

ARGOSY ALL-STORY WEEKLY



Jungle Test

by Kenneth
Perkins

*A Novel of
Courageous
Courtship*

DBEST 34E14

10¢ PER
COPY

JANUARY 13

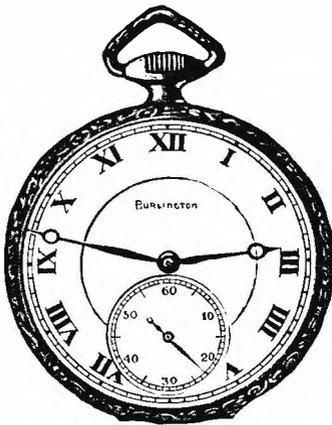
BY THE
YEAR \$4⁰⁰

Missing Page

Inside front cover

21 Jewel Burlington

Just Out
Latest Designs
in Watch Cases
beautifully il-
lustrated in our
booklet. Send
for FREE copy.



Adjusted to the Second
Adjusted to Temperature
Adjusted to Isochronism
Adjusted to Positions

21 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels
25 Year Gold Strata Case
Your choice of Dials
(Including Montgomery R. R. Dial)

New Ideas in Thin Cases

Only **\$5.00**
a Month

And all of this for \$5.00 per month— a great reduction in watch prices direct to you — a 21-jewel adjusted watch at a rock-bottom price. Think of the high-grade, guaranteed watch

we offer here at such a remarkable price. And, if you wish, you may pay this price at the rate of \$5.00 a month. Indeed, the days of exorbitant watch prices have passed.

See It *First!*

You don't pay a cent to anybody until you see the watch. You don't buy a Burlington Watch without seeing it. Look at the splendid beauty of the watch itself. Thin model, handsomely shaped — aristocratic

in every line. Then look at the works! There you will see the masterpiece of the watch maker's skill. A perfect timepiece adjusted to positions, temperature, and isochronism.

Practically every vessel in the U. S. Navy has many Burlington watches aboard. Some have over 100 Burlingtons. The victory of the Burlington among the men in the U. S. Navy is testimony to Burlington superiority.

Write

Get the Burlington Watch Book by sending this coupon now. You will know a lot more about watch buying when you read it. You will be able to "steer clear" of the over-priced watches which are no better. Send the coupon today for the watch book and our offer.

Burlington Watch Co.
19th St. and Marshall Blvd., Dept. 8451, Chicago, Ill.
Canadian Office: 62 Albert Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Burlington Watch Company

19th St. and Marshall Blvd., Dept. 8451, Chicago
Canadian Address: 62 Albert St., Winnipeg, Manitoba

Please send me (without obligations and prepaid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your \$5.00 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Name _____

Address _____

ARGOSY-ALLSTORY

W E E K L Y

VOL. CXLVIII

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NUMBER 4

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CHARLES ALDEN SELTZER'S LAST HOPE RANCH

a six-part serial of six-shooter days in the West
WILL BEGIN NEXT WEEK.

Here is a tale of a bad man's redemption through love.

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

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHEBINGTON, Secretary

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Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$6.00 to Canada, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY COPYRIGHT, 1923

Entered as second class matter July 15, 1920, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879

It's a Crime to Slave for Low Pay —

When It's So Easy To Earn Big Money

If You Are Making Small Pay, Then You Ought to Investigate This Simple Plan that Has Shown Thousands a Way to Magnificent Earnings.

It is little short of an actual crime for a man to struggle along trying to make ends meet, when he can easily step into a position with better pay and unlimited opportunities for making money.

The sentence for a crime of this kind is "a lifetime of drudgery." Trying to make ends meet is a much harder task than making from three to ten times as much money as you are now making. For you can just as easily take advantage of the experience of countless others who, in one swift stroke, have jumped from small pay in blind-alley jobs to incomes of anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000 a year.

These Men Investigated and—

As an office worker in Detroit, Mr. B. H. Voss slaved away for \$1.25 a month. But he saw his one big opportunity—grasped it—and increased his pay to \$500 a month.

As a farmhand, George W. Kearns, of Oklahoma City, grasped the same opportunity. He writes, "Last week I cleared \$300, and this week \$218." And Mr. Kearns earned \$60 a month previously.

Mr. J. L. DeBonis, Chicago, now enjoying magnificent earnings. Before investigating, he was earning \$16 a week as a clerk.

