunts." Kent shook his head. "I'm past doin' that now. When did you see it?"

"Last night. It was here—but it ain't no haunt. It's Dice himself! I found footprints beneath the window this mornin'. Let him come agin. I won't miss him a second time."

"You mean he's alive—that he ain't killed?"

"You've got it! I knew you couldn't figger him dead unless you'd seen his body put in the ground. He's fooled us all, even the Basque. Madeiras was here last night threatenin' me. Told me he'd put me in Carson Penitentiary if I tried to marry Molly. What you got to say about that—do I git her?"

"I was hopin' you'd change your mind about that, Gallup. The girl's half mad."

"Well, you weren't able to do anythin' for Tobias yesterday. I'll wait till day after to-morrow. You pay the money or I take the girl. She ain't got no use for you, nohow. A man't got to have a little backbone if he wants to keep his head up with wimmen. As soon as she pulled Traynor's name on you, you wilted. I don't know how much Dice knows, but it's too much. Madeiras is makin' big talk, too. The damn bosco stole that old Moqui charm of mine. He knew who had it, too."

"What?" Kent's mouth twitched. He shook his fist in Gallup's face. "How'd he know that?" he cried.

"That scares you, does it? Let him prove what he—" Gallup stopped short, his eyes on the door to the adjoining room. He had seen it move! He knew that he had closed it when Kent came in. Pushing his visitor out of the way, Aaron made a leap for the door and threw it open. Tobias was caught flat-footed.

Gallup grabbed the man by his coat and dragged him into the room. "Eavesdroppin', eh?" Aaron screamed. "I'll teach you to spy on me. You're through—fired! You ain't got a cent but what you got from me. You pussyfootin' swine, what were you hopin' to hear! Take *that!*"

Tobias Gale fairly bristled as he got up from the floor. So wrathful was he that his little body trembled from head to foot. For years he had suppressed his emotions, bridled his desires, made a machine of himself. Gallup marveled as he gazed at him now.

"Let us be honest for once, Aaron Gallup," Tobias said with fine impudence. "When the pot calls the kettle black it's time to tell the truth. What I've got is mine. I earned it doing your dirty bidding.

"You'll not kick me out. I've protected myself. Indeed I have. You'll find that out when you try to call in some of our loans. Humph! A swine am I, eh? You are the swine, Aaron Gallup.

"I know why you wanted Johnny Dice put out of the way, and I know that Crosbie Traynor didn't kill himself. You know it, too! You'll crawl to me before I've finished. You just try to kick me out, to cheat me—and I'll tell what's what

"You've kicked and beat me for years. You thought I didn't mind. Well, I've made it my business to find out about you. You start your little tricks, and Molly Kent will know, and Johnny Dice will know. I'll talk you so deep that the Carson Penitentiary will crumble to ruins before they let you out."

Tobias hurled a chair from his path.

"Get out of my way!" he warned Gallup. "I'm leaving this house now forever. When you've got something to say to me you can come to the hotel and find me."

And the slave marched out, the king at last!

Kent and Gallup sat and stared at each other for countless minutes. Crushed, dumfounded, Kent reached for his hat finally and without a word stumbled down the stairs to get into his rig and start for home.

Gallup seemed unaware of his going. Meal time came, but Aaron still sat in his upstairs room, fixedly gazing into space. Some one knocked at his door, but he heard it not. His brain refused to hold any thought other than that Johnny Dice lived and would have the truth from Tobias.

Aaron's gun lay upon the table before him. As he continued to sit in his trancelike state the pistol began to claim his attention. In fact, Gallup fancied it talking to him.

"You've lived by the gun," the weapon seemed to say. "I've seen you through every big crisis of your life. I do my work well when properly handled. I stop babbling tongues; smother secrets: give the old the strength of the young. I am your friend, Aaron Gallup. Men whom you have trusted have failed you or else they have been clumsy, stupid—in me alone can you place dependence."

Yes, it was plain, Johnny Dice had to die. Tobias and Madeiras were dangerous—they could be attended to later, but Johnny Dice's end was imperative. He had to go. But how? It had to be soon—before the boy talked with the other two. That meant to-night! Johnny Dice would have to die to-night!

Gallup began to shake off his lethargy. Between now and sundown he had to be ready.

He went downstairs and puttered over his stove preparing food. Color flowed back into his face as his brain began to function again. He mumbled to himself as he settled on what he would do. Gallup's vanity took much pleasure from the proposed plan. It was simple, but ripe with the native ingenuity which had brought Aaron across many a rough spot.

In brief, it was this: no one but Tobias Gale and Jackson Kent knew that he had seen through Johnny's game. The boy had first appeared to Kent and then to him. That argued that Johnny would be hiding out—anxious to keep alive the belief in his death.

That last night the boy's ghostly visit had been more than a success. Now, if he, Gallup, spread the story of what he had seen—the grinning face, the fiendish cry—wouldn't word of his talking reach Johnny? The man must have some confederate who would carry the tale.

But supposing that failed, if men heard the coroner talking of having seen a ghost, and this very night that ghost should return and be killed, and proved no ghost at all—well, wouldn't that be alibi enough? Yet the law couldn't touch Gallup for that.

So, then, it got down to whether Johnny would return. Aaron was satisfied to believe that he would, so between then and sunset he spread his story up and down the main street of Standing Rock.

Charlie Paul, loafing in front of the Palace Hotel, heard it and carried it to Johnny.

"He look sick, Gallup," the Indian went on. "He pretty damn well scared, him."

"Guess Aaron knows haunts is hostile to him," Johnny said more to himself than to Charlie.

"Him—Gallup—have big fight, too," the faithful Indian added.

"What fight? No savvy that, Charlie."

"Man, Gale—all bus' up."

"Split—all off, you mean?"

"Him split," Charlie grinned. "Him, Gale, live um hotel."

"Well, I'm damned!" Johnny dropped the frying pan to better voice his surprise. "Them two old junipers fallin' out—now

what do you know 'bout that? You hear any more, Charlie?"

"Nah. Gale get horse, he drive away."

"There's a kittle of fish for you!" Johnny shook his head uncomprehendingly. "I should admire to know what's up. Mebbe so we find out to-night."

Unknown to Johnny, Tobias Gale had returned to Standing Rock shortly after sundown. He had not been alone when he reached the outskirts of the town. There he had stopped, and the man who occupied the rig with him had stepped to the ground. Gale had driven on, and the other man, after ten minutes, had started to walk the remaining distance into the Rock.

Tobias made no effort to see him again, but he was apparently well satisfied with his day's work. The man with whom he had driven across country that afternoon could be expected to furnish rare entertainment for one, Gallup.

Gale made some discreet, but futile, inquiries regarding the whereabouts of Tony Madeiras and retired to his room. This was Gallup's night, and Tobias was in no way inclined to share the spotlight with him.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### JOHNNY DICE COMES BACK TO LIFE.

WHEN Aaron Gallup retired to his home at seven o'clock that evening he knew that if Johnny Dice hovered in or near Standing Rock he had heard by now the story of his—Gallup's—supernatural visitor. Figuratively speaking, Aaron patted himself on the back for having set this trap for the smooth Johnny. The old man's confidence in his scheme was such that he even whistled snatches of an old tune popular in the days of the Santa Fe Trail.

He finished his supper without lighting a lamp. Having eaten, he climbed the stairs and made ready for the expected company. He saw to it that his gun was in order; he lighted a lamp; he raised the curtains—it was as if he were a stage manager preparing for the evening's show.

When his old brain refused to suggest any additional bit of stagecraft, Aaron took his seat. He had arranged the lamp so that he sat in shadows. Four or five times he drew a bead upon an imaginary face in the window—it made him smile. He was ready—he wouldn't miss to-night.

It was too early for ghosts, so he half dozed in his chair. A clock struck eight, but Aaron heard it not, nor did he catch the soft *pad-pad* of naked feet ascending the stairs. Gallup was in a strange world confronting a horde of Johnny Dices. He shot them down, one after another, until his trigger finger grew tired.

Minutes slipped by as the old man sat lost in reverie, a smile of satisfaction upon his face. The door had opened noiselessly, a bony hand forcing it inward. The visitor squinted his eyes at Gallup and took a step into the room, closing the door behind him as he did so. He stood still, waiting for the other to catch sight of him.

Aaron became aware of the man's presence by degrees. When he saw him and recognition followed, he uttered no word of surprise or fear, but just stared and stared at him. And eyes as cold as his own stared back at him.

This specter out of the past was no ghost, and yet it well might have been, for if, in appearance, there was ever a living dead man it was this gaunt visitor.

Gallup's thoughts were far from the window. Johnny Dice no longer obsessed him. He knew there could be no connection between the boy and this shriveled shadow of a man confronting him.

And yet there was, and not so remote at that. But Johnny knew nothing of the man's coming. The boy was playing a lone hand this night. He had already circled Gallup's house several times. That a light should be burning in that same room again to-night looked suspicious to Johnny. It said all too plainly that he was expected.

Well, it is a poor general who has only one plan of attack. Johnny flattered himself that he was equal to this occasion.

The eastern freight had not pulled in yet. Two carloads of ore from the Black Prince mine stood upon the side track. They would have to be picked up and cut into the train. Very likely the freight would bring a car of merchandise from San Francisco

for the Rock. That would take more time. Cars would be switched back and forth past the house. One should be able to see into that lighted upper story room from the top of one of those cars.

Gallup had not replaced the shattered glass as yet. With fair skill a man should be able to flip a piece of cardboard into the room. Johnny had such a thing to toss at Gallup's feet—the picture of Molly which he had found in Traynor's wallet.

The boy had the best of reasons for doing this. Surely if Gallup did not recognize the picture it would worry him sore just because he could not place the child's face. A picture, delivered as this one would be, carried a message, a warning. And perhaps the man would fail to reason that it had been tossed into the room from the top of a passing freight car. If so, he would be at some pains to figure how it came there upon his floor.

If the incident produced no other effect than this, Johnny told himself he would be satisfied. It would be another straw added to Aaron's load, and to break and unnerve the man was Johnny's game.

But he stood to win more than this. He had made Kent admit that he had known Crosbie Traynor. If Gallup recognized that picture it was proof enough that he, too, had known the man. Then, Johnny felt that he would have discovered the reason for Kent's subservience to Gallup.

As he walked the tracks to the head of the switch just this side of the shipping pens he told himself that he could not lose. No matter how the play went, he won.

The freight pulled in half an hour late, but Johnny's calculation in regard to the amount of work the train crew would have to do proved correct. Swinging up to the top of one of the big box cars he stretched himself flat and waited for the switching to begin. In a few minutes he was rolling past Gallup's house.

Rising to his knees, the picture in his hand, he peered into the lighted room. What he saw there drove his plans far from his mind. In fact, so great was Johnny's surprise that he had trouble in retaining his balance upon the moving car.

Gallup's visitor was old Thunder Bird! Yes—and the old chief was bound and gagged! Gallup sat before him. Another second and the scene was whisked from Johnny's vision.

Johnny's breath came in gasps as he rode down the tracks. Some things were plain now. It was Thunder Bird himself whom Traynor had gone to see! Could there be any doubt of it? Gallup saw an enemy in the Indian. Why? What better reason would he want than that Thunder Bird had known Traynor, and that the old chief knew that he—Gallup—had known the man, too?

People had called Traynor a stranger, but here were three men—Thunder Bird, Kent, and Gallup—whose actions proved that they had known him. There might be others—Tobias Gale, for instance—he was a mysterious sort of person. Indeed, no stranger's bullet had ended Traynor's life.

Johnny fretted and fumed as the minutes passed while the car stood still. It seemed that hours dragged by before the engine came back to shunt the car down the tracks toward town. Finally it began to move. The boy felt it take the switch just before it crossed the main street of the town. By this he knew that the car was going on to the siding which managed to squeeze past the side of the hotel.

Although not so close to Gallup's house now, the boy could see into the room by standing erect. The car came to a stop almost opposite it. Johnny saw Thunder Bird tied in his chair, but Gallup gone. "Downstairs, no doubt," mused Johnny, "lookin' for me."

For the ten minutes that the car stood on the siding Johnny stared into the lighted room. He did not know just what to do. Rescuing men from Gallup's lair was hardly a thing to be pursued as a nightly vocation —that is, if one were at all fond of living. But on the other hand, Thunder Bird might hold the key to the entire situation. Johnny felt that the old chief could explain many things if he could be induced to talk.

Obviously the thing to do was to find Madeiras and then force a way into Gallup's house. Tony must be in town. Finding the Basque could not be more than an hour's work.

"Damn it," Johnny muttered. "Wisht I'd tipped him off to the truth. Hain't helped a bit to let him think he killed me. I sure need him now. Charlie wouldn't be no good at all. He'd want to stick a knife into Gallup."

The engine kicked a string of cars against the one upon which Johnny stood. They hit so sharply that the boy's legs almost went out from under him. Crawling to the hand irons he swung his foot out to find the top one. He was facing the hotel for the first time. Before him was the room in which Traynor had been killed. Johnny drew back his foot, his brain reeling as he began putting two and two together.

Once he stretched out his arm and touched the window sill.

"My God," he moaned, "this is *it!* It couldn't be anythin' else. It was this time of the night—the noise of the engine to kill the sound of the shot, a stick to lift the man's gun, a toss of the arm to throw it back into the room after the killin'—it's right as day! Why, of course—Traynor's hat was damp. It was rainin' that night. When they pulled it out here to rip the band off the rain got at it. And the wool—I picked up a piece of fleece from the floor. Teixarra was shippin' wool that day. His cars stood right here. Mister, you've got the answer!"

Johnny mopped his face with his hands.

"Bumped him off with his own gun, too," he muttered. "Right clever, that. Yes, sir, this was one of the most clever murders this State can boast of. I got to talk to somebody or bust. I'm goin' to find Madeiras."

The car was moving away as Johnny swung to the ground. Half running, he burst into the Palace barroom. Scanlon dropped his cards as he caught sight of him.

Vinnie shouted: "My God, you dead, Johnny?"

"Dead, hell!" Johnny roared. "Do I look like a dead one? Where's Madeiras?"

"He ain't been here," Scanlon answered.

"He was in town last night," the boy exclaimed. "He ain't far off right now. If you see him tell him I'm lookin' for him—to come on the run!"

Turning on his heel, Johnny flung himself through the door, deaf to the questions in Scanlon's eyes.

Vinnie stared at his partner. The other men present likewise looked at one another. What had happened? Where had Johnny been? Gallup had seen his ghost, eh? The laugh was on Aaron.

"He's rearin' right up for a ghost, ain't he?" Scanlon declared.

"Sumthin' goin' to happen right soon, now," somebody stated. "I ain't never seen Johnny so hostile."

"That's too bad," Scanlon muttered. "Trouble comin'—and Doc Ritter forty miles away. They ain't no advantages in this town!"

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MADEIRAS ASSERTS HIMSELF.

JOHNNY combed the town without finding the Basque. No one would even admit that they had seen him. The boy refused to give up. Madeiras was there, somewhere, and he intended to find him. It was wasted effort, Tony having left the Rock as Johnny crouched upon the freight car.

The day had been one of misery for the Basque. He believed that he had killed Johnny. He was hardly less certain about having seen the boy's ghost. He was primitive and superstitious enough, too, to accept the fact that a dead man's spirit could return to haunt its enemies.

Madeiras had been dogging Gallup's footsteps for two days and nights. The Basque took his share of blame for Johnny's murder, but he hated Gallup for having tempted him into taking such a chance.

Tony had promised himself that Gallup should never get Molly. For this reason he slept in Brackett's stable. Aaron kept his rig there. If he set out for the Diamond Bar, Madeiras would know it.

The Basque had soon forgotten the gunplay at Gallup's house on the previous night. He did not believe the man would make any attempt to see the girl. But brooding all day long over Johnny's death made the fact that he was keeping Gallup

from Molly a small recompense for the loss of the boy. More than once the Basque wished that he had killed the coroner. He told himself that he would have to do it some day. Gallup would have to pay his debt.

Tony had managed to secure more than enough to drink during the last day or two. He was half intoxicated when Gallup had entered the stables an hour ago and hitched up his team. Soon after the old man had left the Basque slid down from his nest in the hay mow.

"*Por Dios!*" he cursed. "So he go after all, eh? Better I tak' her than heem. I say, sometime I keel that man—to-night be the time!"

Madeiras had left his horse with an uncle at the *Casa Español*. The animal was under lock and key when Tony got there. Half an hour was wasted in awakening Felipe and unlocking the barn.

But at last the Basque set sail for the Diamond Bar. He raked his pony with the spurs as he urged him on. Gallup could not be far ahead. Madeiras lashed his pony as the minutes passed. The ride began to sober him and he wondered how Gallup had come so far.

Miles unwound until the Basque had covered half the distance to the ranch. He had yet to catch a glimpse of Aaron. After another mile Madeiras pulled up his horse.

"Where I mees that man?" he asked himself. "I come fas'—no team keep ahead of me." He snapped his fingers at a sudden thought. "Mebbe he leave those team behin' while I was'e all that time wit' ole Felipe and some mens tak' him in those dam' flivver."

Madeiras uttered a wild cry as he caught sight of the ranch. He was breaking all records to-night.

Not until he was within a quarter of a mile of the house did he bring his horse to a canter. A hundred yards more and he vaulted to the ground. Gun in hand, he left the pony and went crawling away through the sage. Passing to the rear of the house and finding the door unlocked, he stepped inside.

Madeiras knew the place too well to need a guide to lead him to the girl's room. Not a light was burning. If Gallup had been here he was gone now. The thought made the Basque less cautious. His spur chains tinkled as he hurried to Molly's door. It was locked. Molly heard him tapping for admission.

"Who is it?" she demanded, frightened.

"Quick!" Tony whispered. "It's Madeiras. Gallup ees comin' to tak' you. Open the door!"

"I will not!" came the girl's voice, strong, defiant. "Go at once or I'll scream."

"Scream!" the Basque dared her as he put his shoulder to the door and snapped the lock. "You come wit' me."

A wave of emotion smote Madeiras as he sprang into the room. Molly had lighted a lamp. He saw her crouching against the bed, her nightgown open at the throat and half revealing the swelling bosom, the tapering limbs. The fragrance of her pink and white loveliness intoxicated the Basque. No wonder that Gallup wanted her. No wonder that Johnny had.

Molly had never been anything more than a tomboy to the Basque. He saw her now for a flesh-and-blood goddess.

The girl read his look and opened her mouth to cry out. The Basque saw her start and he leaped toward her. Molly struggled as his hand closed over her mouth.

"Don't you yell," he warned her. "You t'ink I'm pretty bad frien', eh? Some day, mebbe, you change your min'. I tak' you now. You go wit' me! What I care for Kent? What I care for Gallup? I keel my bes' frien'; but *Madre de Dios*, I die for you!"

Molly beat his hands and scratched his face, but a kitten would not have been more helpless against the strength of him. She felt herself lifted into his arms. With one hand Madeiras snatched up a pile of clothing. The next instant he was striding down the hall, carrying her as if she were no weight at all.

A hundred yards from the house the Basque turned, and shaking his fist at it he cried:

"By God, for once Tony Madeiras ees the boss!"

***TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK***

# Cooper and Candleton

## By LESLIE GORDON BARNARD

MR. AUGUSTUS G. CANDLETON leaned forward confidentially, at imminent risk of upsetting his glass of ice-water—just filled by a brisk waiter—upon Rattini's best damask. His rather heavy-set face, with the slightly protruding jaw, was filled with mingled melancholy and triumph.

"Naw, Billy," he declared, shaking his head. "It can't be! It just can't be! I'm strong for your proposition, and I reckon your car to be the best on the market at the price, but you see"—he shook his head again, staring into the innocuous and innocent depths of the ice-water, as though the answer might lurk therein—"you can't account for these women! I've lost more sales of one thing and another through some darn female butting in and queering the deal than you'd think I was a liar if I told you. A woman?—well, she'll pat you on the head, like you might say, and just about the time you stick a fountain pen in her mitt, and show her the dotted line, bang!—she lands you one below the fifth rib, as the saying is, and you go out for the count. That's how it is in business, Billy, and when it comes to the personal stuff, mark it ditto and double lead it! Not, of course, that Lulu—"

"Lulu!" repeated the local sales manager of the Credo Motors, Limited. "I thought it was some flapper by the name of—what was it—Flo some one or other?"

"Steak," ordered Mr. Candleton, waving aside the *menu* thrust under his nose. "Steak with—and plenty of 'em!"

"Onions, sir?"

"You've said it! Smother it! And French fried, and a double order of bread. And make it quick, like a good chap. No, hi, there, waiter! Cancel those onions; make it beans and have 'em unstrung. Right!" Mr. Candleton mopped his brow. "Your fault, Billy," he added, aggrievedly. "Flo didn't mind onions, you see, and—"

"Lulu does?"

"Sends her right up, Billy! Says they're plebeian! Flo was comfortable that way. Eat what you like, and use your tools according to your own code. But then, you see Flo was too easy all round; she fell for some lowdown drummer—I forget his line, but I know it was cheap. Yes, sir, threw me right over, Flo did! Now, Lulu, you've got to hand it to her! She's the goods! Put six forks, assorted sizes, by her plate and bring on the fish or meat or sweets unsuspecting, as you might say, and I give you my word, Billy, she'll pick the social winner every time. Every time I take her out I nearly choke with pride to see her in action, and to think she's mine, as you might say!"

"Congratulations in order?"

"Well, between you and I, she hasn't given the affirmative signal in so many words, but there's more language than crosses the lips by a long shot. Oh, Lulu is class—there's no doubt about it! But it's kind of hard to follow, and not get winded. Take eating for example; I manage pretty well by keeping my eyes skinned, but it means my taking only the things she does and letting her strike a blow first, as you might say. But I've learned lots of things I never expected to—from running a car to playing a jew's-harp, and I reckon I can tackle a little thing like polishing up on the rules of the road for forks and spoons. Same way with business. 'Jack of all trades,' they say, 'and master of none.' Don't you believe it! I've sold pretty nearly everything salable from Halifax to 'Frisco, and from herrings to hats, and the broad principles of salesmanship fit 'em all. So when she said 'Insurance,' it didn't feeze me a bit."

"Insurance?"

"Sure. Why not? Nice business; wear good clothes; mix in the best circles, and your own boss."

"Brokerage, then, I suppose?"

"'Augustus G. Candleton—Insurance and Real Estate—Mortgages Negotiated'—look rather well on the door, won't it? Lulu's strong for it, you see. Her girl chum's gentleman friend has just started in the business, and she gets an earful every day about how wonderful this bird is getting on! Life, I think it is. If all the prospects live until he lands 'em, he reckons to be able to retire! 'Such a gentlemanly business,' Lulu says. I tried to head her off on cars, but nothing doing. 'I had a fellow once,' she says, 'and he ran off with one of the dames he was showing a car to. I thought she was taking a long time to make up her mind to buy,' says Lulu, 'but looked at in the matrimonial light she was a fast worker! Nothing doing on you, Augustus,' she says, and it sounded like a French ultimatum to Germany about this Versehigh business. So, there you are, Billy. I'm darned sorry, too! Steak's kinda poor without onions, ain't it?"

"How do you propose starting?"

"Buying an agency. I've a bit of coin tucked away, and it's sort of providential, for this here Henry Derriger, the insurance broker—quite big man in the line—well, he's just given the insurance companies a chance to prove the value of protection to his widow. I heard his business was for sale, so I went right after it. An old dry-as-dust Johnny connected with the estate was in the office. He coughs an apology every time before he speaks. I made a pretty good story of it, and he says: 'Come in to-morrow at ten!' It's just about cinched. Gosh, look at the time! Sorry, Billy, but I've got to beat it—simply must! Have to meet Lulu at a little before eight, and it always takes me the deuce of a time getting into my glad rags! She won't go in the orchestra seats unless I dress up, and she won't stand for any other kind of seats. Nothing plebeian about Lulu! Like you to meet her some time! Thanks for the dinner. Sorry to turn down your proposition!"

"So am I, old man! Good-night!"

"*Bon soir*," called Mr. Candleton gayly as he started out. The cashier's desk stood sentinel near the exit.

Mr. Candleton would have passed by on the other side.

"Your check, please?"

Mr. Candleton paused, stared at the girl with a supercilious air. Then he frowned.

"You do not assume," he said, "that I

am endeavoring to escape my lawful debts? As it happens that gentleman back there—the lean one with the purple tie—will arrange the matter with you."

"Yes, sir!" said the cashier meekly.

Mr. Candleton passed on, nodded majestically to the head waiter, secured instant attention from the hat boy, and so reached the street. His self-confidence rose at every step, until he arrived home; until, indeed, he began to array himself in evening clothes. Then the ebb set in. It was close to low tide when he discovered a streaky mark on his only dress shirt: it completely ebbed when a final glance in the mirror gave a reflection that begat gloom. The clothes were not made that would fit Augustus G. Candleton as self-respecting clothes should fit a gentleman.