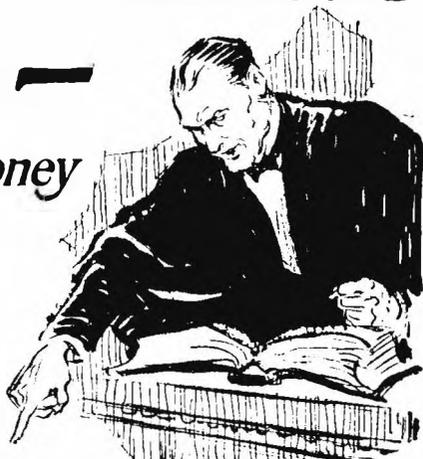
When Charles Berry, of Winterset, Ia., decided that it was a crime to slave for low pay, he was earning \$18 a week. And then the very first month he earned \$1,000.

A whole book could be filled with stories equally amazing of men who have taken this new, quick road to big pay. Nor is there anything exceptional about these men. They were once in the same circumstances that you may be in now. They were discouraged, tired of working for small pay, and disgusted with their prospects. And then, as though by a touch of magic, they were earning salaries that they had never dared hope for.

For they have entered a new field—a field that they had never dreamed of as theirs—one that is not only the most interesting, but the best paying branch of all business—selling.

A Foolish Notion About Salesmen

The average man imagines that in order to make good in selling, he must be a "born" salesman. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no such thing



as a "born" salesman. Thousands of clerks, machinists, bookkeepers, factory hands, firemen and farmhands, to-day, are making big money in the selling field through the simple plan you are invited to investigate.

Secrets that Make Master Salesmen

No matter what your earnings may be, you can quickly learn the secrets of selling that have put thousands into the big-pay class. For the past fifteen years the National Salesmen's Training Association has successfully trained thousands for the selling field—and through its Free Employment Service helped thousands to secure good selling positions.

And through the National Demonstration Method you gain actual experience in overcoming sales problems of all descriptions while studying in your spare time at home. Then, through the N. S. T. A. System of Electives, you get specific instructions in how to sell the line or lines you want to handle. In other words, the proved selling plans of master salesmen in all lines are laid before you.

Book on "Modern Salesmanship" Free

Without cost or obligation, we will gladly mail you a copy of a very interesting book, "Modern Salesmanship." In addition to many interesting facts about salesmanship, it will also give you full information as to how you can become a highly paid salesman. No matter what you may think now, this book will prove to you that it's a crime to slave for low pay when magnificent earnings are within easy reach. There is no obligation, so just fill in the coupon and mail it to-day.

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

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

Send me FREE your book, "Modern Salesmanship," and proof that I can become a Master Salesman. Also send me list of lines with openings for salesmen.

Name.....
Address.....
Age..... Occupation.....



Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needful 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
Munsey's Magazine . . . \$1.50
Argosy-Allstory . . . 2.00
Weekly . . . 2.00
Minimum space four lines
Combi nation ltr. rate \$4.00
less 2 per cent cash discount
February 17th Argosy-Allstory Forms Close Jan'y 20th.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

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. **ARTHUR A. WEEKS**, Sales Manager, Lock Box 182, Chicago, Ill.

BIG PROFITS WITH EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY—\$50 to \$100 WEEKLY EASY. MORE HAS BEEN MADE REPEATEDLY IN ONE DAY'S WORK. WONDERFUL INVENTION DELIGHTS HOUSEHOLDERS. Automatic hot and cold water bath outfit without plumbing; only \$7.50. Eager buyers everywhere. Send no money. Terms. Write today. **ALLEN MANUFACTURING CO.**, 658 Allen Bldg., Toledo, Ohio.

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

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 to travel by Auto to introduce our fast selling, popular priced Household Necessities. The greatest Lino On Earth. Write for Free Automobile Offer and Money Making Plan. **AMERICAN PRODUCTS COMPANY**, 8009 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

TAILORING AGENTS. Easy to get orders for Simpson virgin wool tailored to order suits, the biggest and finest values ever offered at \$29.50 retail. They are all one price, \$29.50, none higher, and regular \$50 values. Fabrics and fit, style and workmanship unexcelled. Also summer suits at \$17.50. **COMMISSIONS PAID DAILY. PLEASE WRITE STATING TERRITORY.** **J. B. SIMPSON, INC.**, Dept. 455, 831 W. Adams St., Chicago.

\$10 WORTH OF FINEST TOILET SOAPS, perfumes, toilet waters, apices, etc., absolutely free to agents on our refund plan. **Lacassian Co.**, Dept. 614, St. Louis, Mo.

\$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. A-304, Chicago.

AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

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.

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

SEND ME YOUR SHORT STORIES AND PHOTOPLAY PLOTS. Submit in any form. I'll Criticize, Revise, Typewrite and help you sell. Send manuscript or write, **H. L. HUBSH**, Dept. 4, 210 Muench St., Harrisburg, Pa.

FOR MEN

ARE YOU OLD AT FORTY? See our advertisement on page 12 of this issue. **THE ELECTRO THERMAL COMPANY**, Steubenville, Ohio.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

GOOD FARM LANDS! NEAR THRIVING CITY IN LOWER MICH. 20, 40, 80 AC. TRACTS: only \$10 to \$50 down, bal. long time. Write today for big free booklet giving full information. **SMUGART LAND CO.**, Y-1245 First National Bank Bldg., Chicago.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

EXCHANGE PLOTS FOR \$5—Photoplay ideas accepted any form; revised, typed, published, copyrighted. Sold. Advice free. **UNIVERSAL SCENARIO CORP.**, 918 Western Mutual Life Bldg., Los Angeles.

PHOTOPAYS 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**, 338 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

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. 218, Chicago, Ill.

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

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-P, 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.

Housewives Buy Harper's Invention on sight. New business. No competition. Ton-Use Set is combination of ten indispensable household necessities. \$7.50 to \$30.00 a day easily. Write for Free trial offer. **Harper Brush Works**, 107 A Street, Fairfield, Iowa.

AGENTS—Try Our Road to Success. Fifty million buyers ready for our protection against loss by accident or sickness. We teach you how to close quickly, and guarantee steady income from beginning. Write for special proposition, and astonishing earning possibilities. **R. B. Lindley**, 186 Market St., Newark, N. J.

AGENTS—Our Soap and Toilet Article Plan is a wonder. Get our Free Sample Case Offer. **Ho-Bo-Co**, 137 Locust, St. Louis, Mo.

27,000 RECORDS GUARANTEED WITH ONE EVERPLAY PHONOGRAPH NEEDLE; new, different; cannot injure records; \$10.00 daily easy. Free sample to workers. **EVER-PLAY**, Desk 112, McChurg Bldg., Chicago.

AGENTS: \$60 a week selling guaranteed hosiery for men, women and children. Must wear 12 months or replaced free. All styles and colors, including finest line of silk hose. Mrs. McClure makes over \$2000 a year. Mrs. Schurman averages \$60 a month working spare time. Geo. Noble made \$35 in one day. Write for sample outfit. **THOMAS MFG. CO.**, Class 507, Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—C. T. A. prices reduced again. Suits \$18.00, made to order, any size or style. Orders easy to get. Big profits. Sample outfit free. Write Chicago Tailors Ass'n, World's largest tailors. Dept. 179, Station C, Chicago.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything. Men and women, \$30.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating out of New System Specialty Candy Factories anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. **W. Hillier Ragdale**, Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

HEALTH

ARE YOU OLD AT FORTY? See our advertisement on page 12 of this issue. **THE ELECTRO THERMAL COMPANY**, Steubenville, Ohio.

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.

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.

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. 20 Sweden Stamps 10c. Lists free. **TOLEDO STAMP COMPANY**, Dept. A, Toledo, Ohio.

TRADE SCHOOLS

BEST PAYING TRADES—LEARN SIGN PAINTING—Pictorial Painting—Auto Painting—Showcard Writing—Decorating—Paperhanging—Graining—Marbling (Catalog Free). **The Big Chicago Painting School**, 152 W. Austin Avenue, Chicago.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.

“Life Ain't in Holdin' a Good Hand, but in Playin' a Poor Hand Well”

By R.C. Templeton



THERE IS NO FINER THING IN THE WORLD than courage. It is the warm and beautiful flame which lights the fires of ambition in every man's soul and burns a forward path through every difficulty.

It is easy to be courageous when the odds are in your favor. But the greater hero is the man who smiles a brave smile when days are darkest and keeps on fighting toward the ultimate goal—"to the last a warrior unafraid."

As Grantland Rice so beautifully expresses it:—

"God grant that in the strife and stress
Which all must face who linger here—
Upon the Field of Hopelessness
Or with the laurel swinging near,
Upon the world's red firing line
The battle of the strong and weak—
The fate of all the Fates be mine—
I will not show the Yellow Streak.

If Fortune play me false or fair—
If, from the shadowlands I creep
Up to the heights and linger there,
Or topple downward to the deep—
On up the rugged path of fame,
Where one man falls—another mounts;
God grant that I play out the game,
For there is nothing else that counts."

As the old cowboy saying goes—"Life ain't in holdin' a good hand, but in playin' a poor hand well."

What if you did have to leave school when you were but a boy! What if you have been working for years at a small salary with little or no chance for advancement! Do you think that makes any difference to a real fighter?

What you have done with your time up to now accounts for what you are Today.

What you do with your time *from now on* will decide what you will be Tomorrow.

Your hands can't earn the money you need. But your head can—and *will!*—if you give it the chance.

No matter what your age—your education—or your means, you can get out of the rut and make good in a big way if you grit your teeth and say "I will."