Mr. Candleton sighed ponderously, and gave it up. One thought alone sustained him. Lulu would rejoice over the insurance prospects. On the way in the taxi he planned his business cards; his business stationery. He wondered whether full face or profile would go best on the upper left hand corner of the letterheads. Enthusiasm grew apace. It carried him through the evening like some magic carpet. Lulu was gracious.

"I am so glad, my dear," she told him, as they parted. "You are sure, Augustus, there will be no hitch?"

"I'm fixing it all up at ten to-morrow!" said Augustus G. Candleton.

## II.

Mr. Cyrus G. Cooper let himself into his apartment without a single unnecessary motion. The janitor's wife, happening to pass along the hallway at the moment, bobbed a curtsy, and remained to stare. The immaculate figure vanished within.

"My," sighed Mrs. Bobbin, shaking her head, "e's blue blood, 'e is! Such a gentleman I've not seen since I came from back 'ome!"

Her mind, filled with the vision of Mr. Cooper's tall, spare figure, aquiline profile, iron-gray hair, perfect dress, accompanied her along the hallway and down to those lower quarters where her husband 'Orace came in for a silent, but invidious, appraisement.

Mr. Cooper, meanwhile, hung his hat on the peg dedicated to its use. Carefully folding his scarf, and placing it in the pocket of his light fawn raincoat, he inserted a hanger as substitute for his own shoulders, and set the whole on the peg next his hat. To upset any of these nice arrangements came near to being sacrilege. The unwitting offense of a "charlady" in this respect had very nearly disrupted the domestic economy for a week one time. A business acquaintance once called Mr. Cooper "a finicky old fool"; but the fact was that he merely carried neatness, punctuality, refinement to a fault, almost to a vice. And his words, never very many, were not less carefully chosen than his ties, or his suits, or as far as that might be, his business associates.

The insurance brokerage office whose outer entrance bore the single sign of "Cyrus G. Cooper, Insurance," was a place of method and an ordered efficiency. The two male clerks were chosen for their gentility as much as their ability; the three women for modesty in dress, well-modulated speech, deportment, and, in the last analysis, an appreciation of their tenure in the world of men and affairs as being on sufferance. Mr. Cooper, while compelled to follow the modern trend, deprecated greatly the invasion of women into the workaday world.

"My dear!" greeted Mr. Cooper now, placing a light kiss upon his wife's brow. He passed on his way; carefully divested himself of his business clothes; conducted his ablutions with a scrupulous regard for trivial details; attired himself in the conventional dress of evening; read such portions of the paper as he felt it his duty to do; and, precisely at seven, reappeared.

They dined alone—these two, but, even so, there was formality about the dinner. At one end of the table, Mr. Cooper, his shirtfront seeming almost a continuation of the stretch of tablecloth; at the other end—removed by a great field of white—Mrs. Cooper, modestly décolleté, and wearing on alternate nights the string of pearls and the diamond pendant he had given her.

"Is there anything new about the Derriger affair, Cyrus?" Mrs. Cooper asked tonight.

"It is virtually settled," replied her husband. "It is eminently desirable that an old-established agency, such as poor Derriger conducted, should not be suffered to disintegrate. It represents a lifetime of conscientious and consistent effort, and his methods—as a whole I mean—were sound and sane and untouched by any of this regrettable modern clap-trap. I feel it, indeed, incumbent upon me to assume the responsibilities of representing his clients in the manner to which they have been accustomed under his régime. Had death not come upon him so suddenly, I have no hesitation in saying that he would have chosen me as his logical successor. However, I saw Ferris to-day; he is acting temporarily, and representing the estate, and he practically admitted that I am the choice of the executors. They have kept the matter quiet, and my associates in the profession, of course, realize that the business will naturally and rightfully come to me, and have made no advances. Indeed, at the brokers' association luncheon, yesterday, when I had the sad honor of paying a slight verbal tribute to our departed confrere, I was openly acclaimed as his successor. It is only right. Will you be served to a little more chicken, my dear?"

"Besides, Cyrus," said Mrs. Cooper, allowing the maid to pass her plate for a second helping, "it will mean a lot to you to secure this extra business. Your clientele has dwindled quite a little, you know!"

Mr. Cooper raised his eyebrows, but kept himself within hand.

"My dear!" he said reproachfully.

"Oh, I know," went on his wife, "that you lost the accounts because you refused to stoop to undignified methods, but the fact remains that we have had to curtail of late. You refuse to advertise, you disapprove of trespassing, as you call it, when others call it competing. You stand on your dignity and see little whippersnappers take the business from under your very nose! With what result?—that only to-day at Mrs. Pringle's tea, Mrs. Barrie said to me: 'My dear, I thought Cyrus was buying you a car?'"

Mr. Cooper interrupted: "You should not have mentioned the fact prematurely, my dear!"

"But you told me, Cyrus, that I should have one six months ago! And then business began to get worse, and you lost that big Fardell account to Canby, and it makes me look so foolish!"

"What rejoinder did you make?"

"I told her I was—was expecting news any day," said his wife; then repeated: "It makes me look so foolish!"

Mr. Cooper considered.

"If you should be phoning her," he said at last, "you may tell her that we are getting a car at once!"

"Oh, Cyrus, aren't you a dear?"

"Please, Mary, remain calm!"

"I shall phone her right after tea about Mrs. Brixon's reception, and then I can tell her—"

"Quite casually, remember, Mary—quite casually! Any exuberance would be so obvious—and childish!"

"You are sure it is—all—right, Cyrus?"

"Is it my habit, my dear, to overstep the bounds of reasonable prudence?"

"No, no—only—supposing there was any hitch and you didn't get this agency—and—"

"My dear," said Mr. Cooper equably, "let us drop the discussion. Have I not assured you that the matter is virtually settled now? I am to meet Ferris at Derriger's office at ten to-morrow!"

## III.

In the office that still bore the name of the late Derriger, Mr. Ferris sat. Since nine he had been checking, in the painstaking manner usual to him, the renewal list, and making sure that all was well with the clientele of the departed. He opened the mail, set aside such matters as required an answer against the coming of his own stenographer at eleven, to give some time to the needs of this office of which Mr. Ferris was foster-father.

This took until twenty to ten.

Since then Mr. Ferris had been consult-

ing his watch at frequent intervals, and each time of such reference, chuckling to himself in his dry way, as though the movement of the hands toward ten gave him pleasure. Once or twice he rubbed his thin hands together and, at least thrice, gave quick little tugs at the old-fashioned side-whiskers he affected in the face of modern criticism and, he almost suspected, laughter.

His mind ran back a matter of ten years—with elephantine instinct, for all that its owner was birdlike rather than otherwise. The chuckles ceased; Mr. Ferris frowned at the conjurings of memory. A very simple, very ridiculous incident to be remembered all these years. But then, others had not forgotten.

It was a Christmas affair—one of those times when the older ones must be children again for the sake of the younger, if not for their own sake in reviving memories of youth. Poor old Derriger gave it in the week between Christmas and New Year's. He—Ferris—had been there, and Cyrus Cooper, and two or three others of the insurance world, asked in for the dinner and evening, with the object of enabling Derriger to slip away into their company, by and by, and indulge in a rubber or two of whist. Meanwhile, just after dinner, the children had their hour, as children rightly must at such a time.

They played, Mr. Ferris recalled, a very ridiculous game. "What is it like, and why?" One member went out of the room; some object was chosen by the remaining ones; and the exile allowed to return. On his asking "What is it like, and why?" the various members of the group must say, for instance, as one did in this case: "It is like Mr. Derriger, because it is square." Whoever returned that answer put the whole affair on the dangerous plane of personalities, which, Mr. Ferris told himself again now, did not excuse Cyrus Cooper for surprising every one by giving his answer: "It is like Ferris because—"

The reason was never given, in words. Some one tittered, and a terrible silence supervened. Only for a moment, though! Derriger's young hopeful, who this time was "it" and so doing the guessing, started dancing up and down with glee. "I know it—I know it—" she cried with the ingenuousness of the youthful, "it's that picture there!" At which the place had rocked with laughter, and even the culprit, Cooper, allowed himself unusual relaxation in the grip of mirth. For the little girl had guessed right.

She was pointing up at a picture from which all eyes had been sedulously averted—the picture of a cat, bewhiskered, smirking, in which Mr. Ferris, had he not followed the apostle's remark and gone away from his mirror not knowing what manner of man he was, must indeed have seen a remarkable resemblance.

Somehow the thing got out—whether, as Mr. Ferris surmised, through the tongue of Cooper or not—and the insurance world, to this day, spoke of him behind his back, and once or twice, inadvertently, before him, as "Pussy Ferris." That had stuck in his crop all these years! Vainly had he striven for some revenge; but the stately Cooper went his way in untrammeled and untouched dignity.

But now—

Mr. Ferris, perceiving that the hands of his watch were almost ten, chuckled a little again.

The insurance world might laugh, but with him, not at him, this time.

## IV.

As it happened, they went up in the same elevator together; their request to the boy to let them out at the fifth floor, if not couched in the same language or same tone, was simultaneous; they left the lift together; passed along the corridor almost elbow to elbow. At a sharp turn, a minor collision took place.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" offered Cyrus Cooper with a stiff inclination of the head.

"Same to you!" returned Augustus Candleton, nodding and smiling expansively. "Great day—eh?"

"Pleasant!" replied Mr. Cooper with a suggestion of frost in his voice that would have checked another.

"You've said it!" ejaculated Candleton happily.

They went on down the corridor, their

footsteps ringing in unison on the marble floor. They did not hear the laughter of prophetic fate in the echoes they awakened. Mr. Cooper held the lead slightly, with his long thin legs. Mr. Candleton, propelled by an urgency born of enthusiasm and not repulsion, kept his fat legs following somehow.

Before the door bearing the name of the departed, Cyrus Cooper stopped. Mr. Candleton halted also. For just the fraction of a second tall dignity looked upon short amiability with suspicion. Then Cooper made as though to knock discreetly before entering. Candleton beat him to it! His quick knock and the thrusting open of the door were almost simultaneous actions.

"Something about a policy?" queried Mr. Candleton, smiling in his enthusiasm. "Step right in, sir, and we'll fix it up for you!"

"We?" repeated Mr. Cooper, pausing on the threshold. "May I ask, sir, what connection you have with this—er—agency?"

"Sure you may ask," said the amiable Candleton. "Fact is—enter noos, as you might say, I'm buying it out since the poor old boy croaked. You can bank, though, on the best attention. Still doing business at the old stand, but under new management! Progressive without being too—too, you know—that's my motto! Why—er—is anything wrong?"

Cyrus Cooper was staring at him as one might regard a lunatic of dangerous propensities.

"There is," said Mr. Cooper at last, "a mistake somewhere! You see—I happen to be concluding the necessary arrangements to take over the agency myself."

Mr. Candleton's jaw dropped visibly.

"Naw!" he said. "Gee! I hope that old fossil hasn't double-crossed me!" He shrugged his shoulders, as if tossing from them the burden of sadness. "Well, we'll learn nothing here, friend. Let's go in and wrassle it out with the empire! Lead on, McDuff!"

He bowed to Mr. Cooper, holding open the door. Mr. Cooper hesitated, bowed stiffly once in acknowledgment, and entered. Candleton followed quickly, closing the door behind him. Nothing could long keep his buoyancy under. If things didn't materialize, Lulu would be disappointed, but—well, there was that car proposition open still. Only this morning Billy had phoned in desperation. His staff was depleted, for one reason and another—so much so that a phone call for a demonstration for this afternoon at three had no one to see to it. Would Augustus be a good scout and do this one thing for him? He knew the Credo car well. The usual commission would be in it if a sale eventuated. Augustus, being nothing if not a good scout, would. The memory helped to sustain Candleton in the present crisis. Besides, Billy was standing him a lunch; and giving him particulars then.

"Good morning," purred Mr. Ferris amiably. "Mr. Candleton—Mr. Cooper! Mr. Cooper—Mr. Candleton!"

Cooper bowed again, stiffly, as to a stranger.

Candleton grinned. "Glad to meetcha!" he said, holding out a pudgy hand. Mr. Cooper ignored it in a well-bred way. Mr. Candleton looked at his outthrust member, shook his head at it as if reproaching it for its temerity, withdrew it with ceremony, winked at Mr. Ferris, and was not at all discomfited.

"Sit down, gentlemen!" invited Mr. Ferris.

They sat—Mr. Cooper, rigidly on the edge of his chair, his hands grasping his gloves and depending upon the support of a gold-headed cane; Mr. Candleton leaning back to enjoy the comforts ordained by the maker of the horse-hair upholstered seat he adorned.

Mr. Ferris, glancing from one to the other, and return, chuckled to himself.

"Well, Ferris!" Thus Mr. Cooper, impatiently.

"Cast off!" suggested Mr. Candleton cheerfully. "Storm signals are displayed on the Great Lakes! Let's know the worst!"

## V.

"Now," said Mr. Ferris, leaning back in his chair and putting the tips of his fingers together, "I am anxious to close the matter of the agency this morning. Apart from the price, which we have already considered

and stated, the executors rely upon me to dispose of the business. It is entirely in my hands. That leaves it to the three of us here to arrange things mutually." He beamed upon them; Cooper was impassive; Candleton smiled back. "In justice to Derriger I am naturally anxious to see his carefully built-up clientele turned over to a successor capable of adequately handling it; conserving it; and extending it, because, as you know, gentlemen, every new account on an agent's books is a possible channel for further business." Mr. Ferris coughed in that apologetic manner usual with him. "At first it seemed that the field was limited to our good friend Cooper here. His fellows of the insurance world conceded it to him by common, and largely silent, consent."

Mr. Cooper nodded once in confirmation; his cane beat an impatient tattoo on the floor.

"Now, however," went on Mr. Ferris with relish that he had difficulty in concealing, "a new point arises. While not fully concurring in this first decision, I gave it tacit acceptance, but a new element presents itself. Mr. Candleton here, with what I think we may call characteristic energy, being desirous of becoming a broker, has applied for the purchase of the agency. In justice—in justice, I say, to poor Derriger—and also to the applicant—I had to take this into consideration. I have a feeling that Mr. Candleton, though new to the business, has the essential qualifications; that he would bring to it life and—your pardon, Cooper—what we might term 'pep'!"

Cyrus Cooper snorted indignantly. "Are you demented, Ferris? With every respect to—ah—Mr. Candleton here—it is preposterous to think of committing the agency to one whose knowledge and experience of the business are obviously nil!"

Mr. Ferris spread his hands; tilted his head judicially on one side.

"The point is not without merit," he returned, "and I have not forgotten it in my conclusions. On the other hand, Cooper, to be perfectly frank with you, it is common knowledge that your own brokerage business is suffering from—excuse the vulgarism—from dry rot!"

Cyrus Cooper was speechless. Dignity stiffened his backbone straighter than ever. He stammered an expostulating: "Sir!"

"The Fardell account, my friend," Ferris reminded him equably. "Canby has done well with that!"

"It was an outrage, Ferris—the methods—"

"Business methods—modern business methods, Cooper! Then there was that United Manufacturers account. I—"

Mr. Cooper rose.

"I decline to sit and listen to such impertinence!" he said. "When I require an analysis into my affairs I shall seek advice from qualified sources!"

"An analysis?" repeated the other. "If you don't hurry it up it may be a post-mortem!"

"The matter of the agency transfer shall be taken over your head to the other executors," declared Cooper, holding himself in. "I myself will make it a point to acquaint them with the ridiculous manner in which the affair is being handled."

Mr. Ferris rose, too. He said, with a touch of steel:

"You may go to them if you wish, but to no purpose! I have full authority to settle the matter this morning, and settled it shall be! The price, you both know, has been fixed, and agreed upon. Sit down a moment, Cyrus! That's right! Now my proposition is this. Here is your business, Cyrus, very nearly shot to pieces lately through lack of initiative, through ultra-conservative methods. Here is, on the other hand, Mr. Candleton, who very obviously is possessed of the modern initiative—if I may use it again, the pep necessary to balance this fault. Why not merge your interests, gentlemen? I am sure Mr. Candleton as a junior partner would be most effective! And the name—quite euphonious it would be, wouldn't it?—'Cooper & Candleton.' To such a concern, possessing the two essentials of caution and of progressiveness, I should have no hesitation in committing the future destinies of poor Derriger's business!" Ferris leaned back again, and beamed upon them.

In all this time Candleton had not spoken. Now it was a monosyllabic utterance that proceeded from him.

"Gosh!" he ejaculated weakly.

Mr. Cooper said nothing.

Ferris turned to the younger man.

"You would be willing to enter as junior partner, Mr. Candleton?" he smiled.

Mr. Candleton waved a hand flabbily.

"I ain't proud!" he asserted. "If he can stand it I guess I can! It was only Lulu I was thinking of. She's queer—Lulu is."

"Lulu?"

"I forgot," said Candleton. "My girl, you know! Swell little dame, but—class, see! Might kick if I played second fiddle. Still, I'll take a chance. I'm queered with her for fair if I don't land this agency after handing her the line I did last night. Otherwise it sounds good enough. If our friend here needs the modern touch, I'm the boy who can do it! Salesmanship?—say, I've references here!" He turned, moved by quick enthusiasm, to Mr. Cooper, offering a handful of documentary evidence. Cyrus Cooper, rising quickly, recoiled as from the taint of leprosy.

"Going?" asked Mr. Ferris amiably.

Mr. Cooper turned at the door to speak his mind.

"I have listened to many amazing propositions in my time," he said rather thickly, "but for sheer impertinence and levity this has been the most unhappy exhibition that has come within my ken. I had thought, Ferris, that you were possessed of some rudiments of sanity, or fair dealing. Your reputation will suffer for this morning's work!"

"And—yours, Cooper? It will make a pretty story—with the usual expansion of rumor and fancy to trim it nicely—how a rank outsider took this plum from under your nose. There will be laughter, friend Cyrus; laughter!" Mr. Ferris let the word linger on his tongue like a pleasant morsel.

"You will not dare let him have it!"

"Say," interrupted Candleton, rising, too, "I don't like the way you say him—meaning me, I suppose?"

The other ignored him. To Ferris, he said: "The new system of brokers' examinations will exclude him, if nothing else."

"You forget, Cyrus, that competent underlings may be had for the technical details until Mr. Candleton can become *au fait* with the business. As for the rest of it, I am, happily, not without influence in the insurance world. I shall readily stand sponsor for Mr. Candleton!" He turned to the latter, smilingly. "If you are ready to sign, Mr. Candleton."

"You betcha," murmured that gentleman readily.

Mr. Cooper hesitated, tried to speak, ended by making an angry exit, and doing violence to his own sense of good breeding by slamming the door fiercely behind him.

"He seems kinda mad!" suggested Mr. Candleton, staring at the glass panel to assure himself it was still intact.

"If you only knew him," chortled Mr. Ferris, supremely happy, "you would know just how mad he is! I'll step across the hall and ask Mr. Hines to come and witness this document if you'll excuse me!"

Fifteen minutes later Augustus Candleton emerged from the office of the Derriger agency with a sense of burden and of triumph. The agency was his. He hurried to a phone; tried to get Lulu. She was out. Up to twelve thirty he had received ten assurances from the wearied landlady at her boarding house, at a cost of fifty cents and a broken commandment or two.

Then he had to meet Billy Doran, the local salesmanager of the Credo Motors.

"Here's the address, Gus!" said Doran after congratulations and the soup course had been disposed of. "The old girl phoned first thing this morning. She's always liked the lines of the Credo, so she's prejudiced! Babbled on as happily as a child with a toy! I gather her hubby has given her *carte blanche* to go ahead and get what she wants, and he'll foot the bill. It's easy money, boy! By the bye, there's a note of encouragement for an embryo insurance broker in it. This fellow Cooper is quite well known in that line!"

Mr. Candleton peppered his side of fish until it assumed a dusky hue. He was staring vacantly at Billy Doran.

"Great snakes, Billy!" he articulated at last. "I guess little Willie doesn't make that sale! Count me out on that demonstration!" He repeated the substance of the morning's conference.

Doran's face fell.

"You'll go, just the same," he decided at last. "I've no one else to send, and the old boy won't be home, anyway! Run her round a bit, give her a good line, and I'll bet the thing's done before ever the old boy shows his nose! You won't fail me, Augustus?"

Mr. Candleton sneezed violently.

"Waiter," he called when he could get his breath, "remove this confounded sea serpent, and tell the cook to go and smother him in his own pepper!"

"Pepper, sir? Ah! I think perhaps, sir, you—"

"Who's paying you to think? Take it away, and bring me steak and onions—no, steak without onions! It's a great life, Billy! Well, I'll go, as you put it up fair and square to me—but if anything goes wrong address me care the jail. I've had more lip from that old codger than goes down easily with Augustus G. Candleton!"

## VI.

As a general thing, Cyrus Cooper lunched in the down town district that accommodated the office building, in which his was one of several insurance brokerages. His invariable rule was to leave the office at ten minutes to one, and, promptly at one, hand the hat boy in the "Brokers' Restaurant" his hat, or hat and coat in season, also his cane, and bid him exercise every care. At which, invariably, too, the boy would say meekly: "Yes, Mr. Cooper," and wink behind his patron's back at the cashier, whose desk was within signaling distance.

To-day he reached his office shortly after the noon whistles had blown. He passed through the general office without a deflection of his glance, and entering the private sanctum bearing his own name, closed the door behind him abruptly.

"The chief is annoyed over something," said Prendergast, the chief clerk.

"It seems so," admitted Miss Jenkins, the stenographer, to whom the remark was addressed.

The matter rested there. The outer office reflected the rather silent dignity of the inner shrine. There was a quietness, a restraint, an atmosphere, in fact, that gave to the visitor a sense of affluence, and big business of a conservative kind. None would suspect, on entering, that they looked upon an institution that was rapidly succumbing to the business equivalent of arterial sclerosis. Time was when the two male clerks, the two women clerks, and the predecessor of the present office boy, were hard put to make the hours of the day go around. Now, with the gradual dropping off of accounts—one here, one there—little of prosperity remained but the atmosphere. The modern world was a world of transition and change; a world, in fact, for whom old gods were dead. Cyrus Cooper would have been very frosty toward any one who would have hinted that a cutting in two of the small staff—

Cyrus Cooper at this moment was sitting in his private office, unmindful of the unopened mail before him, or the routine so religiously followed through months and years. A bulldog tenacity gripping past traditions, customs, practices, habits had kept his heart loyal long after his reason had rebelled. Last night Mary had joined the uprising. To-day Ferris, the impertinent little creature, had touched, with ungloved hand, the very sore itself. A calendar, one bearing, indeed, poor old Derriger's name, stared down at him—a chaste calendar, which the most conservative bank might find unobjectionable in any detail.

Quick anger came again to Cyrus Cooper. To think of such an end to all Derriger's work! Some day his—Cooper's—own clientele would go the same way—if it did not disintegrate before that day if his own dissolution came. He was not an old man by any means—only a little past the sixty mark—but a sense of age was present with him now. The world of men and affairs—as he had known it—was leaving him behind.

He had heard himself called a fossil. Was he? Why did he allow such thoughts to pierce his defences to-day? Perhaps the youthful enthusiasm of the impossible Candleton had disturbed him, representing, in caricature, the modern world he detested. Perhaps it was Mary. Yes, more than anything else, it was Mary.

There had been a time when he could

have afforded the things she craved, the things, indeed, which had been woven into the web and woof of their dreams—travel, a little luxury—expressing itself in these latter days in the wish for a motor car, too. Then he had said: "Just a little more time, dear, and our position will be secure!" And the time had passed, and the modern world of business with its methods which he so deprecated had come and eaten into his affairs, until the security had gone and with it many of the dreams. Mary had been so patient, too. And so easily pleased—quite childish in her delight over the matter of the car last night. She should still have her car; some of the capital he had intended to invest in purchasing the Derriger business would go into it and its upkeep. That was easily said, but he knew that she would never consent to it. With the agency secured, and its certain possibilities—the accounts were picked ones, and few would be lost—new prosperity might be looked for—but now.

A knock sounded at the door, interrupting his thoughts.

"Come in, Prendergast." He knew the familiar *tap-tap*.

Prendergast's rather stooped shoulders—not due to age, but to an habitual roundness of posture—and Prendergast's bespectacled face looked upon him. Their owner flushed.

"Well, Prendergast?"

"Your pardon, sir, but I—do you know it is after one?"

"Dear me!" stammered Cyrus. "I did not realize! Thank you, Prendergast, but I do not really feel like luncheon to-day!"

"You should have something, sir! Let me send the boy—"

"No, do not trouble! Perhaps I may drop over later on!"

He went, indeed, at one thirty, slipping unobtrusively into the restaurant.

"You're late, sir," piped the check boy in surprise.

"Yes, Jimmy!"

He sought a secluded table, glad that the usual crowd of associates were gone. Ferris might have spread word. He ate a light lunch; rose hastily to leave. At the door he met Sammy Warriner—who represented a British marine company.

"Hullo, Cooper!" greeted Sammy. "Say, what's this rumor going round? Hear that you lost out on that Derriger business to some jazzy young person. Ferris has been having the boys laughing their sides sore!"

Cooper mumbled some incoherent remark, and made his escape. He returned to the office; spent the afternoon over personal accounts; shook his head in an unaccustomed way.

At four, he put on hat and coat, and quitted the office for the day. The weather was fine and brisk—something of spring in it, although summer had almost seemed to arrive prematurely this April. The roads were clear and clean, and invitingly washed by the spring rains. Several men he knew passed in cars. He declined a lift. He preferred to walk uptown to the apartment, centrally located, where he resided. He found in the crisp air, the mellow spring sunshine flooding from the west, no exhilaration.

He was going up, rather lagging in his pace, with a touch of Prendergast's stoop about his shoulders—to face Mary.

## VII.

Augustus G. Candleton had kept his appointment at three punctually, driving a demonstration Credo car. On the way from the garage he turned matters over in his mind; salesmanship beckoned, and insurance was for the moment forgotten. Even Lulu, whom the phone had failed to "raise," was in a distant region of his mentality.

Said the temporary salesman of the Credo Motor Sales, in self-communion:

"Augustus boy, you are dealing now with women! Item one: Mrs. Cooper has asked for the demonstration. Item two: She mentions that her friend, Mrs. Barrie, has recommended the Credo to her. Item three: It is a fine afternoon. Conclusion: The danger of two females on one proposition is reduced to nix—barring the usual contrariness of the creatures! I will suggest," said Augustus to himself, "that we take a long drive to show the merits of the car, and, if possible, include Mrs. Barrie."

The conclusion proved a wise one. The suggestion, deftly made, was quickly taken up, and Mrs. Barrie was installed in the rear seat with the prospect. Candleton cleverly deferred to her opinion, in which, however, he was the molding power. Mrs. Barrie's wisdom in operating a Credo was extolled; every good point was agreed upon. The matter was practically settled during the first two miles. Afterward, tactfully, the salesman became, to all intents and purposes, merely a chauffeur. The two women gossiped and chatted. Candleton's quick ear was alert to forestall any detrimental change of conversation. But it kept within safe limits, the long-deferred purchase could not be kept out, of course. Cyrus was a dear, Mrs. Cooper enthused. That led to greater confidences. The improved business prospects followed in smooth and logical sequence.

"Between ourselves," confided Mrs. Cooper, laughing happily, "with times—as they are, you know—Cyrus wouldn't have felt it opportune to buy now had it not been that this new development of the Derriger agency came along. Cyrus is a dear, but so old-fashioned, and he finds it so hard to compete, except with the long-established accounts of conservative firms. These new Derriger accounts will be of the kind he can best hold. He's too old, my dear, to change his ideas now, and he's been so brave through it all."

With the insight of an understanding wife—and suddenly embarked upon that sea of confidences, of which the farther shore is often very distant and alluring—Mrs. Cooper pictured Cyrus as well as if she had ushered her hearers into his office that afternoon.

"I don't know why I've told you all this, my dear," she said at last, bidding goodby at the door of Mrs. Barrie's residence, "but I feel now that things are going differently, and I've been aching to express myself all these months. Good-by, dear!"

The women kissed. Candleton, turning to close the door, saw in this woman of fifty something of the radiance and hope of youth, and in her eyes a softness of shadow that suggested moisture.

He drove her home to her apartment.

"Thank you," she said, "I will phone you confirmation of the order to-morrow, if I may. You see my husband must finally approve and—"

"Sure!" nodded Augustus. "I understand!"

He drove off.

"Good-by, commission!" he sighed. "Billy boy, I've done you bad this trip. Guess I better think of insurance for a change. Gee, I haven't phoned Lulu either! The little girl'll think I've flown the coop!" He felt a vague uneasiness that induced an all-consuming mental process. A traffic policeman brought him to earth.

"Hey, you!" said the angry officer. "What's up with you, anyhow? Drunk?"

"No!" said Augustus, soberly. "Just crazy!"

At the garage he turned in the car, and sought a phone. Cooper answered it.

"Candleton speaking," said Augustus, briefly. "About that darned agency, I've been thinking it through. I'm not hep to the business at all and would probably gum up the works for fair. Eh?—oh, it's just because Lulu wanted me to try the line—yeh, Lulu — L-u-l-u — wife? — heck, no—girl! Classy little piece! Glad to have you meet her some time. Well, anyway, I've a notion old Dry-as-dust—Ferris, isn't it?—had a joker up his sleeve. Had it in for you I guess, and made me his tool. I'm not stuck on that kinda thing, somehow! Look, if you wanta buy the agency offa me now, there's nothin' I know to stop us. What's that?—sure, same price—no, no—in fact, it's quite a favor! I guess maybe I can find some line'll suit me better. Right you are — at twelve-thirty to-morrow? Brokers' Lunch? I'll be there. Don't mention it, old top!"

Mr. Candleton regarded his reflection in a bit of a tinny mirror near by.

"Crazy is right!" said Augustus to Mr. Candleton.

## VIII.

PUNCTUALLY at twelve-thirty next day they met.

"Early to-day, sir?" said the hat boy.

"Making up for yesterday, Jimmy," said Cyrus Cooper affably. They went in.

Augustus G. Candleton was very quiet.

"Mr. Candleton," said Cyrus Cooper, over the soup course, "I have this morning been talking to the manager of the Credo Sales. Went in to see about that—car. He told me a remarkable story about you, sir! Yesterday afternoon you demonstrated a car to my wife!"

"Yes!" admitted Augustus shortly.

"You not only demonstrated the car, sir! You sold it to her. All that remained was my sanction. To-day she is happy in the possession of a car. That, sir, is undoubtedly due to you—undoubtedly! You have placed me under an embarrassing sense of obligation. Ah, you see, Mr. Candleton, I managed, by the exercise of a little diplomacy, to worm the story out of Mr. Doran! He himself confessed to be puzzled. He is wavering between two opinions—one that your sense of losing a sale was too great to allow anything to stand in the way, and the other that a more altruistic motive actuated you. I—knowing, sir, that my wife, with a slight measure of indiscretion of which we will say nothing, revealed the condition of affairs—I incline to the latter view. I have come, sir, to tell you I must decline to accept your sacrifice. You see, I happen also to have heard amplification of your somewhat vague remarks about Miss—Miss—you will pardon the familiarity due to ignorance of the surname—Miss Lulu? I trust that no serious breach—"

Augustus grinned, in a doleful way.

"I told her," he admitted. "She handed me an earful! If I couldn't do this for her, I needn't come round, an' all that! Funny creatures—women—eh?"

"At times," agreed Mr. Cooper, "very extraordinary! Under the circumstances, you must see very clearly that I cannot take advantage of your exceptionally kind offer! I will have to manage the—car—some other way!"

Candleton shook his head. Cooper insisted.

"There's one way out," suggested Candleton, brightening at last. "I wasn't strong for it yesterday when the old josser sprang it, but it would fix us both up!"

"You mean," began Mr. Cooper, in a strange voice.

"Partnership!" said Mr. Candleton.

He smiled ingenuously at Cooper, a smile that could be born only of a big heart.

Candleton looked about the room. It was filling with men who knew him—who might have a greater laugh than ever if—

"Hang them all," declared Cooper, startling the waiter into a near catastrophe. He said after a space: "You may phone Miss—er—Lulu—if you wish that you are to become a partner in an old established brokerage firm, and—"

"Gosh!" ejaculated Augustus, quickly. "You're some speed, after all. I'll just go and phone if you'll excuse me!" He hesitated. Desire seemed to die within him. "Maybe I'll wait," he said. "It'll teach her a lesson! She was a bit sharp!"

The waiter thrust a *menu* under his nose.

"Steak," ordered Mr. Candleton, "steak with—no, drat it all, without onions!" He hesitated. "Hang Lulu," he said, "just imagine being condemned to that for life! Let her go! She's too durned uncomfortable! Hi, waiter, make that with onions! I hope"—he turned to his partner—"I hope you don't mind onions," he said.

"I'm particularly fond of them, sir," said Cyrus Cooper.

"Bully!" cried Augustus Candleton. "Who said we hadn't something in common? Shake!"

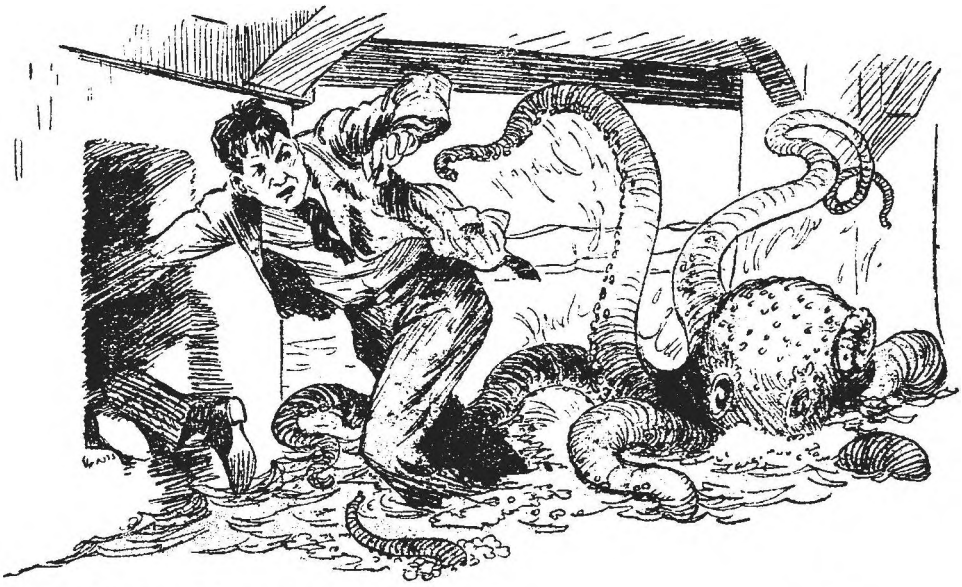
Mr. Cooper—rather unwillingly—but with such grace as might be—shook. Then his eye, roving the room nervously, caught sight of a hated object. Ferris was staring straight across at them. A little flicker of a smile touched Mr. Cooper's lips. The venom in his responding glance was lost in defiance, not untouched with triumph.

His prospective partner, watching, was granted insight.

"We'll make old Dry-as-dust's joke a boomerang for fair!" declared Augustus G. Candleton, emphatically.

"You've said it!" agreed Cyrus H. Cooper, with unprecedented vigor, and a lapse of speech for which his sense of fitness offered no rebuke. "Shake again!"

Ferris, watching the little ceremony, had the look of a man who, essaying to emulate the serpent, finds, of a sudden, that his fangs have been drawn.



# The Four Stragglers*

## By FRANK L. PACKARD

*Author of "The Miracle Man," "Pawned," etc.*

CHAPTER XVII (*continued*).

THE WARP AND THE WOOF.

CAPTAIN FRANCIS NEWCOMBE drew slightly back. He made no other movement. He said nothing. His eyes remained riveted on Locke's face.

"I was almost done in that night," said Locke. "I'd had two days and two nights of it. I did not hear all you said—what particular place it was, for instance, that had been robbed. I heard of the share that each of you had played in the affair. I saw your faces.

"I heard the Frenchman, a self-admitted crook, hail you as a greater than himself—yes, as a greater even than any criminal in all France. I heard you check him with your name on his lips. I heard him call your attention to my presence there.

"I heard you say you had not forgotten—and in a flare light I saw you with your rifle across your knees, its muzzle only a few feet away from my head. Then in the ensuing darkness I was lucky enough to be able to wriggle silently back a few yards in among the trees—and a second later I saw the flash of your rifle shot."

Locke stopped. His lips were dry. He touched them with the tip of his tongue.

The two men stood eying each other. Neither moved.

Locke spoke again:

"As I crawled out of that thicket I swore that I would pay you for that shot if it took all my life to bring you to account. I did not know your name, I did not know where you came from or where you lived; but I knew your face—and I was sure, as we are sometimes strangely sure of the future, that

*This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for February 3.*

some time, in some place, you and I would meet again.

"But it was four years before we did; and in those four years, during which I have traveled a great deal on my father's business, no man's face, in a crowd, or merely in passing on the street, whether here or abroad, but that I searched in the hope that it might be yours. And then I saw you—in London just a few days before *we* sailed. I followed you to your apartment, and I saw the other two—Runnells, and the Frenchman, whose name I discovered was Paul Cremarre.

"I secured an introduction to you at your club, and I learned from you that you were sailing within a day or so on a certain ship. I told you I was sailing on the same ship. Within an hour after I had left you at the club, I did two things: I booked passage on that ship, and I engaged a man who was recommended to me as one of the best private detectives in England.

"With the knowledge that you *were* a criminal, it was only a question of a short time then before the detective would unearth your record, or that you would be caught in some new venture; and meanwhile, leaving him to work up your 'history,' I crossed with you, and suggested the yachting trip as I did not intend to let you out of my sight again until you were trapped. And I think, but for the fact that you have been told now, that would have been accomplished even more quickly than I had expected.

"At one of the stops that I purposely made on the way down the coast on the Talofa, I received a letter from the detective mailed in London the day after we sailed. He said that developments had been such that he was working in conjunction with Scotland Yard, and that he expected to be able to send me a very *satisfactory* report within a day or so."

Captain Newcombe took his cigarette case from his pocket for the second time—but now he calmly lighted a cigarette.

"And so," he remarked smoothly, "just at the moment when, after four long years, you are about to reap the fruits of your labor, you tell me to go. Where? Into the trap—waiting for me over there on the mainland?"

"No," said Locke bitterly. "Where you will; you and Runnells—and Paul Cremarre. We'll have no more trouble from any of you here."

Newcombe paused suddenly in the act of lifting his cigarette to his lips.

"This Cremarre you speak of," he said, "what makes you think he is here?"

"Because I expected him to be here," Locke replied. "He was one of the three of you. He could not very well form part of your retinue as Runnells did. He would have to come separately. I know he is here because I saw a man wearing a mask last night. I have reason to know it was not you; and since I superintended the packing of Runnells's baggage and have also seen Runnells himself, I know—for reasons that need not be explained—that it was not Runnells."

"I see," said Newcombe. "So it must have been this Paul Cremarre—since the three would be here together. I regret that I was not fortunate enough to have the advantage of your viewpoint, even though you honor me with the credit of having arranged all these little details. And so, at the moment of your supreme success we are to go—we three. May I ask why this change of heart?"

Howard Locke reached into his pocket and took out a faded envelope that was torn at one end.

"These," he said, his voice rasping hoarsely again, "are Polly's papers—her birth certificate, the marriage certificate of her parents—the proof of perhaps the most contemptible and scoundrelly crime you have ever committed; I say 'perhaps' because there may be lower depths of beastliness and inhumanity of which only a mind such as yours could conceive.

"You know where these papers were found. Besides using Polly as your cat's-paw and your tool, making her innocence serve your vile ends, you robbed her of her claim to even honest parentage!" His face had grown white to the lips, his voice was almost out of control. "And yet it is Polly—*Polly Gray*—who is saving you now! I have no change of heart. I never, even on

that night in the thicket, wanted to square my account with you as I do now.

"But for Polly's sake I cannot do it. I love her more than I hate you. I want to save her from the sorrow and distress she would suffer if she knew the truth of what has happened here; and, above all, I want to save her from the misery and shame of having her name publicly connected with yours were you brought as a common criminal to stand in the dock.

"And so you are going—where I do not know. Not London, or anywhere else, as Captain Francis Newcombe any more—for you would no longer dare do that with the police at last hot on the investigation of your career. But you are going out of her life never to contaminate it again.

"And this is the bargain that I make with you—that she shall never hear from you again. I compound no felony with you. I have no power to hold you, even were I an officer of the law, without specific evidence of a specific crime. That such evidence will inevitably be forthcoming is certain, but for the moment there is no warrant for your arrest.

"You will make the excuse for your departure as I have suggested—and later on a brief notice of the death of Captain Francis Newcombe in some distant place will account for your continued silence, and remove you out of her life."

Newcombe blew a smoke ring in the air and watched it meditatively.

"Excellent!" he murmured. "And if I refuse? To save Polly you would have to call your bloodhounds off."

"It is too late for that," said Locke sternly. "And even if it were not, it would be better that Polly should suffer even the shame of publicity than that you should remain in any way in touch with her life."

"I see!" murmured Newcombe again. "But with exposure as inevitable as you say it is, it is too bad that Polly should—er—nevertheless suffer her share of this shameful publicity whether I go or not."

"You fence well," Locke observed with a grim smile. "Scotland Yard sooner or later *will* know, but they will not make public what they know until they have laid hands upon their man. It is *your* freedom that is at stake. I told you I did not think you would venture to return to London."

"Locke," said Newcombe softly, "permit me to return the compliment—but also with reservations. You are clever—but having overlooked one little detail, as so often happens even to the cleverest of us all, your scheme as regards keeping Polly in ignorance of my unworthiness falls to the ground. That envelope in your hand—I was wondering—it simply occurred to me—how Polly was to be informed that—er—her name is—I think you said—Gray."

"I had not overlooked it," Locke answered evenly. "Polly's parentage is a matter that precedes your entry into her life by many years; it is a matter that is logically within the knowledge of this Mrs. Wickes. I shall cable London to-day. There will be means of securing Mrs. Wickes's confession on this point. These papers will come from her."

"Ah, yes!" said Captain Francis Newcombe gently. "Quite so! Perhaps, after all, *I* am the one who overlooked detail. But if by any chance this Mrs. Wickes could not be found—what then?"

Locke studied the other's face. It was impassive; no, not quite that—there was something that lurked around the corners of the man's mouth—like a hint of mockery.

"In that case," he said steadily, "I should have done my best to save her from the knowledge of what you are, for I should have to tell her; but meanwhile you will have gone from here, and, as I have already said, she will be saved the brutal notoriety that would attach to her wherever she went, and until she died mar her life, if Captain Francis Newcombe's 'case' were blazoned abroad from the criminal courts of England—and that, in the last analysis, is what really matters."

He thrust the envelope abruptly back into his pocket, and as abruptly took out his watch and looked at it. "I do not want to detain the boat. You know where to find Cremarre. Get him, and take him with you. Your baggage has been searched—so has Runnells's.

"I do not for a moment think you found that which specifically brought you to this

house. I doubt, indeed, now that Mr. Marlin is dead, if it ever will be found by anybody. But in so far as you are concerned, assurance will be made doubly sure—the three of you will be subjected to a *personal* search before you are landed on the other side."

He snapped his watch back into his pocket. "Shall I find out if Miss Marlin is able to see you?"

Newcombe examined the glowing tip of his cigarette with every appearance of nonchalance—but the brain of the man was seething in a fury of action. He was beaten—in so far as the existence, the entity of a character known as Captain Francis Newcombe was concerned—he was beaten.

This cursed, meddling fool had beaten him. Damn that shot that he had missed in the darkness. He could not draw his revolver and fire another and kill this man—not *now*. To do that here would be suicide.

And, besides, there was still half a million dollars. Quite a sop! Mrs. Wickes didn't count one way or the other—but Paul Cremarre—that was awkward. The island must be left in quiet and repose so far as anything pertaining to the attempted robbery was concerned—an incident that with his departure was closed.

Cremarre must be accounted for. Well, the *truth* was probably the safest, since denial would only result in a search for a *third* man that Locke knew had been here. That Locke should think that Paul Cremarre had come here as part of the prearranged plan was probably all the better. It left no lingering doubts.

He looked up—his eyes cold and steady.

"I regret, I shall *always* regret, that I missed that shot," he remarked deliberately; "but for whatever satisfaction it will bring you, I admit now that you have beaten me. I agree to your terms. I will go: so will Runnells—but I can't take Paul Cremarre. He is dead. He died this morning. A rather horrible death. I found him on the shore a little way from the water's edge, his clothes in ribbons—in fact, one of his coat sleeves was completely torn away and—"

"The man I was looking for had a white shirt sleeve," said Locke quietly.

"Well, your search is ended then, if that will give you any further satisfaction," Newcombe declared gruffly. "His white shirt sleeve was the least of it. His face and throat were covered with round, purplish blotches, and the man was absolutely mangled. He had the appearance of having been *crushed*—as they say a python crushes a victim in its folds.

"And, damn it, that's not far from what happened! How he had first come into contact with the monster I don't know, but he had been in a fight with a gigantic octopus, and had evidently just managed to crawl ashore out of the thing's reach temporarily, and had died there." Newcombe laughed unpleasantly. "The reason I know this is because I saw the creature—the tide was higher, of course, when I found the body—come back and carry off its prey. You will pardon me, perhaps, if I do not describe it in detail. It—er—wasn't nice."

Locke stared at the other for a moment.

"That's a rather strange story," he said slowly. "But I can't see where it would do you any good to lie now."

Newcombe helped himself to another cigarette, lighted it, and suddenly flung a mocking laugh at Locke.

"No," he said, "I'm afraid that's the trouble—it wouldn't do me any good to lie now. And so I might as well tell you, too, that there's no use sending that cable to London about Mrs. Wickes, either. Mrs. Wickes is also dead.

"For reasons best known to myself, I did not choose to tell Polly about the woman's death, so I fear now that, lacking that estimable old hag's coöperation in the resurrection of those papers, you will have to resort to telling Polly, after all, a little something about her cherished guardian. However, Locke, on the main count, that of notoriety, if it depends upon Scotland Yard ever getting their man, I think I can give you my personal guarantee that she will never be—"

He stopped, and whirled sharply around.

One-half of the French window was swaying inward.

With a low cry, Locke sprang past the other.

"Polly!" he cried.

She was clutching at the edge of the door, her form drooping lower and lower as though her support were evading her and she could not keep pace with its escape, her face a deathly white, her eyes half closed.

Locke caught her as she fell, gathered her in his arms and carried her to a couch. She had fainted. As he looked hurriedly around for some means of reviving her, Newcombe spoke at his elbow:

"Permit me." He was proffering the water in a flower vase from which he had thrown out the flowers.

Mechanically, Locke took it, and began to sprinkle the girl's face.

"Too bad!" said Newcombe pleasantly. "Er—hardly necessary, I fancy, for me to explain my sudden departure for England to her—what? I'll say *au revoir*, Locke—merely *au revoir*. We may meet again. Who knows—in another four years! And I'll leave you to make my adieus to Miss Marlin."

Locke made no reply.

The door closed. Captain Francis Newcombe was gone.

Polly stirred now on the couch. Her eyes opened, rested for an instant on Locke's, then circled the room in a strange, quick, fascinated way, as if fearful of what she might see yet still impelled to look.

"He—he's gone?" she whispered.

"Yes," Locke answered softly. "Don't try to talk, Polly."

She shook her head. A smile came, bravely forced.

"I—I saw him from upstairs—on the lawn coming toward the house," she said. "After a little while when he did not come in, I went down to find him. I did not see him anywhere, and—and I walked along the veranda, and I heard your voices in here—heard something you were saying. I—I was close to the door then—and—somehow I—I couldn't move—and—I wanted to cry out—and I couldn't. And—and I heard—all. And then I felt myself swaying against the window, and somehow it gave way and—and—"

She turned her face away and buried it in her hands.

Something subconscious in Howard Locke's mind seemed to be at work. He was staring at the French window. It had given way. It hadn't any socket for the bolt at top or bottom. Strange it should have been that window! He brushed his hand across his eyes.

"Polly," he said tenderly, and kneeling, drew her to him until her head lay upon his shoulder.

And then her tears came.

And neither spoke.

But her hand had crept into his and held it tightly, like that of a tired and weary child who had lost its way—and found it again.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE TIME LOCK OF THE SEA.

LOW tide at three fifteen! Captain Francis Newcombe, in the stern of a small motor boat, drew his flashlight from his pocket and consulted his watch. Five minutes after two. He nodded his head in satisfaction. Just right!

And the night was just right—just cloudy enough to make of the moonlight an ally rather than a foe. It disclosed the island there looming up ahead now perhaps a mile away; it would not disclose so diminutive a thing as this little motor boat out here on the water creeping in toward the shore.

The boat was barely large enough to accommodate the baggage, piled forward, and still leave room for Runnells and himself. Also the boat leaked abominably; moreover the engine, not only decrepit but in bad repair, was troublesome and spiteful. Newcombe shrugged his shoulders. The engine was Runnell's lookout; that was why, as a matter of fact, Runnells was here at all. As for the rest, what did it matter? The boat had been bought for the proverbial song, and it served its present purpose.

Again he changed his position, but his eyes narrowed now as they fixed on Runnells's back. Runnells sat amidships where he could both nurse the engine and manipulate the little steering wheel at his side. Runnells was a necessary evil. He—Newcombe—did not know how to run the engine.

Therefore, he had been obliged to bring Runnells along, and therefore Runnells would participate, after all, in the old fool's half million—*temporarily*. Afterward—well, there were so many things that might happen when Runnells had lost his present usefulness!

Runnells spoke now abruptly.

"It's pretty hard to make out anything ashore," he said; "but if we've hit it right, we ought to be about heading for a little above the boathouse. Can you pick up anything?"

"Nothing but the outline of the island against the sky," Newcombe answered. "We're too far out yet."

Runnells's sequence of thought was obviously irrelevant and disconnected.

"The blinking swine!" he muttered savagely. "Stripped to the pelt and searched, I was—and you, too! And kicked ashore like a dog! Gawd, it's too bad they ain't going to know they'll have had the trick turned on 'em after all! I'd give a good bit of my share to see Locke's face if he knew. He wouldn't think himself such a wily bird maybe!"

"You're a bit of a fool, Runnells," said Newcombe shortly.

His train of thought had been interrupted. Runnells had suggested another—Locke. Newcombe's hands clenched suddenly, fiercely in the darkness. *Locke!* Some day, somewhere—but not now; not until the days and months, yes, even years, if necessary, were past and gone, and Locke had forgotten Captain Francis Newcombe, and Scotland Yard had forgotten—he would meet Locke again.

And when that time came there would be no ammunition *wasted* as there had been in that damned thicket that night! *Locke!* The fool doubtless thought that he had been completely master of the situation and of Captain Newcombe—even to the extent of *obliterating* him. Well, perhaps he had!

It was quite true that the clubs of London, and—yes, for instance, the charming old Earl of Cloverley, would know Captain Francis Newcombe no more—but *Shadow Varne* still lived, and Shadow Varne, with half a million dollars, even in a new environment, wherever it might be, did not present so drear and uninviting a prospect. Ha, ha! *Locke!*

Locke could wait—that was a *pleasure* the future held in store! What counted now, the only thing that counted was getting the money actually into his possession—that, and the assurance that the trail was smothered and lost behind him. Well, the former was only a matter of, say, an hour or so at the most now; and the latter left nothing to be desired, did it?

He smiled with cool, ironic complacency. Locke, having in mind Scotland Yard, would expect him to disappear as effectually and as rapidly as possible. Locke ought not to be disappointed! He *had* disappeared; he and Runnells—and, equally important, their luggage. One was sometimes too easily traced by luggage—especially with that infernally efficient checking system they employed on the railroads here in America!

It had been rather simple. When Runnells and the luggage and himself had all been dumped with equal lack of ceremony on a wharf over there on the mainland, he had had some of the negroes that were loitering around carry the luggage into a sort of storage shed that was on the dock, and merely saying that he would send for his things, he and Runnells had unostentatiously allowed themselves to be swallowed up by the city. And then they had separated.

The rest had been a matter of detail—detail in which Runnells, with the experience of years, was particularly efficient. A purchase here, a purchase there—quite innocent purchases in themselves—and later on a man, *not two men*, but one man, a man who did not at all look like Runnells, seeing the chance of picking up a bargain in a second-hand motor boat somewhere along the water front had bought it and gone away with it. Later on again, but not until after nightfall, not until nine o'clock, in fact, he—Newcombe—had "sent" for the luggage—by the very simple expedient of forcing an entry into the shed and loading it into the motor boat that Runnells had brought alongside the dock.

Thereafter, Runnells, the luggage, and himself had disappeared. Surely Locke ought to be quite satisfied, he—Newcombe—was doing his best to guarantee Polly

against any unseemly publicity in connection with Scotland Yard! And he would continue to do so! With any kind of luck he would be away from the island here again long before daylight; then, say, a few nights' cruising along the coast, laying up by day, and then, as circumstances dictated, by railroad, or whatever means were safest, a final—

With a smothered oath Newcombe snatched at the gunwale of the boat for support as he was thrown suddenly forward from his seat. The little craft seemed to stagger and recoil as from some vicious blow that had been dealt it, and then as he recovered his balance it surged forward again with an ugly, rending, tearing sound along the bottom planks, rocking violently—then an even keel again—and silence.

Runnells had stopped the engine.

"My Gawd," he cried wildly, "we've gone and done it!"

Newcombe was on his feet peering through the darkness to where Runnells, who, after stopping the engine, had sprung forward from his seat, was now groping around beneath the pile of luggage.

"A reef, eh?" said Newcombe coolly. "Well, we got over it. We're in deep water again. Carry on!"

Runnells's voice came back full of fear.

"We're done, we are," he mumbled. "I stopped the engine the minute she hit, but she had too much way on her—that's what carried her over. She's bashed a hole in her the size of your head. She won't float five minutes."

"Start her ahead again, then!" Newcombe's voice snapped now.

"It won't do any good," Runnells answered as he stumbled back to his former place. "She won't anywhere near make the shore—it's half a mile at least."

"Quite so!" Newcombe agreed. "But, in that case, we won't have so far to swim!"

The engine started up again.

"It ain't as though we didn't know there was reefs"—Runnells was stuttering his words—"only we'd figured with our light draft we wouldn't any more than scrape one, anyhow, and it wouldn't do us any harm. But she's rotten, that's what she is—plain rotten and putty! And we must have hit a sharp ledge of rock. Gawd, we've a foot of water in us now!"

"Yes," Newcombe said calmly. "Well, don't blubber about it! We'll get ashore—and we'll get away again. There's half a dozen skiffs and things of that sort stowed away in the boathouse that are never used now. One of them will never be missed, and we can at least get far enough away from the island by daybreak not to be seen, and eventually we'll make the other side even if it is a bit of a row."

"Row!" ejaculated Runnells.

"Yes," Newcombe asserted curtly. "Why not—since we *have* to? We can't steal a motor boat whose loss would be discovered, can we?"

"My Gawd!" said Runnells.

The water was sloshing around Newcombe's feet; the boat had already grown noticeably sluggish in its movement. He cast an appraising eye toward the land. It was almost impossible to judge the distance. Runnells had said half a mile a few minutes ago. Call it a quarter of a mile now. But Runnells was quite right in one respect; it was certain now that the boat would scuttle before the shore was reached.

"How far can you swim, Runnells?" he demanded abruptly.

"It ain't that," choked Runnells. "I can swim all right; it's—"

"It was just a matter of whether your body would be washed up on the shore, which would be equally as bad as though the boat stranded there for the edification of our friend Locke," drawled Newcombe. "But since you can swim that far, and since the boat's got to sink, let her sink here in deep water where she won't keep anybody awake at night wondering about her—or us. Stop the engine again!"

"But the luggage," said Runnells, "I—"

"It will sink out of sight readily, but run a rope through the handles and lash the stuff to the boat so it won't drift ashore—yes, and anything else that's loose!" Newcombe added tersely. "I can't swim a quarter of a mile with portmanteaus! Stop the engine!"

"Strike me pink!" exclaimed Runnells faintly as he obeyed and again stumbled forward to the luggage.

Newcombe sat down and began to unlace his boots. The water was nearly level with the bottom of the seat.

"Hurry up, Runnells!" he called.

"It's all right," said Runnells after a moment.

"Take your boots off, then, and sling them around your neck."

"Yes."

Newcombe stood up and divested himself of a light raincoat he had been wearing. From the skirt of the garment he ripped off a generous portion, and taking out his revolver and flashlight, wrapped them around and around with the waterproof cloth. The coat itself he thrust into an already water-filled locker under the seat where it could not float away.

"Ready, Runnells?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"Come on, then."

The gunwale was awash as he struck out. A dozen strokes away, as he looked back, the boat had disappeared. He cursed sullenly under his breath—then laughed defiantly. It would take more than that to beat Shadow Varne.

Runnells swam steadily at his side.

Presently they stepped out on the shore.

Captain Newcombe stared up and down the beach, as he seated himself on the sand and began to pull on his boots.

"We're a bit off our bearings, Runnells," he said. "I couldn't see any sign of the boathouse even when I was swimming in. And I can't see it now. Which way do you think it is?"

Runnells was also struggling with his wet boots.

"We're too far up," he answered. "I thought I had it about right, but I figured that if I didn't quite hit it, it would be safer to be on this side than the other so we wouldn't have to pass either the wharf or the house in getting to it."

"Good!" commented Newcombe. "We'll walk back that way, then."

They started on along the beach. For perhaps half a mile they walked in silence, and then, rounding a little point, the boathouse came into view a short distance ahead. A moment later they passed in under the overhang of the veranda.

And then Runnells snarled suddenly.

Newcombe was unwrapping his flashlight. The faint, stray rays of moonlight that managed to penetrate the place did little more than accomplish the creation of innumerable black shadows of grotesque shapes.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

"The damned place in under here gives me the creeps after last night," Runnells growled.

"It's not exactly pleasant," admitted Newcombe casually.

"You're bloody well right, it ain't!" Runnells agreed fervently. And then sharply as the ray from the flashlight in Newcombe's hand streamed out: "That's where *he* lay last night, only the water's farther out now. It's blasted queer the thing never tackled the old madman in all this time."

"On the contrary," said Newcombe, "it would rather indicate that the brute was a transient visitor."

"Then I hope to Gawd," mumbled Runnells, "that it didn't like the quarters well enough to stick to them for another night."

"I agree with you," laughed Newcombe coolly; "but, as it happens, it's low tide now and the water is out beyond where we are going—which may offer an alternative solution to old Marlin's escape. However, Runnells, that's not what we are looking for—we're looking for a keyhole."

He led the way forward, his flashlight playing on the big central concrete pier, some eight feet square, in front of him. He was chuckling quietly to himself. It being established that the old maniac's hiding place was here under the boathouse, a hiding place that was opened by a key, and that, except at low tide, was inaccessible, the precise location of that hiding place became obvious even to a child. The row of little piers that supported the structure at the sides and front were all individually too small to be *hollow*—and there was absolutely nothing else here except the big center support.

With Runnells beside him now he began to examine this center pier under the ray of his flashlight. He walked once completely around it, making a quick, preliminary examination. The pier was some six or seven feet in height, and the concrete con-

struction was reënforced with massive iron bands placed both horizontally and transversely between two and three feet apart, the small squares thus formed giving a sort of checkerboard effect to the mass. The lower portion was green with sea slime. There was no apparent evidence of any opening.

But Newcombe had not expected that there would be.

"Look for a little hole, Runnells," he said. "Anything, for instance, that might appear to be no more than a *fault* in the concrete. And look particularly above high-water mark. The opening is below because the old man could only get in at low tide; but the keyhole is more likely to be above out of the reach of the water because it must be watertight inside."

They made a second circuit of the pier, but carefully now, searching minutely over every inch of surface. It took a long time—a half hour—more.

And still there was no sign of either keyhole or opening.

"Strike me pink!" grumbled Runnells. "It looks like it was sticking to us to-night! This is what I calls rotten luck!"

"And I was thinking that it was excellent—even beyond expectations, Runnells," said Newcombe smoothly. "The old man has done his work so well that it is certain no one would *stumble* on it. Therefore, when we get away we do so with the absolute knowledge that an *empty* hiding place will never be discovered. You follow that, don't you, Runnells? No one except you and I will know that the money was ever found—or taken."

"Yes," Runnells agreed gruffly; "but we ain't got it yet. And we must have been at it a good hour already—and the tide's coming back in now."

"Quite so!" said Newcombe evenly. "But if we don't get it to-night, there is to-morrow night—and the night after that again. There are always the woods, and your ability as a thief guarantees us plenty to eat. Meanwhile, we'll stick to this side here fronting the sea—it's the logical place—one couldn't be seen even from under the veranda back there. Go over every bit of the iron work now."

Another quarter of an hour passed in silence—save for the lap of the water that, with the tide on the turn now, had crept up almost to the base of the pier. The flashlight moved slowly up and down and to right and left as the two men crouched there, bent forward, their fingers, augmenting the sense of sight, feeling over the surface of the cement and iron that here was barnacle-coated, and there covered with festoons of the green slime.

"It's no good!" Runnells declared pessimistically at last. "Let's try around on another side, and get out of the water—I'm standing in it now."

"It's here—and nowhere else," said Newcombe doggedly. "And, furthermore, I'm certain it's one of these squares inside the intersecting pieces of iron. It would be just big enough to allow a man to crawl in and out—and not too big or too heavy for one man to handle alone. It can't be anything else. Whatever's here the old man made himself—no one helped him, understand, Runnells? His secret wouldn't be worth anything in that case. Go on—hunt!"

But Runnells, instead, had suddenly straightened up.

"I thought I heard something out there like—like a low splashing," he said tensely.

Newcombe paid no heed. He was laughing, low, jubilantly, triumphantly.

"I've got it, Runnells!" he cried. "Here's a bit of the iron down here that moves to one side—just a little piece. Look! And the keyhole underneath! I was wrong about the keyhole being above high water—it isn't, or anywhere near it—but we'll see how the contrivance works."

He thrust his hand into his pocket, brought out the bronze key, fitted it quickly into the keyhole, and turned it. A faint *click* answered him. "Push, Runnells, on that square just above the water—it's bound to swing inward—these iron strips hide the joints."

But he did not wait for Runnells to obey his injunction. He snatched the key out of the lock again, and even as he saw the piece of iron swing back into place covering the keyhole, he was pushing against the concrete slab himself. It swung back and

inward from its upper edge with a sort of oscillating movement.

His flashlight bored into the opening. Clever! The old maniac had had the cunning of—a maniac! It was quite clear. Marlin had cut away the square and fitted it with a new block—yes, he could see!—the interior would, of course, have been flooded at high water while the madman was preparing the new block, but that made no difference—the place would always empty itself at low tide again because the flooring, or base, in there was on the same level as the lower edge of the opening. It would be when it was empty of water, naturally, that the new block would be fitted into place—and thereafter it would remain empty.

He was crawling through the opening now—the weight of the swinging block causing it to press against his shoulders, but giving way easily before his advance. There was just room to squeeze through. Very ingenious! The walls were a good foot to a foot and a half thick.

The lock-bar worked through the side of pier wall into the *middle* of the edge of the movable block so no water could get in that way; and the block when closed fitted in a series of gaskets against the inside of the iron bands that reënforced the outside of the pier, which latter, overlapping the edges of the block, hid any indication of an entrance from view. It must have taken the old fool weeks!

Again Newcombe laughed. His head and shoulders were through now, and, with his flashlight's ray flooding the interior, he could see that—

A cry, sudden, wild, terror-stricken, from Runnells reached him.

"Quick!" he cried frantically. "For the love of Gawd make room for me—the *thing's* here! Quick! Quick! Let me get in!"

The *thing!* In a flash Captain Newcombe wriggled the rest of his body through the opening, and, holding back the movable block, sent his flashlight's ray streaming out through the opening. It lighted up Runnells's face, contorted with fear, ashen to the lips, as the man came plunging along; and out beyond, it played on a waving, sinuous tentacle, another and another, groping, snatching, feeling—and from out of the midst of these a revolting pair of eyes, and a beak, horny, monstrous, in shape like a parrot's beak.

With a gasp Runnells came through, sprawling on the floor.

The movable block swung back into place with a little *click*.

Newcombe shrugged his shoulders.

"A bit of a close shave, Runnells," he said. "I fancy you're right—last night's tragedy brought the brute back again. Rather a bore, too! Unless he moves off again, he's got us penned up until low water."

"That'll be twelve hours," whimpered Runnells; "and it'll be daylight then—and another twelve before we could get out when it's dark."

Newcombe shrugged his shoulders again. His flashlight was playing around him. The hollow space here inside the pier was perhaps six feet square, and of solid concrete, top, bottom and sides. This fact he absorbed subconsciously, as he reached quickly out now to a little shelf that had been built out from one side of the wall.

There was a half burned candle here and some matches, and, lying beside these, a package wrapped in oiled silk. He struck a match, lighted the candle, switched off his flashlight, thrust it into his pocket, and snatched up the package. An instant more and he had unwrapped it.

And unholy laughter came, and the soul of the man rocked with it. It rose and fell, hollow and muffled in the little space where there was scarcely room for the two men to move without jostling each other.

*The money!* He had won! It was his!

Locke—Paul Cremarre—Scotland Yard—ha, ha! Well, they had pitted themselves against Shadow Varne—and Shadow Varne had never yet failed to get what he went after, in spite of man, or God, or devil—and he had not failed now—and he never would fail!

He was tossing the bundles of bank notes from hand to hand with boastful glee.

"This'll buck you up a bit, Runnells!"

he laughed. "You'll be well paid for waiting even if it has to be until to-morrow night—eh, what?"

Runnells, on his feet now, a sudden red of avarice burning in his cheeks, grabbed at one of the bundles, and began to fondle the notes with eager fingers.

"Gawd!" he croaked hoarsely. "Thousand-dollar notes! Strike me pink! Gawd!"

Newcombe was still laughing, but his eyes had narrowed now as, watching Runnells, there came a sudden thought. Would he *need* Runnells any more? There wasn't any motor boat to run—but it was a long way in a rowboat for one man over to the mainland.

*Here* in the old maniac's hiding place—ideal—and a bit of irony in it, too—delicious irony! Well, it did not require *instant* decision. Meanwhile it seemed to be strangely oppressive in here in the confined space.

"It's stuffy in here, Runnells," he said. "Pull that door, or block, or whatever you like to call it, back a crack and freshen the place up."

The "door" was fitted with a light brass handle, similar to a handle used on a bureau drawer. Runnells stooped, still clutching a bundle of bank notes in one hand, and gave the handle a careless pull.

The block did not move. He gave the handle a vicious tug then, but still with the same result.

He dropped the bundle of bank notes, and used both hands. The block did not yield.

"I can't move the damned thing," he snarled. "It seems to be locked."

Newcombe's voice was suddenly cold and hard.

"Try again!" he said. "Here, I'll help you! Take your coat off and run the sleeve, the two of them if you can, through the handle so we can both get hold."

Runnells obeyed.

Both men pulled.

The handle broke away from its fastenings. The block did not move.

"It's locked, I tell you," panted Runnells. "Haven't you got the key?"

"Yes," said Newcombe quietly; "but there's no hidden keyhole here. It's locked from the outside—a spring lock. I remember now hearing it click. The old man would set it so that he could get out, of course, every time he entered. We didn't."

"Gawd!" Runnells muttered thickly. "What're we going to do?"

Newcombe's eyes studied the four walls and roof. He spoke more to himself than Runnells.

"Say, six by six by six," he said. "Roughly two hundred cubic feet. Watertight—hermetically sealed—no air except what's in here now. One hundred cubic per man—short work—very short."

"What do you mean?" whispered Runnells with whitening face—and coughed.

"I mean that brute out there, if it still is out there, counts for nothing now," Newcombe replied steadily. "We could at least *fight* that—we can't fight suffocation. I'd say a very few minutes, Runnells, before we're groggy if we can't get air—I don't know how long the rest of it will take."

Runnells screamed. His face gray, beads of sweat suddenly spurting from his forehead, he flung himself against the cement "door," clawing with his finger nails, where no finger nails could grip, around the edges of the block. In maniacal frenzy he attacked the wall with his pocket-knife.

The blades broke.

Newcombe, with a queer, set smile, drew his revolver, and, holding the muzzle close to the wall, fired. The bullet made little impression. With the muzzle held over the same spot he fired again.

And now he choked and coughed a little.

The acrid fumes helped to vitiate the air.

"You're making it worse—my Gawd, you're making it worse!" shrieked Runnells. "I can't breathe that stuff into me."

"I prefer to be doing something, even if it's pretty well a foregone conclusion that it's useless—than sit on the floor and *wait*," Newcombe declared. "A bullet probably hasn't the ghost of a chance of going through—but if a bullet won't, nothing that we have got to work with will."

The lighted candle on the shelf began to flicker.

Newcombe fired again—once more—and yet still another shot.

Runnells moaned and staggered. He went to the floor, his fists beating at the wall until they bled.

Newcombe watched the candle.

The light grew dim.

Newcombe sat down on the floor.

A strange coughing, a mingling of choking sounds.

The candle flickered and went out.

Newcombe spoke. There was something debonair in his voice in spite of its labored utterance:

"The house divided, Runnells. Do you remember that night in the thicket?"

There was no answer.

Again Captain Newcombe spoke:

"I've saved two shots. Will you have one, Runnells? Suffocation's a rotten way to go out."

"*No!*" Runnells screamed. "No, no—my Gawd—no!"

Captain Francis Newcombe's laugh was choked and gasping.

"You always were a coward, Runnells," he said. "Well, suit yourself."

The tongue flame of a revolver lanced through the blackness.

Runnells screamed and screamed again. Sprawling on the floor, his hand fell upon the package of bank notes he had dropped there.

He tore at them now in his raving, tore them to pieces, tore and tore and tore—and screamed.

But presently there was no sound in the old madman's hiding place.

The tides are tongueless. They came and went, and kept their secret.

In England, Scotland Yard sought diligently for the murderer of Sir Harris Greaves, and on a little island of the Florida Keys long search was made for a great sum of money that an old madman in his demented folly had hidden—but neither the one nor the other was ever found.

***THE END.***

## *RADIO*

ONCE while a kite rose drifting
Up from a lofty hill,
The eyes of Franklin, lifting,
Sparkled, as wise eyes will.

Down to the dust appointed
Went Franklin, whence he sprung;
Out from a plan disjointed
Where moss of ignorance clung.

But that was the age of doubting,
And that was the day of fear:
The pilots sail a routing
The air lines, son, this year!

The cars move without horses,
The engines without steam,
While on their wireless courses
Our words speed like a dream.

Whispers, while Destiny steers them,
Cleave space with mystic guile;
Wonder if Franklin hears them,
And if his wise eyes smile?

*Olin Lyman.*

# The Twin Sicks

## By IVON BARKER NEWMAN

IN a field of two he had come in a very poor second. The evidence was there—not in black and white, but in streams of crimson running wildly over what once had very likely been a whole face.

He was standing, or rather endeavoring to maintain the perpendicular, in the doorway to the dressing room.

He tried to smile. But the effects of the battle seemed to have deprived the mouth of even the ability to indulge in the simple emotion of a smile.

As a statue of ruin he was a marvel.

But as a prize fighter—

—Whyncha do like I told you, dumbbell?" This from the short little man in the far corner of the room, whose eyes, laden with disgust, had become icily fixed on the messy spectacle which had just managed to make his way through the doorway.

"Whadye mean? Anyhow, I gave this bird eight pounds."

The protest was delivered in about the softest and most soulful tone that had ever emerged from the ring-battered mouth of Charley Sick, late middleweight champion of Tennessee.

"You gave him pounds, believe me! And that ain't all—you gave him the prettiest race I ever saw. It was some foot race while it lasted. Did y'ever think of hitting that guy?"

"Lissen—for two cents, I'd—"

"Yes, you would. You better save the pennies, m'boy. You'll need 'em to eat on later. I understand the gentle art of dancing ain't being paid for in the ring today—anyhow, since Carpenterr met Siki."

Then, as though a brilliant light had struck him, Danny Wells, prominent fight manager — in western Tennessee — added: "Carpenterr sure got Siki!"

Charley couldn't see the joke. It was only natural that he would encounter some difficulty. He could hardly see his manager,

with one eye dead to the world, for the week at least, and the other rapidly rising, like the Mississippi River at flood time.

"Well, come off, Danny. Where's the clothes? I gotter get fixed up."

"Uh. You need a new set of fixtures. Honest, now, did you have any sort of understanding with this feller's sweetheart or sister? Maybe you promised not to touch him?"

"G'wan, will you? Gimme the duds. Let's get out of here. What did the receipts amount to?"

"Six hundred. That's on a sixty-forty split."

"Well, three hundred and forty bucks ain't bad for this dump."

"Where'd you go to school? Forty per cent of six hundred ain't three forty, it's one forty."

Charley bowed in submission before the superior knowledge of his manager. After all, he was only Gentleman Charles, of Memphis. His part was to fight; his manager's to collect.

The quality of his fighting to date had been, while not of the highest, at least remunerative in a fair sort of way. Memphis, Nashville, Chattanooga, Birmingham, and Knoxville had been the stamping ground of Gentleman Charles of Memphis, as he was billed, and his manager, Danny Wells.

Lately, however, as a battling machine, Gentleman Charles of Memphis had proved to be a first-class toe dancer. Consequently bouts had become not so frequent and blows had increased by the same ratio until the usually charming countenance of Gentleman Charles was fair on the way to belying his lately acquired sobriquet.

The name, Gentleman Charles of Memphis, had been discovered by Danny, after overhearing some ring gossip of a few years back when monnikers meant additional revenue and knockouts were as frequent as English lecturers in New York in the fall of the year.

At first, before Charley's face had acquired the earmarks of such vicious experience, the title was becoming. Now, in the face of his late disfigurements, his sagacious manager deemed it advisable to make a change.

"You look so funny to-night, Charley, I got a mind to change our fighting title."

"I better get a change of luck."

"You need more'n luck, kid. Wait! I got it! You are so darned cut up to-night I'll call you Twin Sick. You look about like two guys, anyway. Your nose is in two, your chin maybe more, and so forth."

"Uh-huh. Hey, let's go eat."

So, changed of name, Gentleman Charles of Memphis no more, departed Twin Sick, leaving behind him tokens of the recent fray in terms of crimson and departed skin.

Before he left, however, he cut his initials in the little doorway leading from his dressing room. It was a habit of his. And, by the initials, he carved a No. 3. That signified the number of rounds the fight had lasted.

## II.

Over a steak, a plate which once bore half a dozen rolls and as many more thick slices of bread, a cup of coffee, two side dishes of French fried and a bowl of rice pudding, Danny delivered a sermon entitled "How Not to Get Knocked Out"—in six parts.

Presently talk drifted into less unpleasant channels.

"Say, Danny, I just got a line from the brother. He's coming down this way. Maybe you could handle him, too?"

"What d'ye mean? Is he a fighter?"

"Sure. He weighs in same as I do. Snappy kid, too."

Danny reflected a moment. Of late he had, in an effort to reduce expenses, served as sparring partner for the new Twin Sick, and taking wallops in the jaw had not been particularly pleasant to one so long ago removed from active ring work. Here was a chance, Danny ruminated, to get two boys, one as a prelim worker and the other as the main go. They could each serve as the other's sparring partner.

"Well," Danny said. "He can't be much worser'n you. When 'll he show up?"

"He oughta be in Memphis day after tomorrer, 'cording to his letter."

Danny and Twin Sick were at the station to herald the new addition to the camp.

Presently, after the Chicago-New Orleans

Express had poured out its consignment of travelers for Memphis, Twin Sick gave a short cry: "Hen! Here we are!" Then, turning to Danny, and pointing a finger in the direction of a figure descending the train step: "There's the kid, Danny. Look him over!"

Danny did.

And it was this looking over process that made Danny gasp.

"Meet my brother, Danny," said Twin Sick.

"Eh! Is this your brother?"

"Sure!"

"Why, say, they ain't no difference, is they?"

"Sure they is. About three minutes."

"Twins," muttered Danny. "Ye Gods, twin fighters!"

III.

NEXT day Danny had the boys in the gym of the Phœnix Athletic Club, the headquarters for the gentlemanly art of professional self-defense in Memphis.

It seemed that, aside from a natural likeness most uncanny in its exactness, the boys had stepped in the way of an equal number of blows in just about the exact spots.

They were as like as two peas; two very similar peas, at that.

Even to the location of the two gold teeth the boys were one in appearance.

In the workout which followed, Danny noted the only difference between them. Charley used his left as his money-maker; Henry's right dealt out any punishment he could bestow.

Both boys were equally second-raters. The gods of Fate that had decreed them twins in blood had cast them into the same mold of second-rate fighters that fill the woods in the middle years of their lives, and the free handouts, in their later and more reclining years.

Danny had an idea. He took the twins into confidence and laid out the plan.

"Do you think we could get away with a thing like that?" asked Charley.

"What's going to stop us? Ain't nobody seen your brother, has they?" Danny said.

"No, but—"

"Say, you listen to me, will you? You ain't no pretty white hope to-day. And the same's your brother. You take my tip and get what's in it now."

"Well, maybe so, but— And, anyhow, how do you know you can get a fight with Pal Morton? You know I ain't done nothing lately that 'd give us a fling at him."

"You leave that to me. If you boys do your part I'll do mine, and we'll make a nice little clean-up."

The twins nodded. Better that than going back to driving a laundry wagon. And, besides, Danny could work it, Charley believed, now that he thought about it.

The plan in itself wasn't a bad one.

Here is the way Danny outlined it:

"You know that Pal Morton is about lined up to get a crack at the title. He's a New Orleans boy, and the fights ain't been coming so fast lately. Anyway, if he could get a nice, sure set-up like he'd figure us to be, he'd grab it, because you still got a pretty fair name down here, and that 'd help him force the titleholder into a bout with him.

"Now, I'm going to use both you boys in this fight. I'll tell you how later. I can do it. And you'll lick him sure. That 'll give us a nice little slice, besides a crack at the title, which means real money. Of course, I couldn't work both of you in on that, but the loser's share will be enough to smile away on."

And Danny had glowed with the satisfaction of one who knows he is about to embark upon a cruise of originality and cleverness, leading gloriously to the Port o' Success.

"But who's going to *let* both of us fight Pal Morton?" Charley the intellectual, spokesman of the twins, had insisted.

"You leave that to your Uncle Dudley," Danny had laughed.

IV.

THE night of the big fight was at hand. The fighters had weighed in that afternoon.

At five o'clock Danny, and Charley under the protection of a great overcoat, had entered the Phoenix Club, where the bout was to be held.

Both went directly to the dressing room held for Danny's fighter. Only the door man had seen them enter. And not even he witnessed what took place within the next ten minutes.

Under the ring, and encased on the sides by canvas, was a sort of dugout the same size as the ring, and about four feet high. Into this enclosure Danny led his half of the twins.

They both crawled in, feet first, through the little opening where the canvas was tacked to the north side of the ring. In the ring above, the north corner was reserved for the fighter of the House of Danny.

Below the ring, Danny gave out careful, guarded instructions.

"Now, when you hear me tap three or four times with my feet, you'll know it's time to get ready. Right after that, I'll give the signal and the house lights will go out, like an accident, for about two minutes. You'll step lively and hop into the ring. There's enough room between the canvas and the ring. Your brother will jump in below. We'll have a fresh man in the ring, see? And that's not all. Morton'll be getting used to a right-hander, then he'll get the surprise of his young life when a left starts putting the finishing touches on him. How's it, boy?"

"Fine, fine. But all I hope is that nothing flukey happens with your signal. Say, what is it, anyway?"

"Simple. I got the house electrician fixed. All I do is take my hat and put it on my head. That's the signal. Then the dimmers go on!"

With that Danny departed.

The hours passed slowly for the hidden half of the twins.

At seven o'clock he could hear the muffled feet of the crowd, filing in slowly, but in profitably large numbers.

At eight o'clock one of the smaller bouts started, and Charley, as each thud came to his ears, grew more and more apprehensive, more and more concerned that nothing "flukey" should happen to the signal.

There was a dull and heavy thump just over his head. Then a thousand voices and more roared in unison. After that, there was a scraping overhead. It was the body being dragged over to the corner to be revived. A knockout!

Charley commenced to sweat.

It wasn't brought on by the heat of the enclosure, either. Gosh, how he wished he could get hold of Danny and call this thing off.

But it was too late now. He heard the announcer.

"—in this corner, Twin Sick—"

Then the fight started.

Charley heard the prancing of well trained feet, the thud of landed blows.

Visions of a mistaken signal floated before him—and were chased away by a particularly loud grunt from one of the fighters from above.

Above Charley, the other twin was having a hard time in eluding the few ounces of leather that were making for his head and stomach with alarming speed, force and frequency.

His own right was in action, true, but it didn't seem to be making a dent either in the cranium of Pal Morton, or in the hopes of that gentleman.

Pal Morton dazzled the twin with his speed, and he had him floundering always with the precision of his timing. If the twin tried to mix it, he steadied him with no more than a couple of punches that caused the twin to mow and miss like the rankest amateur.

Twice in the second round the twin was brought to his knees. And Charley sweated below, waiting for the dreaded signal.

All the time Danny was seated in the north corner. He was the twin's second, of course. But his mind was more on the thought of when he should give the signal than on advice that he should be yelling to his man.

Danny had a problem. He must keep the left-handed twin in as long as possible, so Pal Morton would be lining up his attack and defense for a left-hander. Then Danny would slip in Charley, the right-hander, and before Pal would get wise to the change in style—as he would figure it—the little birds would be singing sweet melodies in his cauliflower listening posts.

But he must watch out, Danny knew. He realized that his twin stood a chance of

being knocked out any moment now. Each moment that he tarried in the ring was potent with danger.

Finally, when the twin's breath was coming in desperate pants, when his ribs had taken Pal Morton's blows by the score, when one of his eyes was on the way to dreamland, Danny figured it was time to give the signal.

He'd have to tell Charley to fix up his eye somehow, first. Then the signal.

But about that time, a member of the audience, occupying a ring-side seat, became suddenly aware of the necessity for his presence outside the Phoenix Club.

Three things happened at the same moment.

The twin had been beaten over to his own corner.

Danny was whispering, apparently, into the open spaces.

And the gentleman rose suddenly, and thrust his hat on his head.

Then the twin swung; came a dull thud —out went the lights!

## V.

CHARLEY was waiting.

He could tell that the time for his act was drawing near. He could tell by the heavy breathing and dull falls being registered above him.

Then came Danny's instructions. He " spotted " his right eye with the pharmaceutical aid he had provided for this emergency.

A tremendous roar broke out, thousands of lusty voices were raised.

Gosh! He must not have heard the signal Danny had given. Frightened, he drew himself to the opening, wondering what to do.

Complete darkness was about him; the house lights were out now.

Suddenly came a tripping just above him. Then followed the scrambling drop of a body through the opening in the canvas.

The twin raised himself agilely through the opening onto the ring.

There, in the darkness, he could discern a form. It must be Pal Morton. He hoped it wasn't the referee.

His natural, or rather commercial, instincts asserted themselves, and he crouched in a fighting position, his guard raised, his mind alert to the necessities of the occasion.

His hair and face having been " fixed " below, the twin showed all traces of having gone through a tough battle.

This had all happened in a few minutes.

He swung wildly at the figure in front of him. Then—

The lights went on!

At the sight of the two men in the ring the crowd went into a frenzied outburst.

The twins were socking each other!

Instantly the crowd grasped the significance of the battle. It took the twins only an infinitesimal fraction of a second to understand that the thing most desired between this athletic club and themselves was distance—and plenty of it.

No light-footed sinner fleeing the torments of hell ever tore down a street with more velocity and definite purpose than Hen and Danny.

Between breaths Hen managed this pertinent inquiry:

" Wonder—where—Charley—is—?"

Danny snorted: " Boy! He ain't carving his dressing room door to-night. If his feet are as slow as his brain he's about ten miles due south of us!"

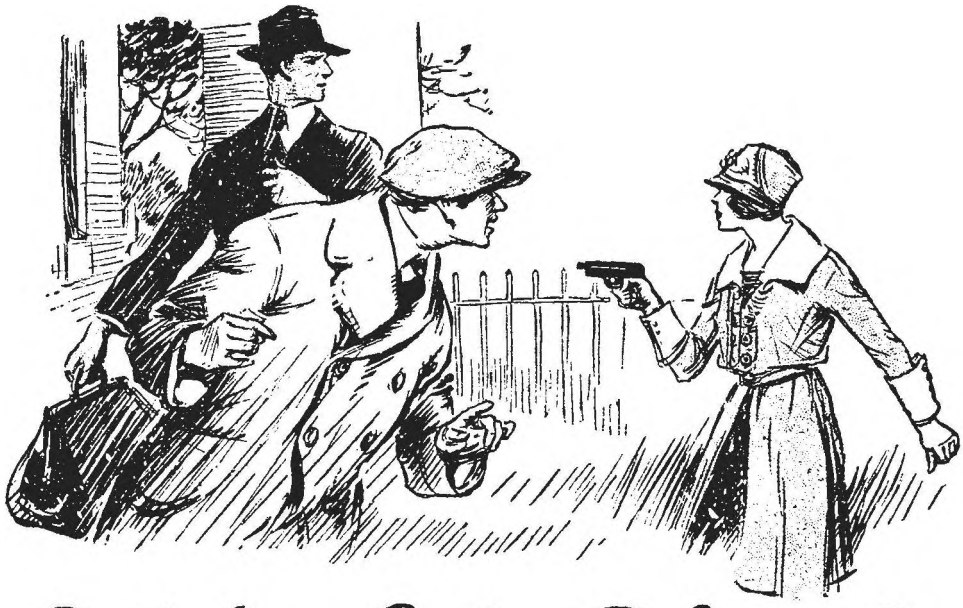
## VI.

REPOSING placidly among beer bottles and certain pieces of discarded clothing under the ring was the somewhat fractured altogether helpless body of Mister Pal Morton, who had made a rather sudden and impromptu exit from the main scene of the evening's activities.

It grieved him sorely that he could not understand why it took him so long to land after he was hit; such a long while to where he was from the time he was on the way!

Then, from the opening in the canvas came the solicitous and somewhat suspicious voice of his late second: " What'ye doing down there, Pal?"

But Pal was busy—dreamily busy. This was his answer: " 'Leven—twelve—thoiteen—"



# When You Tangle With Thrills

**By JAMES W. EGAN**

EVER since this dame Eve does her stuff with the snake back in the well-known garden the ribs has been busy crossin' up birds who belong to the alleged virile and male sex. Believe me, there's more brothers in the big house right to-day from frolickin' with fluffs than there's alibis for rain in California, and I guess as long as you can find janes the fine art of jail buildin' shall not perish from the earth.

The way I got it figured no crook can dally long around the damsels without bein' knocked over. Any time you tangle too much with thrills Old Man Trouble begins brushin' up his teeth for another good hearty meal. No molls for mine. I stay away from 'em like meat on Fridays.

Unfortunately, Slick Flanders ain't constructed this way. No smoother performer than Slick ever busted a box or gunned a goof, but he has his one glarin' and deplorable weakness. He does tumble for the twists. That is, he always has in the past. Maybe now, owin' to—well, of course, I don't know how many times some cookies has to be burned.

Here's how it is:

Very recently Slick Flanders and yours distrustfully locate ourselves temporarily in a small and selected burg identified only on the largest and most comprehensive maps as Logandale, Wash. There ain't much cause to believe the said Logandale will ever give New York, Chicago, or even Seattle pangs of jealousy in the years to come. One hotel, one bank, a movie that

annoys the orbs Saturdays and Sundays and at least four places you can die drinkin' wood alcohol, are the main features of the town.

Bein' used to the temptations and tidbits of a great city, Slick and me hardly find Logandale a riot. However, we ain't present to be riotous. This village may be tough to take, but not so tough as a steady job makin' shoes or brooms under government supervision—and without wages.

The fact is, it's up to Slick and company to lay as low as a caterpillar's heels. We've deserted the breezy shores of San Francisco bay just in time to evade certain badge bearers strangely interested in our activities and it's more than likely we'll have to have our mail forwarded for a long, long time.

And that ain't all. To make it more intricate we're also in Swiss with many of our old pals owin' to an unfortunate circumstance which compelled us to turn up a coupla big screams in the underworld in order to save our own laundry. No ouija board is needed to inform us our social standin' is pretty well shot as a result. Market Street and south of the slot is gonna miss our merry faces for quite a while.

In our abode of exile Slick and me pose as a pair of birds interested in timber lands. Timber is the cream cheese around the burg. A concern called the Logandale Lumber Company controls the hotel, bank and about everythin' else in sight. If we don't show excitement over timber we don't belong in Logandale. And for a while we gotta belong.

I won't warble, time whizzes by on greased wheels the first few days. I manage to endure fairly well by readin' a lot of detective story magazines, which happens to be my favorite pastime. The fiction fables of crooks and coppers have a professional appeal, and now and then I even get a bit of information outa the printed word.

But Slick Flanders ain't anythin' of a library lizard. By the end of a week he is as peevish as a yokel who's just lost the leather off his hip.

"What made us choose a cemetery like this?" he squawks. "Why, there ain't one good lookin' girl in the whole—"

"Ravin' again, huh?" I cut in. "You can't lay off the thrills, can you? And you know any nifty can get your number. The moment some dame dynamites you with a dizzy look you're a candidate for the gymnasium. And you know what's found in gymnasiums."

We are sittin' in the palatial lobby of the Logandale hotel doin' our guffin' and one of the limited trains—limited in all respects—which visits the village daily is just snortin' off.

"By Judy, I got a guest comin'," announces old Calder, the hotel manager, night and day clerk, bellboy, and lobby fireman, peerin' through the window. Nobody but Calder can see through that glass.

"What—another? That makes three this month, don't it?" brightly cackles Slick, and then he suddenly checks his chirpin'.

The entrance of the new guest accounts for this. The arrival proves to be a member of the sex that don't usually smoke corncob pipes or wear derby hats. She is plenty young and easy on the eyes. Which is abundant and sufficient to start Slick off.

No sooner has Boniface Calder dragged the girl and a straw suitcase to one of his best rooms—distinguished from the worst only in the matter of rates—than my partner is onceoverin' the register.

"Cora Taylor, Seattle," he reads. "Well, Cora looks good to the Flanders family. I'm gonna know her as well as liver does bacon before long."

"Knowin' in advance my wise counsel will be scorned like a plate of cabbage at a society banquet I yet arise to register vehement and violent protest," I gargle. "Form no entanglin' alliances. Pass up this pippin and all her subtle sex. Otherwise we may yet be wearin' suits that can't be bought at any tailor shop."

"Cork it! Cork it!" says Slick. "I'm out to win this woman. I only hope she's gonna stick around a while."

It appears she is. And right pronto Slick scrapes up an acquaintance. There ain't no question but that my partner could draw a damsel's attention. He has the looks and a heavy line to hand 'em. The cute Cora and he become as thick as rice puddin' in a hurry.

I learn without enthusiasm that the young woman is an orphan, and hopes to cajole a livin' outa Logandale by teachin' music. Accordin' to Slick she plays a wicked piano and hasn't any other means of earnin' the daily doughnuts. I figure she mighta picked a more promisin' field for her talent than Logandale.

After stayin' a night or two at the hotel Miss Taylor moves into a private home on the edge of the burg where she sets herself up in the musical business and divides her time into waitin' for pupils and waitin' for Slick to call around.

Just as this frail is beginnin' to brighten the life of my pinin' partner a letter arrives from the shyster who handles our legal affairs in San Francisco and this egg donates considerable news. His entertainin' epistle says in part:

> . . . You may have to lay low for some little time. It's not a bad idea to keep near the Canadian border.
>
> When you saved yourselves at the expense of Mal Parsons and Tony La Vine you certainly did for them. They ain't got a chance. Do you know an Oakland jane called "Babe" Bell? She's a sweety of Mal's and has been awful sore over this. She don't know so much, though. One of the Dumbbell family, I understand. She's skipped with Whitey Jones and Dave Huggins, the only members of Mal's gang that got away.
>
> Incidentally, another former friend of yours, Joe Duke, was nabbed this week. A female dick did the job. A sharp dame who runs around under the moniker of Zelma Zone. Joe is a clever boy, but he has a weakness for women. Like Slick. This girl outsmarted him in wonderful shape, I hear.
>
> The Addison Agency, which employs Zelma, is lookin' into the last job you two were in. It may mean a bunch of grief. Don't take chances where you are. I'll keep you wise to anythin' new that comes up . . .

This hardly is a letter intended to make a guy whistle and sing. I give Slick a glance.

"The under cover stuff continues, I guess."

"Well, it ain't so hard to take now—with Cora in town," he chirps, smilin'.

"Blah!" I growl. "Notice what Winsor writes about Joe Duke and his weakness for women. See where he is now? A female dick ruins him."

"But there ain't any female dicks in Logandale, Jerry," my partner grins.

"Perhaps not. If there was you'd sure be a victim," I squawk. "The best policy is to keep away from all molls. Then you're sure to be safe. Right now you—"

"Aw, don't be an oilcan all your life, Jerry. Cora Taylor is a nice, innocent little girl who ain't never been around. Sometimes I feel awful rotten at trickin' a kid like her."

"You'll be in a jam before it's over," I gargle. "Leave it to you. Never gonna learn, are you?"

This peeves Slick and he refuses to talk any more.

Of course, he continues to hang around the pretty music teacher like ivy on an old wall. The two of 'em attend the movie show when it movies, take twilight strolls, and even wander into church on Sundays. How the buildin' stays up with Slick inside is by me.

Good lookin' thrills bein' no more plentifull in Logandale than paved sidewalks, it's natural that some other birds in the burg show cravin' to horn in on Miss Taylor's time, but Slick seems to be toppin' the field. The only others who even get a play are a coupla babies who toil for the lumber company and they rate very little. Slick sure thinks he's enjoyin' himself.

I can't spend all my time readin' magazines or pretendin' to pick up bargains in timber land, and more than once my fond thoughts stray toward Logandale's lone bankin' institution. Banks always interested me, and to an old hand this antiquated treasury presents temptation in great gobs. Especially when I discover that on certain dates the lumber concern stows big piles of jack in the cheesy cage. I tell myself it would be a shame to leave town without knockin' over such a pipe.

And then, suddenly, comes a missive from the legal Mr. Winsor that means action. The Addison Agency appears to have smelled out our place of exile. It's up to us to move pronto.

Slick Flanders acts all fussed up.

"Ain't this the bunk?" he gargles. "If it wasn't for Cora—"

"Cora is out, from now on!" I squawk.

"You just forget her. We got somethin' real to worry about!"

"Forget her? Jerry, I can't! Of course, you don't understand, but—but she wins me. She's straight and clean—the kind a guy can't help lovin'. I wish I hadn't done a lotta things now. There's somethin' about her innocence and purity that—that—"

"Oh, my Gawd!" I groan. "Is this one of those movie things? The good little girl and the hardened crook. He reforms and sins no more. What do you want to do, you sap—marry that jane?"

"Oh, I guess it ain't any use. It's too late now—it wouldn't be fair. Poor kid! And she trusts me so!"

I never have seen my partner so worked up, and I scorch.

"Cut that sob stuff!" I bark. "Either we are outa this hick center by to-morrow night or we get free board and room for a long stretch. Get that?"

"But how will I tell her I'm goin'—"

"Didn't I know there'd be a jam!" I snort. "However, you gotta handle that end yourself. And before we leave we have to build up the finances. Our funds have shrunk, and we may have far to travel. There'll be ten thousand extra bananas in the bank to-morrow eve. We go after it!"

"Not on your life! No job in this town, Jerry! I—"

"It's gotta be done—and we do it!"

"How can we pull it off on such short order?" he objects.

"Listen to me," I reply. "It's a cinch, Slick. To-morrow is one of the semi-monthly dates the lumber company puts in a big wad. The bank is small and one horse. The watchman is nearly deaf. All we gotta do is burn away a few bars in the back, soak the old bird, and throw some trained fingers on the big box. I know I can open her. It's takin' candy from the kids, as a job."

"But what getaway—"

"I've been figurin' while you've been fallin' for your frail," I gargle. "We've promised several times to look over timber lands at Susqually. To-morrow mornin' we go, probably for a week. Old Boniface Calder has told me where I can rent a swell car for a few days. We hop into the bus and roll off. We're supposed to be in Susqually. Late to-morrow night we return—and you know everybody in Logandale hits the hay at nine o'clock. We do our stuff, jazz to Seattle, lose the crock, and pick outa place to hide anew. And we'll have a bankroll to aid and assist."

"You have it doped out," admits Slick. "But leavin' Cora!"

"Ain't you ever left janes before?" I yodel.

"Not her sort, Jerry. She thinks I'm on the level. It'll hurt. I—I wish there was another way out."

"Oh, these dames!" I grunt. "Good or bad, they get you—if you fool around with 'em. Let them be."

We carry out my scheme. Next day about noon we drive outa Logandale in a rented heap, supposed to be on the way to Susqually for several days. Not a taint of suspicion in the air. We've acted the part well in the village.

Slick Flanders is as gloomy as three days in the black hole. He had seen Cora Taylor for a few minutes and though he hasn't told her it's for the last time the fact he knows it has soured him plenty.

"Let her know you're gonna be gone a little while, huh?" I ask.

"Yes. Business trip, I said. Do you know she looked at me almost in alarm, as if she sensed somethin' behind it—as if she felt I was goin' outa her life."

"Which is correct. You are," I grimly remark. "Maybe them roughnecks from the lumber mill who tried to horn in now and then will fill the achin' void in her heart."

"Oh, you can't understand, Jerry!" Slick snaps. "I know she cares for me. She's so pure and sweet and unaffected—I feel like a dog. For the first time in my life I bitterly regret bein' a crook. That's my punishment. I can't get away from it. And I suppose I'll never see her again."

"You're as bad as the birds I read about in the magazine stories," I gargle. "You'll soon forget her. I know you. Life is just one jane after another with you."

"Not any more," he says, as if he really means it. I decide to drop the matter.

It's near midnight when Logandale sees us again—or, rather, doesn't see us.

The town is fast asleep and snorin'. We roll up a back street in the bus, park it a block away from the bank, and set forth. In addition to carryin' a small leather bag that's intended to hold the haul, I wear my big overcoat, and Slick wants to know why.

"I gotta a few tools I want to use and it's an easy way to tote 'em," I warble.

The job turns out to be the custard. We get in after a little labor, sock the watchman to slumber, and then while Slick mounts guard I toy with the vault.

The box is a cinch and I'm soon in the money. Currency is all we want, and I loot all the bills in sight. In less than an hour we're all washed up.

As we depart speedily, but quietly, I give Slick the leather bag.

"Carry that, George Gloom," I whisper. "It's worth a flock of Coras."

My partner snaps somethin' under his breath.

Back to the spot where we left the hack we stroll—and then a sweet jolt is handed us.

That old bus is gone!

"Wh—what has happened to that car?" gulps Slick.

"Some one is wise!" I gargle. "Some one has—"

Another surprise party is due. Outa the shadows of a near-by evergreen waltzes a slight figure.

"Mr. Flanders! You are lookin' for your car?" The tone is sweet and silvery, yet—

"Cora!" gasps my partner. "How—what do you know about our car?"

"You'll find I know all about it—gentlemen!" Somethin' flashes to her lips, and a low whistle sounds.

I take a quick step toward the girl, but suddenly halt. In her hand is a small automatic pistol.

"Cora, I don't understand!" And from the way Slick says it I know he doesn't. But I think I do.

"You call me Cora. Others have used the name of—Zelma!" falls from the lips of the music teachin' miss. "Don't move now, or—"

"Zelma!" My partner staggers. "Zelma Zone! The female dick who got Joe Duke! The Addison operative! Oh, what a chump I am!"

"Echo agrees," I murmur.

Appearin' in response to the girl's signal our own bus glides up the street. Two husky birds are in the front seat—the same cookies who had posed as employees of the lumber company, I quickly make out. Oh, this hasn't been framed at all!

"Got 'em, Zone! Just as you figured, by gum, and with the stuff. Good work, I say." One of the eggs hops outa the machine and approaches us.

"The booty is there, Joe." She points to the bag Slick is carryin'.

Her associate relieves my partner of that burden pronto, and pulls some bits of metal outa his overcoat pocket. In a jiffy Slick and yours humbly are handcuffed and ordered into the rear seat.

"I will ride with 'em," says the girl. "I've some questions to put. Drive to the depot. It's open all night, and we can wire from there."

"All right, Zone," chirps he who did the handcuffin'. "We better wake up the marshal after we wire. I'll keep the dough in front here, hey?"

The bus throbs on its way. Our lady captor speaks.

"So you did come back?" she remarks. "We weren't sure. For some days we figured we had you two pegged. I had a hunch you wanted a look at the inside of the bank to-night. When the others wanted to nail you this mornin' I insisted on lettin' you go, and waitin'. I know you haven't much money, and the hour was ripe to make a haul. Of course we had wires out to Seattle in case you didn't return—but I felt you would."

"I hope you're satisfied. Wanted to get us good and plenty, huh?" growls Slick.

"I'm sorry, in a way," she confesses. "Suspectin' all along you were a crook, still I—"

"What a sap I am, to fall for you!" Slick's voice is bitter. "I figured you were so different. I was ashamed of bein' a crook because I thought you were so all right."

"But you came back to rob the bank!"

"I was in too deep—I couldn't get away from the past. I was forcin' myself to give you up. And all the time you actin' a part, waitin' for me to step into your little trap."

"You ain't fair!" she utters. "Perhaps I hoped this mornin' you would go and—well, it ain't so easy! Duty is duty, though, and you did return!"

"Sometimes a crook might—might want to turn square, but can't." Slick is makin' me restless. "A simple little music teacher, indeed! Play the same game on Joe Duke, down in Oakland?"

"Joe Duke? I—you won't be fair. And you're hurtin' me more than you know." Her voice trembles.

All this sounds strange, considerin' the situation. But the other sex is plenty strange, I reckon.

The heap draws up at the Logandale depot, one spot in town that's awake. A night man is on the job because several trains buzz through there durin' the slumber hours. Even now the one o'clock southbound express is whistlin' in the distance.

As we stop the two birds in front hop outa the hack and hike inside the station, takin' the bag with 'em. They seem willin' to leave everythin' but the plunder in the hands of the dame, I note. I wonder what they want to wire about, anyway?

"I'm cured, Jerry!" Slick mumbles in my ear. "No fluff will ever bunk me again!"

The southbound's headlight gleams down the old rails. This train always tarries a minute or two at Logandale for orders.

Our girl captor speaks as if arrivin' at a sudden decision.

"Because you did care—because I can't go through with it—one last chance!" she whispers. "The keys to the handcuffs are in my lap. Use them, quick!"

Slick seems almost paralyzed. I grab toward the said keys.

"You can get out on that train," the thrill buzzes on oddly. "We have the money, but we won't have the men. I'm doin' this for your sake, Fred Flanders, or whatever your name really is. I hope you will—please try to go straighter after this. My associates will be angry beyond measure with me. But—well, I'm gonna be a weak, foolish woman. Here"—she shoves somethin' into Slick's coat—"you can read it on the train. Hurry!"

She kinda slumps back in the seat. Strange stuff, but in a jiffy we're free of the shackles. If Slick's watchin' me he probably sees a peculiar grin on my face.

But I guess Slick ain't. He must have slipped the jane a kiss or somethin' before boundin' onto the train after me. The wheels spin, and we make a chair car. No alarm sounds. No sign of Zelma Zone's two partners. Away we roll.

"Jerry, she did care! She gave me my chance!" starts Slick, as Logandale is left behind. "But those other dicks! They'll wire ahead! She can't stall that, and—"

"Better you read the note she slipped you," I cut in as I flop into a seat by his side. "Maybe you won't worry about the dicks wirin' ahead. I gotta hunch, I have, Friend Slick!"

My partner hands me a look, and dives into his pocket. He pulls out the farewell message and peruses. Abruptly he gasps, then gulps. I take the note outa his hand and scan this:

A very desperate game, my dear fellows, but if you ever get to read this you'll know we played it out. Our plans won't have miscarried, and you'll be miles away.

I confess I'm not Cora Taylor, music teacher. I'm not Zelma Zone, either. I do happen to be Mal Parsons's former sweety, the little cabaret pianist, Babe Bell. And you guys put him where he is. I could do anything to either of you for that. Remember that, so-called "Slick" Flanders.

No, it wasn't altogether coincidence that I came to the same town as you two, with my two good pals, Whitey Jones and Dave Huggins, whom you must have met this night. Did they make good dicks?

We were laying for you, hoping to get square for what you did, Mal. The bank job was it. We ain't handy at that stuff. You are. I knew you'd be back for it. Had you pegged, Slick. So we get the loot without doing the labor. Thanks.

Never mind where we got our Zelma Zone hunch and the handcuffs. Do I make a sweet Zelma?

Of course we had to get rid of you. Our best plan was to rush you to the station and fake up a means to let you escape on the one o'clock if there was time. As I write I don't know what we will work, but as long as you're reading this, we worked something.

We'll try to see you get blamed for the robbery, but we have the dough. And we know where to go. The car helps.

Yours gratefully,

CORA—BABE.

P. S.—For a cabaret performer ain't I some little actress?

Slick wears a pale and sufferin' air.

"The lyin', tricky devil!" he hisses. "Mal Parsons's sweety! Not Zone! Who could have guessed it?"

"I could," I squawk bluntly. "What's more, I did."

"You did?" he gargles.

"Sure," I answer. "Ain't I been readin' a lotta magazines? If crooks do funny things in stories, why not in reality? The moment this Cora came to town I didn't think she was on the level. Her gag, teachin' music, was not so good. And then her precious pals, Dave and Whitey, never looked like lumbermen to me. So I wasn't altogether unprepared for startlin' events to-night."

"You mean—"

"Before we entered the bank I had a feelin' we were watched, though I didn't exactly see anybody. When I came out I found the hunch was good. And right pronto the alleged Zelma shows up to nab us."

I see I have Slick as puzzled as a guy tryin' to understand the immigration problem, and I rather enjoy the same.

"I was sure the dame wasn't Zelma Zone. If she was we'd been arrested long ago. What she chirped in the car confirmed it. The reference to Joe Duke for one.

"Then who else could she be? Who else might be very anxious to get us good?

"Babe Bell. The sweety Winsor wrote about. Perfectly plain to me. All they wanted to-night was revenge—and the money."

"And they got both!" snarls Slick. "If you knew so much why didn't you make a fight? Why give up to them without a struggle? You could have wised me, and—"

"They had the drop on us, remember. I know tricks worth two or three of that. I'll admit I took a chance myself, but everythin' went through fine. They helped us outa town—and we still *got the money!*"

"Got the money?" Slick's jaw falls. "Didn't they take the bag away from me?"

I grin.

"Yes. They did. But there was no money in it. I am wearin' an overcoat—wore it all the time. Well, all that currency is in the old benny. I tucked it there, and let you carry the bag—you can see why. It fooled 'em. That bag holds just some copies of my favorite magazines. I got a flock of ideas outa them stories. Maybe they'll read 'em and get some, too. I bet right now Babe Bell is tellin' the world she does belong to the Dumbbell family. Oh, lady!"

"Well—I'll be—let's see that jack!" Slick cries.

I show him some. He's convinced.

"Now," I remark briskly, "that we've done the job like any good magazine crook would, we gotta figure where to get off and how to keep hid for a while. And you can thank the Lord I ain't like you are when it comes to the rib family. You gotta leave 'em be. The next time you mix up with a moll I'm out. I can't always save you from destruction. Any old time you tangle up with thrills—"

# The Tidal Wave

## By PHOEBE O'NEALL FARIS

PALLISTER first saw Mary Flyn standing tiptoe on a box in front of the mess kitchen stove trying to start a charcoal fire. The cook had flown, as Haitian cooks had a way of doing, and Mary, nosing about in search of tea things, was the first to discover the fact.

She was little and vivid. In white linen riding coat and breeches, with a long, thick braid of bronze-gold hair down her back, she looked almost a child. Hearing him, she whirled and came near falling off her perch. Throwing out one hand to catch herself, she grasped keroseney charcoal.

"Damn," she said softly, humorously. "Which one are you?"

"I am Pallister," he answered.

"The cook is missing—has departed, I fear. Let's get supper. I put kerosene on the stuff, but it 'll do nothing but smoke." She looked up at him and he saw her eyes—marvelous eyes they were, gray-brown with long, black, fringing lashes—and a skin like the rose orchid. A feeling of warmth came over him that was not of the tropical sun.

"Too wet," he diagnosed. "Let me. Are you Mrs. Flyn?"

"Yes."

"White women do not work in *Republica Dominicana*. I'll get another cook up the trail."

She shrugged her shoulders impudently. "In *Republica Dominicana* I do as I please. And everywhere. I like to cook. Let's have something besides fish, will you?"

"All right," Pall surrendered. Every one surrendered to Mary Flyn.

They cooked a good supper. Pall discovered Mary's friendliness, and her impulsive curiosity about everything from men to *mimis* (gnats), and her philosophically witty answers giving an odd twist to commonplace speech.

Late that same evening he came upon her sitting alone on the barracks steps waiting for Bob. She showed a splash of white in the dark.

"All alone?" he asked.

"Yes." Her voice was husky. "The nightingale up the trail—"

She was thoroughly under the spell of the tropic night. He listened; and into his soul crept the wish that she sat there waiting for *him*.

The next day Bob Flyn went up interior to chase bandits; and Mary the adventure-

some, Mary who loved the unusual, was left to flit like a lambent flame about the colony —and as far afield as she dared penetrate.

And Pallister loved her from the first. Not guiltily—for he had no sense of moral values—but exultingly, and with the primitive male's desire to annihilate whatever stands in his way. He would have fought—or even killed, I am convinced—any man who had so much as harbored an evil thought about Mary Flyn; yet to win her for himself he hoped to walk nail-shod over her honor and happiness.

Pallister forgot, in his own past, little dusky Marta who had loved him with the wild abandon of the jungle woman, and whom, with his own long, graceful fingers about her smooth brown throat, he had sent into the beyond but a few days before she would have borne him a brown-skinned child.

He forgot the lies he had told—to escape detection—when from headquarters was issued the order that in the future it would be the firing squad for all who dallied —as he had dallied—with the jungle women.

He even forgot his fear of the only one he knew—Marta's ancient crone of a mother.

Two years back it was now—and he had ceased to recall the drooping, dejected air of those round brown arms sprawled over the rude table in the tiny palm hut far up the hill trail. There had been times when, lying in his bunk at barracks through dark nights, rain sounds or gentle winds from the mountains had seemed footsteps and sighs, or the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar. Often he had awakened to find himself drenched in sweat, his mind filled with the horrible feeling that some one or something pressed heavily on his thoat.

But this was long ago—two years back. There had been no detection. The wrinkled old mother with her water can had disappeared from the river bank.

And Pallister was happy. The climate agreed with him—there is no healthier place than the hill above Haina. He was content with the rather monotonous life—directing Haitian laborers from seven to eleven and from two to five; a swim in the ocean, mess, and poker—he always won.

Randal Pallister was the only son of a cotton planter of Alabam'. He knew the races—and won; played poker—and won; and his skill with dice was uncanny. He went home after the war, but the wanderlust had him and he sailed for Santo Domingo to help the marines build roads.

A gay little colony flourished at *La Capitol,* which was headquarters for the naval officers in charge of the military government. The marines, doing guard duty and engineering, were scattered about the island. Pallister's contingent was stationed in barracks ten miles west of the capital, with orders to make a hard-surfaced road out of the centuries-old trail between Santo Domingo City and Azua.

And Mary herself — she believed in friendship; and in variety; and she loved folks. There was Helga Jolson, who spoke English brokenly, but she was Swedish, and to Mary, her stolidity was an everlasting barrier to companionship. Mary would have been lonesome those three months of Bob's absence had it not been for Pall. They danced in the plaza, rode the hill trails, spent long evenings in the sand at the sea's edge, or read tales of banditry and buccaneering. They saw each other a dozen times a day in just the ordinary routine of camp life; and Pall made many opportunities that had nothing to do with the daily routine. There was no discretion in his devotion; he loved her—that was all.

There came a time, however, when Pallister realized that it could not pass—this love which was life to him. He could not endure the thought that Mary belonged not to him —but to Bob Flyn; that Bob would come out of the interior again and that Mary was waiting for him—that she had no other reason for being there at all. He knew only the Mary he loved and wanted—the Mary whose beauty and wit enchanted him; he did not know the Mary Flyn whose loyalty was stronger than death itself.

So he set himself to win her, first her romantic interest, and next her love. Once he pressed hot lips to her hand where it lay thrown back on the sand; she looked at him queerly and said nothing. He dreamed all night of what it would be like to hold her in his arms.

Mary seldom talked of her husband. She knew he loved her as only such steadfast natures can love. She knew that he had a faith in her that was not easily shaken. And in Mary's heart, Bob Flyn's love and hers had created a holy place where no stranger might intrude. Perhaps if she had talked to Pallister of Bob, of their comings and goings together, his dream would not have carried him so far from the paths of discretion. Or if she had been less philosophic, less "friend," and more the married coquette—but— Again, perhaps it was inevitable, his wanting her.

One night with Pall, she lingered by the sea's edge, delightedly watching for phosphorescent flashes in the wave crests. Pallister, standing at her side, fought his desire to take her in his arms. He gave in. She was too sweet, too near, and propinquity—

"Mary—sweet Mary Flyn, I love you, love you!"

She felt his kiss of passion on her lips. She fought to free herself, and the flash of wrath that came shook her slender figure. He held her close and closer, kissing her lips again and again. Her fury settled in a shiver, and she stood rigid in his embrace.

"Sweetheart—Mary, only one little moment against so many years to come—" he pleaded.

"I should like to kill you for this!"

Her voice was like ice to the heat of his emotion. He released her. The pounding of his heart almost suffocated him. She stood tensely straight, her lifted chin trembling. "So you mean to ruin a very wonderful friendship?" she asked, and this time there was a hint of sadness in the asking.

In a low voice, and choked with emotion, he answered her: "But it is love with me."

"Any one can love!" she flashed. "But men—and friendship! Bah!" She turned and walked rapidly down the beach; Pall followed.

"Mary, you must not go through the grounds alone—"

Whirling, she spoke furiously. "Of whom should I be afraid—but you? These blacks would not touch me! You—you—"

With the suspicion of a sob she stopped abruptly.

That night Pall's head and heart were abuzz. A hope that raced crazily through his brain ignored entirely Mary Flyn's fury; it was born solely of his own desire. His whole being was keyed up to a high pitch. He now knew how badly he wanted her—and he vowed to get her—some way, any way. He spent the night in feeding his passion with foolish hopes. Toward morning he slept a fitful sleep, frequently broken and troubled by grotesque dreams.

The next day at noon, Bob came home. Pall saw Mary standing in her doorway. She wore a blue dress with roses on it, and dainty white slippers. Her lovely hair was drawn beautifully back. He saw her raise both arms, clasp Bob's neck; saw Bob's arms holding her tenderly close for a long sweet moment. He heard distinctly Mary's happy "Oh, Bobbie dear! I should have died if you hadn't come soon!" and Flyn's "Poor little girl! Been awfully lonesome?" And then they went inside.

Pallister crept up the trail and lay face downward on the moist soil under the leafy lattice work. A wisp of wind, faint and velvety, fanned over him. After a while the rigidity in the hands grasping tender ferns relaxed. He arose. His slender frame straightened, as a young tree after a storm. He threw back his head and cursed.

Action! He must have action, something sane in the face of the desperate jealousy that assailed him. A bird with iridescent feathers flashed low to the ferny undergrowth, and up to the scented China-berry blossoms. He thought of Mary's glistening, silken head, and of the sweetness of her—in his arms at the waves' edge. Stumbling down the trail he cursed again—at a dog that ran from a palm hut to snuff his legs.

At the barns he spoke roughly to Julio, ordering his pony pronto. He then set to searching through the dark harness shed. Julio appeared at the doorway to announce that the pony was saddled and waiting for *el señor*. Then, as Pallister continued his search, the brown boy asked: "*Que busca Vd.?*"—what are you looking for?

"*La soga*"—the rope—growled Pallister.

"Rope—*grande?*" Julio asked. "*Esta aqui, señor.*" Julio used an English word whenever a chance offered itself. He led the way to the tool room and pointed out the

coil of strong rope that lay in the corner. Pallister, mounted on his scraggly, gray pony, ordered Julio to carry the rope to the beach bathhouse, and also to bring his tools. He raced the pony over the mile of gravelly road that stretched between the barns and the swimming beach, where a palm hut to be used as a bathhouse was in process of construction. He set furiously to work nailing the rounded boards into place. When Julio arrived Pallister ordered him to lay the coil of rope inside the hut on the floor, and to get to work carrying palm leaves for the thatch.

It was a scorching afternoon and he worked himself into a furious sweat. Julio watched him surreptitiously, but sensing his taciturnity, avoided conversation—and Julio loved to talk to Americanos. He had spent a year in Porto Rico, and some day he would have enough saved to go to the States and work as a carpenter. With this end in view, he strove laboriously to learn English.

Sitting precariously near the edge of the frail roof form, and leisurely laying palm leaves one upon the other and overlapping, he wondered at Pallister's furious energy. Usually "Señor Palleester" sat on the bench under the coconut trees—an overseer merely, to see that he—Julio—and black Victoriana did not shirk. And if, by chance, la Señora Chiquita came riding her little black pony by the beach road, the khaki-clad overseer had no longer eyes or ears for his two *carpinteros*. But the *señora* did not come to-day—and Señor Palleester pounded nails through royal palm and swore.

At the first *cling-clang* of the five o'clock bell on the hill, Julio slid easily to the ground. Pallister, after inspecting the leaf roof, remarked that *mañana por la mañana* they would need four or five men to finish the laying.

"Yes," he decided. "The rope and tools will be all right inside until the roof is ready for binding."

At mess supper Helga explained Mary's absence—and Bob's. They had gone picnicking up to the old hill church, and would return by moonlight. They had asked her to accompany them, but it was Bob's first day at hime—he had been away so long—and she knew they would love being alone. Pallister turned away from his food—it sickened him. His face was ashen—why did Helga feed his jealousy? She glanced at him pityingly as he arose and left the dining hall.

On the steps of the hall he lingered, gazing with unseeing eyes down toward the palm-fringed Caribbean, where the watchful early moon hung suspended as if waiting until the sun's rays shimmered out behind the foothills. Helga and her husband came out and stood beside him. With a nervous laugh he brushed past them and was off striding up the hill trail. He did not want human sympathy; he could not endure the sweet seductiveness of the beach glow; rather, he desired the quiet jungle paths, where arching ferns palisaded his way, and the alpinia sent out its heart in pungent, unmistakable fragrance.

Far up the slope he sat down on a log at the trail's edge, staring with wide open eyes up through the leafy interstices—and wondering why he felt this burning jealousy of Mary Flyn's husband; why he had loved her at the first; why he had dreamed of possessing her, and what had nourished his desire into hope.

Within him fought the warring elements of fire, self-ridicule, envy and sadness. He had never been able to see the philosophy of right and wrong. At cards, or the races —"cleverness" and bribery had been "all right if you can get away with it." But Mary—she loved Bob—and believed in friendship! Over him came the memory of the loving greeting he had witnessed between husband and wife—and he cursed aloud. A ragged, aimless-footed black boy on the path above, frightened, broke into a run.

Suddenly, from a small cloud in the zenith, a cool shower fell on the warm hillside, while the moon shone gloriously on, silvering the rippling Caribbean in the distance. On the ancient wide trail below him the pound-pound of ponies' hoofs sounded—and Mary Flyn's happy laugh. They were racing home through the shower. And then the wet silence of the night was broken only by the quiet drip-drip of glistening water drops from freshened leaves. Pall wondered

if he could bear it, this thought so bitter—of Mary and Bob together—always. He moved from his log; started down the trail; the rain had made the ground soft. He slipped. He would try to sleep—and tomorrow—

The next day broke dull, dark and soundless. By noon the sky had a steely hot sheen, and the heavy fronds of the coconut palms draggled in the heat. Thin black clouds wavered in the humidity. By four o'clock it was insufferably warm.

Pallister, leaning against the beach hut, watched a foam patch that floated on the restless dark gray water. Far out at the reef where the shore waves began, a black point extended above the surface. Pall thought of sharks—they never came inside the reef—but no, it was a point of coral reef rock. The underwaters must be disturbed—these points seldom showed. The world seemed to stand still. Lord, how hot! Pallister had sent Julio and Victoriana to the barns to work inside. He thought of an ocean plunge to cool himself off. He would swim to the river mouth; give him something to think about. It was a long, hard pull.

"Hello, Pall! Come on, let's hit 'em!"

He turned to see Bob and Helga Jolson in bathing suits, trotting side by side down the gravelly road. Behind them straggled Lars Jolson, his red, outstanding ears flopping. Mary was not with them.

Pall assented bleakly. Entering the hut he changed to his bathing suit. There were as yet no hooks in the bathhouse, so he precisely folded his khaki clothes and lay them on the rope coil in the corner.

In the water he felt better; some of the heaviness of heart that had all but suffocated him during the last two days and the interminable nights was lifted by the exhilarating coolness of the flash of spray. He started down shore to the river mouth. Helga and Bob, far out, riding the breakers easily, waved beckoning hands. He dived to the bottom, felt a pull, came up far beyond the shore waves. Ah! The undertow.

The waves were suddenly thrown higher—and the foam patch had thickened. He began to struggle. Lars, on the sand, watched him. He tried to dive shoreward. The tow drew him seaward instead. A great smooth-bosomed, silver-crested roller gathered him in as the octopus infolds its prey, and sucked him down. He thought of Mary—her fear of the sea—as the water churned him under and shouted in his ears. Up—up on the surface again he caught a glimpse of the sky and heavy clouds flocking in black phalanxes.

Before the next wave engulfed him he had perhaps five seconds to adjust himself to a treading position, and to poise for a leap through the wall of roaring water. This saved him from being drawn under. If he could stay in the surface waters until the ever-increasing volume of rollers bore him in! He could still think; but the waves were beating the reason out of him. He did not remember afterward how Lars had waded in between the great water cliffs, dragged him nearer shore, and how they were both dashed high and dry by a superwave.

Coming to his senses, Pallister found himself lying on the sand; the murky air seemed to inclose him; a strange, ominous tattoo far off down the sky aroused him from his vacant staring. It was like the roll of a monstrous drum. He lifted his head, looked about him; saw Lars, his face gray-white, frantically waving his arms toward the foaming sea. Pallister got dizzily to his feet.

In the trough of the rollers, through a patch of foam, Helga was swimming furiously on the surface—and seaward. Bob Flyn was under. Helga's brave thought was of Mary. "Oh, what will Mary do? What of Mary? I must get him—must—"

A churning breaker coming in boomed over the reef and came on. She felt herself grasped, turned over and over, but fighting, she did not go down. She caught a glimpse of a floating face borne upward, and a hand that grasped at the air. A few strokes and she reached the hand, gave it a mighty pull, an encouraging clasp.

"Bob!" she gasped. "Swim easy! On top! Jump the waves—now!"

Mary Flyn, skimming swiftly beachward, paused apprehensively. Through the post-like grove of palm trunks, she could see ocean spray rising far into the air.

"I never saw the waves like that before," she thought. "No swimming to-night. They'll be lying in the sand."

She ran on, paused again as she became conscious of a dull roar from the darkening horizon line.

"What can it be?" A furious puff of wind whipped her hair about her face. Before she could tuck it under her tight cap the air was morbidly still again. The atmosphere weighed like a load on her lungs. A fearful presentiment tore at her heart. Panting, she flashed through the grove.

She saw two figures, Lars and Pallister, silhouetted against the spray. Pallister stood still, as if stunned into immobility. Lars ran up and down, frantically beckoning. He called to Pall, and started wildly toward the foaming sea that was now rolling in, in solid wave walls.

Mary screamed.

"Lars! Lars! You cannot swim! Don't, don't!"

Then with a woman's divination she cried: "Where is Bob?"

Lars did not hear her. He hesitated at the foam's edge. Pallister stood rigid—sinister, and bleak-eyed.

"What is it? Oh, Pall, what is it?"

A solid wall of water collapsed on the sand, and Mary saw the two battling in its trough. There was nothing in their favor. Each sea as it lifted them and then overwhelmed them bore them a little nearer the land; but they were immediately sucked outward and downward again. The two faces were purplish-gray; Helga was almost exhausted; Bob struggled feebly to keep up. A few more rollers and he would go down with the undertow and stay.

"Get them out! Get them out! Get a rope!" screamed Mary. Running to Pallister, she grasped his hand. "Help them, Pall! Get a rope!"

He coldly shook his head. "There is nothing I can do, Mary. It would mean death to go in after them—and I have no rope."

"Hunt one! Oh, back in the grove there might be a rope—on a donkey—or a wire from that fence! Come, help me, Pall—a wire—"

Pallister stirred, his apathy disappeared. "I'll run over to the barns for a rope," he said.

"The barns! A mile! They will drown! Oh, Pall—" She stopped and came closer to peer into his face: to try to search the deeps of his shifting eyes. She saw many different emotions depicted on his face, terror, horror, fascination and resolve. She loosened her hold on his hand, dropped it as if it burned her. In the dead air his face flamed—then faded pallidly. He raised his hand to his forehead, threw back his head and looked into her eyes. As if settling a mooted dispute, he said:

"Mary, there is nothing nearer than the barns. I'll go—"

"No! A wire would do—and it is nearer! Oh, Pall—" she pleaded.

But he was off, running in the direction of the barns.

"Lars! Lars!" Mary looked wildly about her. But Lars had gone in—and he could not swim the quietest sea. She caught a glimpse of Bob's face, drawn and ashen. He still struggled faintly, but Helga and Lars—

She threw up her hands in one wild prayer: "God help me! What shall I do?"

Stumbling, she ran over the vine-entangled sand plain to the coconut trees; frantically she pulled at a rusted barbed wire which was stapled to rude posts. She pulled and fought the staples; her hands were torn and bleeding. Looking back at the enormous waves that hammered and battered the shore, she saw black clouds sweep down to whip the foam. Crying, moaning, praying, she struggled to tear loose the wire.

Through the weirdly murky air a ray from the setting sun pierced. Mary dropped the loosened end of wire, brushed the tears from her blinded eyes with her torn hands, and looked about her, searching for some quicker means of rescue. Along the path through the grove padded a native boy with a *machete* in his hand.

"Julio! Julio!" she shouted. He stopped stock still, sought her with his eyes, found her, stared at *La Señora Chiquita* with her blood-stained face and hands. Then he came on. Mary beckoned wildly, screaming: "Julio! *Pronto! Su machete!*"

"*Que la pase, señora?*" he asked.

She succeeded in making him understand; that he must break loose a long wire; that she must have it because some one was in the sea—in danger. Once he paused in his pounding to point to the sky. "*Mal tiempo —mañana,*" he prophesied. Mary, crying, fighting the wires to help, urged him to hurry. Suddenly he stopped hacking at the staple.

"Meester Palleester has rope in bathhouse." He pointed to the unfinished hut. For a moment Mary was stunned. Then, clutching Julio, she ran toward the bathhouse. Julio was by now aroused. He had seen the spray and the foam of the waves.

It was but a minute that it took to drag the coil of rope to the edge of the pounding sea. Lars lay on the sand—the waves had thrown him back before the undertow could drag him down. Helga was floating in the trough—and, oh, thank Heaven! Bob's face showed for an instant—and then disappeared.

"Lars, Lars!" She pounded him to life. "Come! Help us!"

Julio had found a heavy block of wood. They quickly tied one end of the flexible rope about it. Then Julio threw, while Lars and Mary called encouragement to Helga. She could not hear; went under with a wave. Bob came up, appeared to come to life, reached for the rope—and missed. A roller enfolded him. Mary dropped to the sand, sobbing.

Julio looked at her: his saffron face set; he quickly drew in the rope, unfastened it from the block, and stripping off his shirt and trousers, tied it about his naked chest and under his arms. Then giving the coil to Lars, he told him to hold on. After the next wave rolled in and collapsed in a screen of spray, Julio went in with the outward drag.

The white, struggling man and the sobbing, praying girl on the sand witnessed a marvelous rescue. Julio had dived for pennies in San Juan Harbor, but he had never battled with tidal wave rollers before.

The incoming water was heavier now, and slower. This gave the rescuer an opportunity to look about him. He first located Bob, who had become stunned by the pounding of the breakers and was at their mercy. Julio glanced seaward, saw a cloud of spray at the reef. He swam swiftly, headed for Bob; he circled him, wrapping the rope tightly about him—and then both were engulfed.

Coming up, almost insensible from the blow he had received from the pounding water, he raised his hand in signal to Lars to draw in the rope. At that instant he saw Helga, just beneath him in the water; her face was covered with seaweed; she was gently slipping outward. He dived, caught her arm, held until the sucking lessened. Twice he lost her and recaught her. He could not reach the surface to signal, but with a drowning man's grip he held on to the white arm.

Lars and Mary pulled. It was raining great flashes, solid, slanting sheets of water that chuted drops like pebbles down in unbroken streams.

Not one of the five at the foam's edge could remember afterward how it was done. The two on the shore, blinded and beaten by the rain, knew only to pull. The rollers aided in landing the three helpless bodies on the rope, but there was the terrible fear that there would be no life left—that they were dragging in—corpses.

It was Julio who revived first, who, braving the grove where winging fronds and dozens of coconuts were thudding to the ground, found a board for stretcher. Together, he and Lars carried the unconscious Helga through the obscuring sheet to the partly roofed bathhouse. There Lars fell on his knees by the still figure and began chafing the wet hands.

Back by the roaring sea, Mary Flyn lay sobbing in the flooded sand, her arms thrown across her husband's breast. Julio, returning to help her, stooped over to touch her, went dizzy and toppled. Then Bob opened his eyes.

"Lord!" he gasped. Mary drew back, stared at him, then about her. She shouted for joy—a wild cry of happiness that pierced the tumult of the elements.

"Oh, Bob! Bobbie! You're not dead!" She began trying to drag him to his feet. He smiled at her through the wetting deluge. Seeing Julio, she shook him.

"Come, brave brown boy, let's go where

it's dry," she said. Julio roused, and together they got Bob to the hut. Helga, revived, was crying weakly.

The unfinished roof was but little better than nothing to the saturated figures crouching on the rough floor under the soaked palm roof. The downpour slacked; dusk came with a murky pall. Teeth began to chatter, but spirits revived as there came the realization of their marvelous escape.

Helga and Lars talked quietly in Swedish; Bob and Julio in Spanish. Mary, shivering in her corner, was thinking of Pallister. A horrible suspicion was creeping into her mind. The look on his face as he left her to run to the barns for a rope! And his clothing, here in the bathhouse—she had lifted them from the coil of rope herself! Had he been too frightened, too stunned to remember that the coil was here? But his eyes, bleak and sinister—

A honk sounded above the rain. Pallister had brought a car. No one thought to look into his face—no one but Mary. To her it was enigmatic. What had he expected to find, she wondered. Lars told him of the rope in the hut, and of Julio's remarkable rescue. Julio eyed Señor Pallister slantingly. Pall turned his face from Mary. Pity came into her heart. She *knew* what he had meant to do—*but to think that he would have sacrificed Helga, too!* She shivered. And then came chill after chill.

During the night and the next two days the sky poured torrents onto the earth. The sea rose higher and higher, until the shore waters were seething caldrons of foam. The tidal wave flooded the groves and washed away everything within its reach—huts, fences, uprooted trees. There was a steady wind, though not strong enough to be devastating. A week later word came of terrible wreckage by wind on the eastern islands.

And Mary Flyn was ill with the hideous jack — pneumonia. Pallister braved the storm, risking his life and his gray pony's, to go to the capital; but without avail. The storm had been much worse there, and the military physicians had more patients than they could manage without taking the hazardous trip with him—back to Mary.

Heartsick and cold in his helpless misery, he retraced his way. The storm was abating. Occasionally, along the road he met bedraggled and tatterdemalion blacks trudging through the mud, or riding water-soaked burros.

Six miles out the road ran close to the sea, but was protected from the tidal wave by a cliff of coral rock. On this cliff stood the ruins of an ancient Spanish fort. A muddy path led to the fort. Pallister could see the foaming breakers dash high above the cliff. Splashing down the path and through the ruined fort walls, he dismounted and stood at the edge of the coral wall looking out to sea.

It was a grand sight—and a fascinating one. At two-minute intervals great waves came riding in, mountain-high, topped with bannerlike clouds of spray, to hurl themselves with satanic fury against the rocks, to recede and leave a seething whirlpool below him.

Pallister looked down into the dizzying profundity of this whirlpool. In it he seemed to see faces — Bob Flyn's and Helga's—and Marta's.

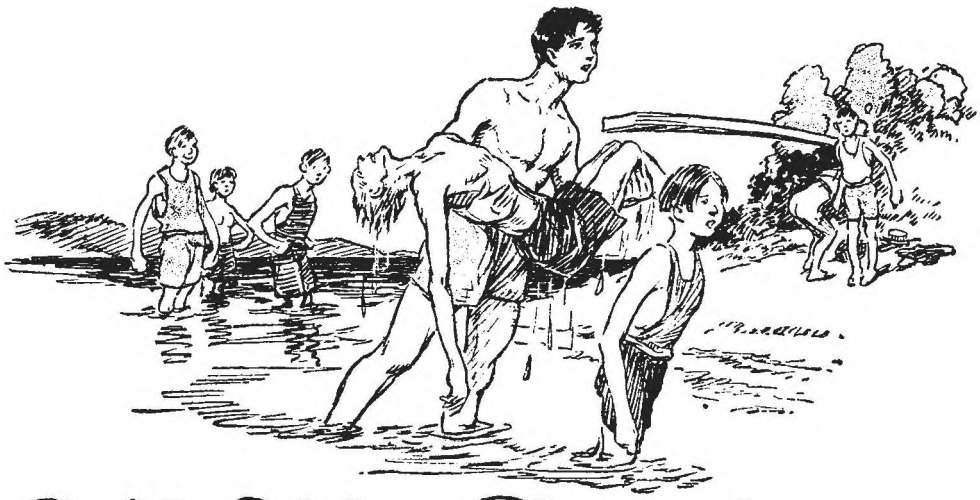
The whirlpool fascinated him. It would be so easy to slip off the rock and join the faces below. And why not? What was there, for him, worth living for? But, no, that would be the foolish way.

He dragged himself back from the cliff, threw up his head and gazed skyward. To get back to Mary—that was what he wanted above all else—and there might still be a way to his desire, somewhere far down the future.

Back in the fort a creature crawled from behind a ruined wall—an ancient, wrinkled crone of a woman in the bedraggled and tattered weeds of the beggar. Softly as a shadow moves she glided toward the slippery rock on which he stood. He felt himself slipping, slipping—gently pushed from behind—down to the faces below.

A hollow laugh, a scream of triumph, and "*Soy yo! Soy yo! La madre de Marta! La madre de Marta!*" ("It is I! It is I! Marta's mother! Marta's mother!") floated over the precipice.

The rain ceased. There was a rift in the west over the hills. Only the ocean thundered on.



# The Kid Brother

**By JACK BECHDOLT**

THERE was so vast a difference between the step-brothers that their relationship on the paternal side was always a matter of surprise to strangers.

Bob Carrol, christened Robert Renfrew Carrol, even as a boy was handsome. By some miracle of nature he seemed to escape altogether that weedy, long legged, squeaky voiced period that embarrasses young males and often renders them miserable for years of maturity. Bob passed from the beloved toddler to Fauntleroyhood, to sturdy, red-cheeked boyishness, to alert, confident young manhood by delightfully imperceptible gradations. Dark of hair and eyes, handsome of feature, he played all games well, developed a fine body, danced gracefully, made friends without effort, and eventually became one of the leading young business men of Seven Oaks.

William—he never was called Bill for obvious reasons—was the younger, the son of Oscar Carrol's second wife. A tow-haired boy, he began life ailing and continued ailing until he had exhausted nature's catalogue of annoyances. As a consequence he was slender, undeveloped, short sighted. He never tanned in summer, but burned miserably. Flies, gnats, ants, beetles, and mosquitoes marked him as easy meat. Poison oak and ivy had their way with him. He bruised and bled and generally made himself unsightly through no fault of his own.

Wearing the spectacles he was made to assume to correct his short sightedness, William was the most goggling, reedy, leggiest, squeakiest-voiced adolescent in Seven Oaks. He was universally known as " Bob Carrol's kid brother." His biography is the story of an ineffectual battle to live down that title.

The boyhood swimming pool of Seven Oaks was about half a mile north of the village, at a bend in the mild mannered little river. William learned to dog-paddle when he was seven. Bob, then nearing eleven, was taking up the art of diving in a serious way. William watched his brother's diving with owl-like attention. He attempted his first dive before he was even sure he could dog-paddle back to the bank.

A long time William stood that day on the muddy bank, a foot or two above the pool, nude, so shockingly thin it seemed a breeze might blow him away, blue with chill, in a mortal funk. He didn't like the water, he didn't care much about swimming, and he could as readily have thrown himself under an express train as hurl his fragile body, head down, at the pool. But Bob dived, and William was going to learn!

The others jeered him and dared him until they tired of the sport. Then, unexpectedly, came the splash. William had dived.

It was probably the worst dive in the history of boydom. The shrill, cruel laughter of youth rose to screams of comic ecstasy, hesitated and faded to awed silence. Bob Carrol flashed off the springboard in a beautiful arc, his body cutting the water with scarcely a ripple. He emerged in a moment, bringing William from the bottom.

Even in his state of coma there was, on William's face, a comical expression of bewilderment and mild protest. They drained William out, pumped some air into his lungs and set him aside to dry and get over his nausea. Finally he emerged from the bushes shakily and stood again on the bank, the tortures of realization compounding with those of anticipation. But he dived again, and again was fished up and restored to realization of his misery.

William took to rising early and disappearing on a mysterious mission. When he came home late to breakfast his wet hair lay sleek as a river rat's. The jeers of the gang at the swimming hole were hard to bear, so he practiced in secret. If anybody had been there to watch they might have seen a wispy, shivering small boy in passionate earnest hurling himself time and again at the surface of the pool, emerging gasping from the stinging effect of his "belly-flop" to dog-paddle to the bank and try all over again.

One day, this was the middle of the following summer, William astonished the gang by a clean, sweet dive off the springboard. He climbed out dripping, shook himself and followed the first surprise with a second thriller, a back flip. He had other thrillers in his repertoire, mastered at God knows what cost in pain and trouble. But interest in his act ended suddenly. His big brother Bob was showing the gang some fancy shooting with his new air rifle. William was left to dive by himself.

The air rifle was partnership property by terms of the deed of gift from the boys' father. William had difficulty in getting his share of it, nevertheless, and when he had it he couldn't hit a target at all, let alone a bull's-eye. His defective eyesight made shooting a seeming impossibility.

Bob found him practicing one day and watched with ill-concealed amusement. "Here, kid," he ordered good naturedly, "look! Get a bead on the thing, see? Like this. Then pull easy and steady—see?"

"You give that back!" William cried, snatching the weapon. "I can shoot without you bossing me."

In time William did learn to shoot, but then the air rifle had lost its vogue. Shinny was the game, and Bob was a wonder at shinny.

Bob Carrol was a football star in his freshman year at high school. He remained an idol throughout his four years. William could not make even the scrub team. The game they played in those days called for weight. One scrimmage served to send William off the field with a broken collar bone. But they let him wear a sweater and sit on the side lines with a ready bucket of water and sponge, "because he was Bob Carrol's kid brother." He gritted his teeth at that title, but he served the school loyally.

At the State university William was Bob Carrol's kid brother again. Illness had postponed his freshman year until after Bob's graduation. To William the title was a hateful epithet. In former years he had fought, usually unsuccessfully, when boys called him Bob Carrol's kid brother. Unable to fight a State university, he resolved to outshine Bob and live down the title. A quiet, homely, rather awkward, tow haired young man, William lacked Bob's electric personality and spectacular success, but the friends he made slowly remained steadfastly loyal to him, and he went after scholastic honors with a grim determination amounting to obsession.

He became a star of the debating society. He wrote leaders for the literary monthly that attracted considerable attention. His work on the weekly paper got him a correspondenceship for a metropolitan daily—unusual recognition. In his sophomore year he was the popular candidate for editor of the monthly, sure of election. Just before that triumph his father died and he was called home to Seven Oaks. At mention of his name alumni of the institution scratched their heads and said, "Who, William? Oh, yes, Bob Carrol's kid brother!"

The year he left college Bob Carrol formed a partnership with his father to exploit some acreage they plotted into residential lots. Several factories had located at Seven Oaks. The town was growing, there was demand for property, and the Carrols started toward success. The village said it was due to Bob's hustle and modern ideas. Bob inherited the business at his father's death, it being understood he would look after the future of his younger brother. Seven Oaks said, "Bob Carrol's going to make things hum, see if he don't. He's the kind of young fellow this town needs." When anything was said about William it was usually the prediction that he was lucky to be Bob's kid brother.

William received five thousand dollars, his share of the money left by his father. The day the estate was settled, as he handed William a check, Lawyer Ezra Penny said, "That's quite a bit of money, William. What you planning to do with it all?"

William mumbled something about being undecided.

"Your father would want to see you use it wisely," the lawyer went on kindly. "It would hurt him if you frivoled it away—"

"Yes, sir," William agreed. Though he was in his twenty-second year, his voice still betrayed him at times with ridiculous treble squeaks, so he used it as little as possible.

The lawyer studied him shrewdly, a slender, pallid young man with restless hands, always ill at ease. "I tell you, William," he exclaimed heartily, "take my advice and stick to Brother Bob. Bob's going to do big things in this town. There's a good chance for you in his business. Invest your money and stick to Bob and you'll find it the wisest thing you ever did in your life!"

"Um-m-m!" said William, more ill at ease than ever. "Well, good-by, sir."

Lawyer Penny watched William down the street from his window and shook his head. "A piddling young fellow," he thought; "lucky he's got a brother that's up and coming."

Next day the village was astonished to learn that William had gone—departed bag and baggage for parts unknown. Bob Carrol did not explain much.

"He wants to try his luck by himself," was his brief explanation. "He's welcome to, if he feels that way."

There had been something of a scene that night after dinner in the old Carrol house. Bob had made his brother a very generous proposition. "What you want to do is go into business with me, kid. This real estate game is going to make a lot of money. Now I can take you on as a salesman, and if you make good—and you can make good with a little coaching from me—I'll take you into full partnership. You stick to me and you'll never regret it."

At this point William flung out of his chair, tense and white.

"You go to hell!" he shouted, and his voice went up to a childish squeak that added to his rage. "You can take your real estate business and go to hell! Stick here in Seven Oaks, go into business with you and have the whole town say forever afterward that you made my fortune? Stick to you and be called Bob Carrol's kid brother the rest of my life? Say—" Words failed him. He rushed from the room and began to pack his bag.

Bob had made the proposition in all good faith. He felt a little virtuous about doing William a good turn. He failed utterly to understand William's reasons for flying into a rage. From his point of view he had every right to feel put out, downright angry even, at such base ingratitude.

William left town on the midnight train.

## II.

William meant to get so far from Seven Oaks that nobody would have heard of Bob

Carrol or his kid brother. When he got to such a place he meant to make a gorgeous success of himself. Then he would come home and show Seven Oaks the stuff William was made of. But never, so long as he lived—this he swore with every quivering ounce of energy in his frail body—would he return to Seven Oaks and Bob until his ambition was achieved. He had just one purpose in life, and the same stubbornness or courage or high ideal or whatever it was that had caused him to dive again and again into the old swimming hole until he could dive as well as Bob, was going to hold him to his rocky road.

Seattle looked like a good place. The city was at the height of its real estate boom. An engineering genius was moving unnecessary hills into the harbor almost overnight. Fortunes were being made as rapidly. Best of all, nobody in Seattle seemed to have heard of Seven Oaks or Bob Carrol or, if anybody had heard, he was too busy to recall the fact.

William invested his patrimony in an option on a corner lot that promised to double in value within ninety days. But within that ninety days the boom, which had been wabbling on its unsteady pinnacle, fell with a sickening thud. It was no consolation to William to know he had lots of company in misfortune. And at that particular zero hour he ran across an alumnus of his university.

"What, not Bob Carrol's kid brother!" the alumnus exclaimed, squeezing his hand hard. "Say, boy, you've got to come out and take dinner with us to-night and tell me all about old Bob!"

"Sorry," William said hastily, "I'm sailing for San Francisco at eight o'clock."

William learned the Pacific Coast thoroughly in the next few years. Learned, also, that lumbering has its ups and downs, that the shipping business is a suicidal form of gambling, that a small-town grocery can't be made to grow much faster than the community it serves, that insurance pays men of his kind a steady income but no fortune, that keeping books is a job no decent man would give his dog, but clerking in a department store is worse.

William did not rise to any dizzy peaks in his successful moments, and he descended to some dismal depths and sometimes lost hope. He never lost his stubborn determination to become a bigger man than his brother Bob. Living in an optimistic, new country, where conditions changed rapidly, he felt, even in his darkest hours, that the big chance was just around the corner.

He heard of Bob occasionally, from him never. Bob was going big in Seven Oaks. He had cleaned up a small fortune from the realty business. He married a local heiress. He was the president of the Chamber of Commerce, and was talked of as a State Senator at next election. Bob Carrol was a big man—bigger than the small city Seven Oaks had become. William heard these reports, turned pale and gritted his teeth. He'd show them yet!

Early in 1917 William had the agency for a motor truck in a thriving young city that served a trucking territory. He got a good close-up of his fortune at last. Orders poured in on him—orders that would be filled in two months. His profits were generous, and so great was the demand for trucks that there was no trouble securing advance payment on deliveries. Success was as certain as daylight—then, one day, the country went to war. Overnight William failed. The factory which he represented could not fill orders. Its entire output was needed by the War Department.

The army would not have William on any terms. His brother Bob, he heard, had won a captaincy after his course in one of the government school camps.

## III.

PURPOSELY unannounced, William came home. He brought a wife with him. She had been his stenographer in the war days when he had charge of getting out airplane spruce for the government. William loved her for herself, but the fact that her family, while not rich, was socially prominent in the Pacific Northwest, that she herself was a very highly finished social product and a glittering ornament to any home, immensely increased his satisfaction. She was not the least part of his triumph—the success he

sought so many years, though that success included two modern city business blocks, a lumber camp and mill, a fleet of five steam schooners, directorship in four corporations, a town house, a country house, two motor cars, and a cruising power boat worthy the name yacht.

William came home to Seven Oaks unannounced. He meant to blaze like a meteor across the Seven Oaks sky. This was his day, hard won after years of bitter disappointment. At last he was a bigger man than Bob. He had ceased to be a kid brother.

William came home, and the first news he heard—it was Lawyer Ezra Penny encountered by chance on the street who told him—was that Bob was dead. Bob had died two weeks before. William's address was unknown. He kept it unknown, anticipating his triumph, and thus he came home to a shock.

Bob Carrol died, the town's greatest man. Had he lived another year he might have exchanged the title of colonel, won during the war, for Governor. His success was not alone financial, though he was reputed unusually rich. It was a personal success, a vivid glory reflected wherever his magnetic self had been known. Living, he had been the big man of Seven Oaks; dead, he was a popular hero. Bob died a widower without child. His will, which had just been made public, left his fortune to found and maintain a free public library in the town.

William was shocked by the news—tremendously shocked. He mourned Bob's death sincerely, recalling all the fine traits, the lovable things about Bob. When the shock lessened, when custom staled the poignancy of his grief at his stepbrother's taking, he realized that he was back in the same old Seven Oaks, obliged wherever he went to listen to the praises of Bob and to sing those praises himself. It was no time to boast to Seven Oaks what he had done for himself. He was still Bob Carrol's kid brother.

## IV.

Lawyer Penny called William to his office, sent his stenographer on an errand, and closed doors and windows to insure absolute secrecy. Lawyer Penny was administrator of Bob Carrol's estate, and the old man was greatly upset.

"I don't know what to do, William," the lawyer said distressedly. "Of course my duty's plain enough, but that doesn't make it any pleasanter. Anyway, you being Bob's next of kin, I thought you ought to know first—"

"Know what?" William asked.

"It's a shock. It will be a blow to the town." Penny shook his head mournfully. He fixed William with a sudden look of shrewd cunning, lips pursed, eyes twinkling. "You know, William, I've had my suspicions for some time that things were about like that with Bob—"

"And how were things with Bob?" William insisted.

Things with Bob were in a bad way, it seemed. Penny had completed an inventory of Robert Carrol's estate. There was not enough to build a memorial library. There was scarcely enough to dig the foundation where a library might grow, provided somebody else donated the property. In other words, Bob Carrol died a comparatively poor man.

With the lawyer William went over his step-brother's business. As he studied and delved, tracing the rise and fortunes of Bob Carrol from that first realty venture he made with their father, William began to see Bob Carrol as he really was. He was shocked by the revelation, but the more he thought about Bob the less was his surprise. All his life Bob Carrol had been a brilliant opportunist. His good luck was almost uncanny. His business judgment was so bad that even the hardened William shuddered.

Time and again only accident—that persistent good luck that followed Bob—had kept him from bankruptcy and disgrace. He had practically ruined the business his father left him. He had sunk all his wife's fortune in bad investments. His own money went the same way. Yet one lucky turn or another kept him always afloat, to all outward appearances the big man of Seven Oaks. And at the last, with disaster threatening him again, a disaster which seemed inescapable, Bob had brilliantly

died, his last act, the grandest gesture of all —a free gift of all he owned to found the Robert Renfrew Carrol free public library in Seven Oaks.

Brilliant Bob! Lucky Bob!

William thought back to his boyhood. Bob had the luck then, good health, a fine body, a charming, friend-winning manner. And he, William, had plodded in his footsteps, slaving to reach the things which fell into Bob's hands. From the days of the swimming hole it had been the same story: Bob doing the fancy diving, William the painful floundering; Bob winning the applause, William the jeers. From the days of the swimming hole until his last days when Bob's investments had been buttered so thin that there seemed no human way to save them—and death made him a greater man than ever!

A shocking thought occurred to William. Bob had reached the end of his rope at last! It was his own turn to triumph now, and nobody could say he had not earned his triumph by agony of flesh and spirit. Now Seven Oaks would find out who was the really great man!

William was ashamed of the idea—and fascinated by it. Every argument he could bring against it only seemed to prove that he was entitled to the triumph. He studied it over silently in Lawyer Penny's office, a man of about forty who looked fifty because of his slight, shrunken body, lined face and tow hair fading into unsightly white.

"Well," said the lawyer finally, "I thought you'd better know first. Nothing to do, I guess, but file the inventory with the court. It's going to be a blow to this town—not only on account of the library, but because of everybody admiring Bob so. He was a sort of king around here—a model for boys to copy, to emulate, you might say."

William laid his hand on a thin bundle of securities and spoke reluctantly in his uninteresting monotone. "How about this Consolidated Trolley stock?"

The lawyer snorted. "You could buy the whole company for a few German marks to-day! Looked like a good thing when it was organized. If they had run that interurban service to the State capitol it would have been a good thing; but politics got mixed up in it. Lord, I thought Bob had sold that out before the crash—he told me he did!"

"Have you asked about the stock lately?"

"Huh! Might's well ask after the health of Julius Cæsar—or old man Noah."

"You never can tell about these traction things," William murmured. "Better write some good city broker, anyhow. And say, while you're inquiring just hold off your inventory. Say a week or two—there might be something we've overlooked. Give me a little time to dig around. Bob seems to have been sort of careless about his affairs—might find something. Somehow, it doesn't sound like Bob, flattening out this way. Bob was a big man!"

"Biggest man this town will ever see!" Penny agreed. "Take time to look around if you think you can do anything. God knows I'm not anxious to give the town this bad news!"

William promised to do his best, and went his way. Penny felt hopelessly discouraged—more discouraged than before he had consulted William. "If the case was just reversed and it was Bob who was trying to help!" he sighed. "Gosh! I'd expect 'most anything to happen!"

William went to a broker in the city and gave him secret orders and a liberal account to draw upon. Then he came back to Seven Oaks and continued to do nothing in particular and be even less than that in the eyes of the town.

But when the inventory of Bob Carrol's estate was filed he turned out to be richer than anybody expected. A reorganization of Consolidated Trolleys had made the old securities worth a fortune. Other investments, seemingly hopeless, turned out gold mines. Lawyer Penny felt vaguely that William had a lot to do with the miracle, yet every time he looked at William the thought seemed utterly untenable. William never gave him cause to believe otherwise.

William returned to Seven Oaks for a brief visit two years after his brother's

death. He stood before the newly finished memorial library and read the inscription over its door and the corner stone which recorded the greatness of Robert Renfrew Carrol in everlasting granite.

William felt the same envious irritation he had known since he had striven to win some of the applause Bob had got so easily by diving into the swimming pool. But he managed to smile as he murmured, "He deserves it. He certainly deserves a monument from me! If I hadn't had Bob to set the pace I never would have got anywhere —it was trying to catch up with Bob that made a man of me. I ought to be grateful!"

"Confound him!" William burst out aloud, all gratitude forgot. "He beat me all his life and he beat me by dying. Now, I suppose, when they hand me out my heavenly harp I'll find Bob leading the whole blessed orchestra!"

## *SUCH IS LIFE*

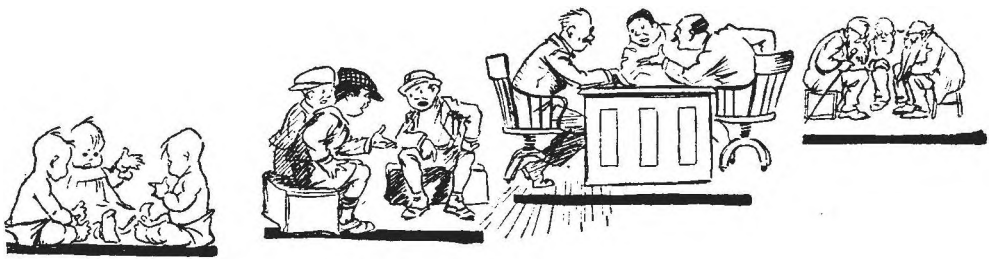
NOW this is the plaint of the average man,
Be his purpose high and pure;
The ever-recurrent flash in the pan
Or he'd fetch the bacon, sure.
With lenient ear do we list him prate,
While we kindred feats recall:
The marvelous drive on the fairway straight—
To the bunker that trapped the ball!

The might-have-been is a haunting plea
(Oh, that inexplainable skid!)
We suck at the sop of the ought-to-be—
The didn't but nearly did.
Aye, that is the record that sticks—the gist
Of the day a-field, to wit:
The thundering Canada goose we missed,
Not the measly teal we hit!

Come men of worth and of proved skill,
Well versed in the angler's lore.
They ought, they should, and they likely will—
But they yawp the yarn of yore.
Go forth. Lay on. We are also booked
To the same old fisherman's luck;
The whale of a trout that we almost hooked,
And the fingerling that we struck!

'Tis a tricksome life one is doomed to lead
Who trots with the hopeful herd;
To grind along on the second speed
And clash in the jump to third.
Hector may look like a promising pup
While he chases his tail through town—
But, ah, the success that fate's holding up
O'er the job that we're holding down!

*Edwin L. Sabin.*



# IZZY KAPLAN'S KOLUMN

***Received via W. O. McGEEHAN***

## CURING THE CONFERENCE EVIL

BAD hebits is what ruined a lot of people and a lot of countries, and if a feller ain't wery careful it would be wery easy for him to get a lot of them, and once you start to skid you would hit the bottom hard before you could help yourseluf.

Here is an example how a feller could start going wrong. To-day I got it a letter from the Photografters' Association. You should read it yourself so you wouldn't call me no liar. Here is what it says:

> Dear Sir—You are inwitationed to attend a conference of the Photografters' Association where we would discussion metters for the good of the business. P. C. S.

You are esking me what it means, "P. C. S." That is the photografters' code for "Please come sober," on account the lest time there was a conference the politz busted into the room and got fresh with a lot of the members and it was a terrible knock to me on account so many people saw them putting me in the politz patrolling wagon. Ain't it funny that if you was riding in a swell limerzine nobody would see you, but if you are riding in the patrolling wagon by special inwitation from headquarters everybody would know you was pinched again?

You esk me if I am going to the conferencing? Me go to a conference with my brains?

Listen, the trouble with the whole world is that everybody is conferencing instead they should be doing a little work and watching the front door for customers. Ever since the war was the whole world ain't been doing nothing but conferencing. In the old country life is chust one conference after another, and what is the results? Well, what is the result of any conference? Nothing. Business in the old country is getting rottener and rottener every day.

When this conferencing business was first started it sounded pretty good. There was big pieces in all the papers about them and everybody was expecting they would make business a whole lot better and make customers loosen up and pay spot cesh. First there was conferences at Paritz and Wersails and then they started to bust out all over Europe. The best brains of the world was conferencing and conferencing.

What did it done to the best brains of the world? Look at Lord George. He ain't got no more chob than a rebbit and he has to write pieces for the papers to pay

his expenses, and Mr. Clementstein, the French feller, is around giving lectures, and I hope he has safed a little something on account he is pretty old to commence to start all over.

After these two fellers had been conferencing for a couple years the firms started to holler about the expense accounts which they was pretty stiff. Then they looked at the new business which they got and it was nix. You know what the Board of Directors done them fellers. They fired them and they got some new salesmen which anybody would have done it.

What I am afraid of is that this conferencing is going to make trouble in the United States. Everybody is conferencing here, and even with my brains I tried it wunst myseluf. You couldn't blame me on account everybody was didding it. It sounded kind of high-toned, and when you are in business it would pay to be a little high-toned, but not too much. There is a end to every limit.

I waited until the first customer was in the front office, and before he could say nothing at all I said: "Oxcoose me a minuite, please, on account I got it a wery important conference." Before he could answer me beck I went into the dark room and I started to conference with the chanitor and the scrub women about cleaning up the place. We had a wery nice conference, but when I went beck in the front office the feller was gone and I found out later he took a little cesh business to that grefter, Moe Koenigsberg, which nothing would make him heppier than to stole one of my customers.

That is what the conferencing hebit done me, but it only done it wunst. If Chon D. Rockerstein himseluf should inwitation me to a conferencing I would have to turn him down. If a feller gets ruined more than wunst it is his own fault.

But there is a lot of conferencing going on in this country, and it is my opinion that this is what is the metter with business and why the price of comicals is going up and the profits is getting smaller and smaller. When you go to call on a customer the boy would told you that he is in a big conference and it was his orders that he couldn't be disturbed. His callender is all marked up with dates which has got to hold conferences and most of them is got the conference hebit so bad that maybe nothing could be done for it.

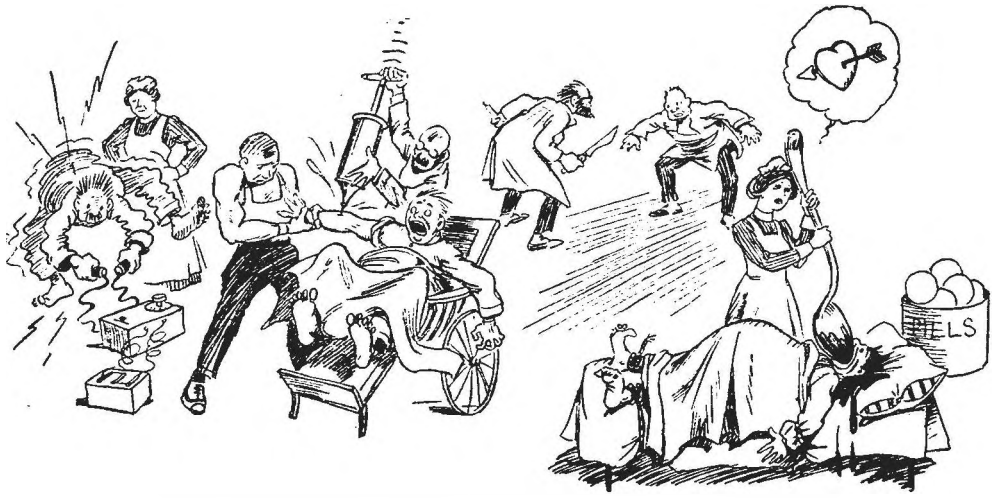
I am thinking that maybe if I could get a little becking that I would start it a hockspital to cure people from conferencing. It is like anything else, you couldn't break it off too sudden on account when a feller has got used to having a lot of conferences every day he couldn't stop quick. It would make him a nerfous wreck.

For a week I would let him have three conferences a day, one after each meal and only in the home where a feller would be sure of the conferencing. The kind of conferences you would run into these days you couldn't trust, and European conferences is the worst.

It all depends upon a feller's will power. When anybody comes sneaking in on him and says: "Come on, have a conference with me. One wouldn't hurt nobody," he got to be able to say: "No." Otherwise he would do nothing all his life but stagger from conference to conference like them European nations.

WHEN HE IS UNDER THE INFLUENCINGS OF A CONFERENCE.

Of course when a feller is run down he is always thinking that a little conferencing



I WOULD START IT A HOCKSPITAL TO CURE PEOPLE FROM CONFERENCING.

would put him on his feet again. It is the same way with Chack Barleycornstein. Very few fellers could take a conference or leave it alone, and the first thing they know they couldn't get along without none. If Mr. Wolstead pessed a law which it would say that there could be only one haluf of one per cent conwersation in conferences it would be one of the swellest laws ever pessed, and everybody would be saying: "What a smart feller that Mr. Wolstead is," instead you could hear nothing but knocks when you mention his name.

And the things that a feller would do and say when he is under the influencings of a conference! When he is in his sober senses he never would done them or said them.

Oi, Oi. Let me get out of here. I thought I was cured, but here I am having a conference with you and busting all my good resolutions. Don't told nobody. People would say: "Where was Izzy Kaplan's brains all the time?"

But maybe it would be all right if we would have a conference once in a while for the sociability of it. Maybe me and you could take our conferences or leave them alone. Pull up a chair and let the conferencing commence to start. I got some good prewar conwersation with me.

ʊ ʊ ʊ

## *A TRIBUTE*

HE thumps the ivories in Mikey's place
One dim flight down; from eight to twelve each night
Presides in state, the tenderloin's delight,
Dispensing syncopation, while his face,
Shoulders and body keep pace with his theme.
Yet there are times I'd swear he'd found his way
Into a realm above the cabaret,
In his slow groping dreamed a nobler dream.
One Sunday evening in the concert hall
Surprised, I found him raptly giving ear
To things of Bach—Beethoven—I sat near
And watched him. He was happiest of all
Who listened. Once he quickly turned his head.
"God! There's a playin' fool!" was all he said.

*Sydney King Russell.*
10 A

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***who want to stay young***

## *Women!*

***who want to look young***

**are now using**

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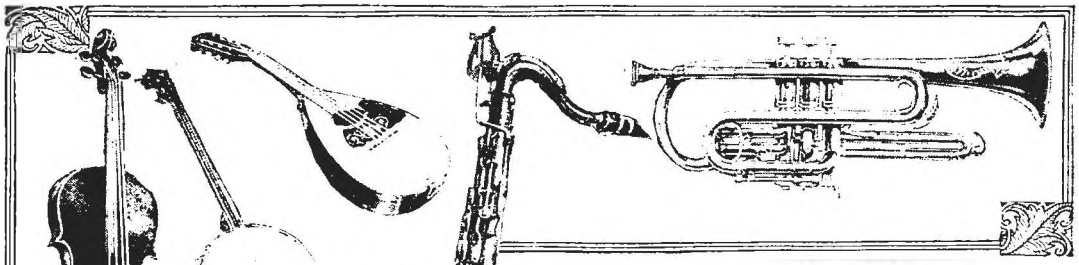

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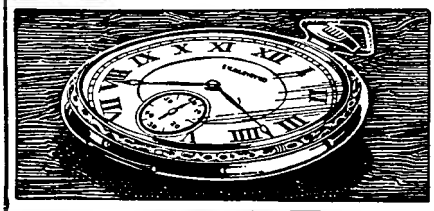

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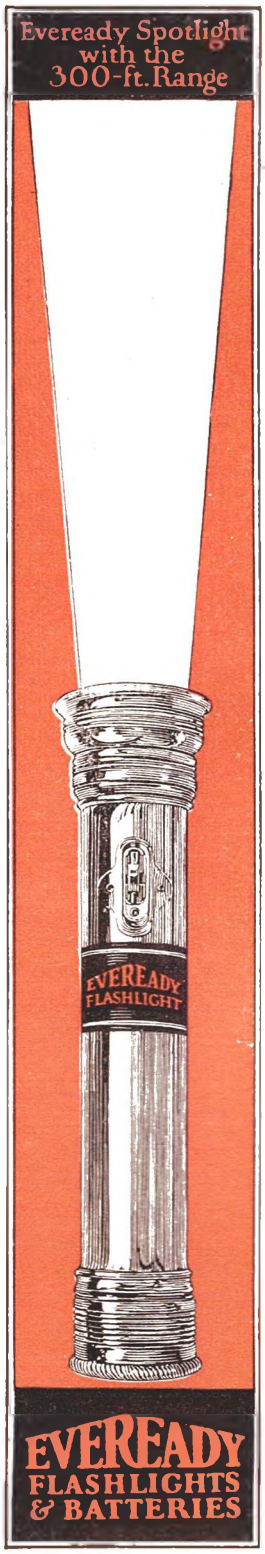


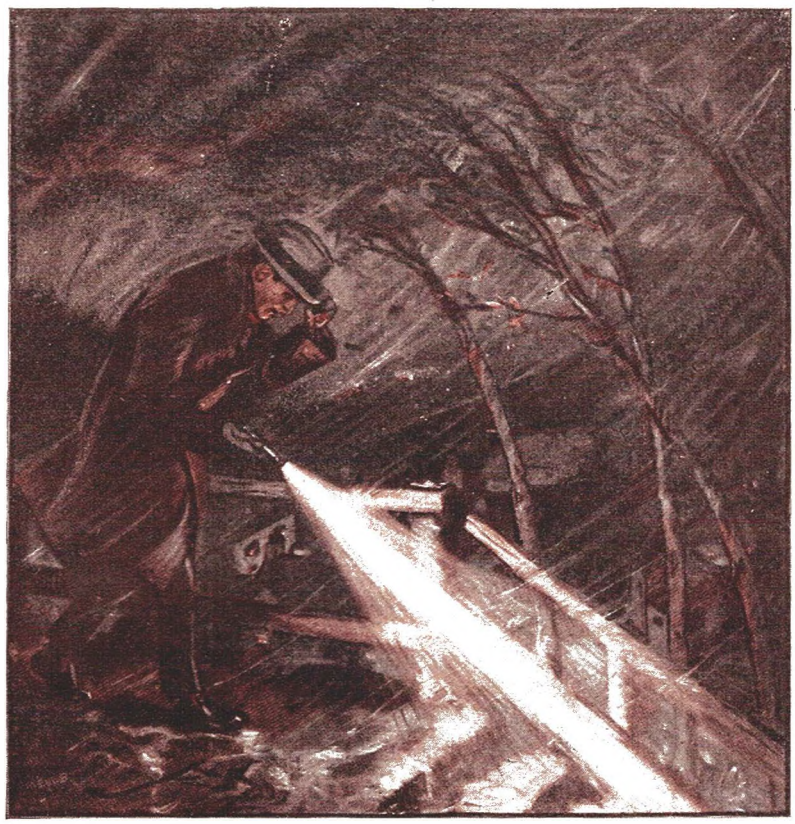

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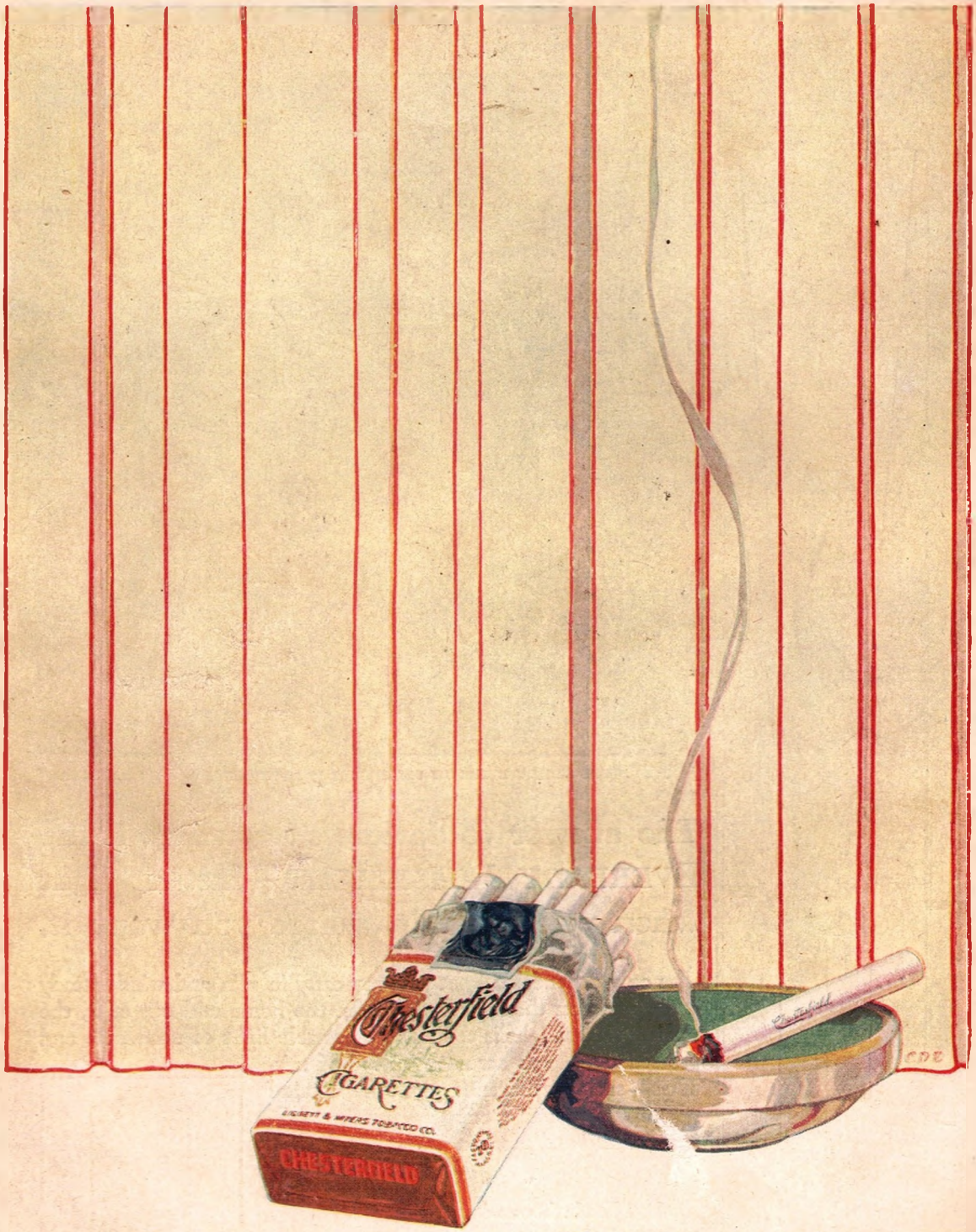


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