DO you want to advance in Business? In Advertising? In Salesmanship? Many of the country's foremost Sales and Advertising Managers, Chief Clerks, Accountants, Office Managers, Bookkeepers, and Private Secretaries have won success with the help of the International Correspondence Schools. More students have been enrolled in the I. C. S. Business Courses than in any other business courses in the country.

Would you like to be a first-class Draftsman, Mechanical, Electrical, Civil or Steam Engineer? A Chemist? An Architect? A Building Contractor? An Automobile Expert? Thousands of men have climbed into big jobs in the technical professions through I. C. S. help.

The I. C. S. is the biggest and oldest correspondence school in the world. For thirty years, it has been helping men out of routine drudgery into work they like—helping them to win advancement, to have happy, prosperous homes, to know the joy of getting ahead in business and in life.

How much longer are you going to wait before taking the step that is bound to bring you more money? Isn't it better to start now than to wait five years and then realize what the delay has cost you?

One hour after supper each night spent with the I. C. S. in the quiet of your own home will prepare you for the position you want.

Here is all we ask: Without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, mark and mail this coupon. It takes only a moment of your time, but it is the most important thing you can do today. Right now is the time to say "I will."

----- TEAR OUT HERE -----
INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2173-C, Scranton, Penna.

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

BUSINESS TRAINING DEPARTMENT

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Organization | <input type="checkbox"/> Better Letters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Trade |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenography and Typing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banking and Banking Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Business English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy (including C. P. A.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nicholson Cost Accounting | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary | <input type="checkbox"/> High School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Illustrating <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEPARTMENT

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Architect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Print Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Positions | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating | <input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing and Heating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Automobile Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metallurgy | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Steam Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Poultry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio <input type="checkbox"/> Airplane Engines | <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics |

Name
Street 6. 26. 22
Address
City State

Occupation

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Classified Advertising continued from page 4.



She Found A Pleasant Way To Reduce Her Fat

She did not have to go to the trouble of diet or exercise. She found a better way, which aids the digestive organs to turn food into muscle, bone and sinew instead of fat.

She used *Marmola Prescription Tablets*, which are made from the famous Marmola prescription. They aid the digestive system to obtain the full nutriment of food. They will allow you to eat many kinds of food without the necessity of dieting or exercising.

Thousands have found that *Marmola Prescription Tablets* give complete relief from obesity. And when the accumulation of fat is checked, reduction to normal, healthy weight soon follows.

All good drug stores the world over sell *Marmola Prescription Tablets* at one dollar a box. Ask your druggist for them, or order direct and they will be sent in plain wrapper, postpaid.

MARMOLA COMPANY

250 Garfield Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

SEND NO MONEY



Startling WATCH Offer!

This beautiful high grade ladies' small size, octagon watch, with choice of gold finished link or ribbon bracelet guaranteed gold finish (\$15 value). Special advertising price \$4.98. Stem wind and set, beautiful case, attractive gold dial, splendid movement, good timekeeper. Sent in Morocco finish, silk lined gift case. Gold Filled

Beautiful Gift Don't Send a Penny Just Write!

Just send name and address. Pay postman on delivery our Special Advertising Price \$4.98. Satisfaction guaranteed. Write TODAY.

THE CHARLES CO.
2812 E. Wash. Ave., Dept. 151, Chicago



WHEN you start a serial in the Argosy-Allstory you only wait a week to go on with it. Start one this week, and you'll buy every number until it's concluded. Ten cents a copy—all news-stands.

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

HELP WANTED

Make 2 to 5 dollars a day painting Parchment Shades, without leaving privacy of your own home. Easy to learn. We teach you to do our work and positively guarantee to supply you with interesting spare time employment. Write immediately for information. United Shade Co., Dept. F, Sturgeon Bldg., Toronto, Can.

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, 64 East Richmond, Toronto, Canada.

WRITE NEWS ITEMS and Short Stories for pay in spare time. Copyright book and plans free. **PRESS-REPORTING SYNDICATE**, 433, St. Louis, Mo.

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.

HELP WANTED—MALE

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

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. STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INST., BUFFALO, N. Y.

HELP WANTED—FEMALE

WE PAY BIG MONEY for painting willow toys. 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. SLENDID 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.

PATENT ATTORNEYS

PATENTS—WRITE TODAY FOR FREE INSTRUCTION BOOK AND EVIDENCE OF CONCEPTION. BLANK SEND SKETCH OR MODEL FOR EXAMINATION AND OPINION. STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. NO DELAY IN MY OFFICES. MY REPLY SPECIAL DELIVERY. REASONABLE FEES. PERSONAL ATTENTION. **CLARENCE O'BRIEN, REGISTERED PATENT LAWYER, 528 SOUTHERN BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D. C.**

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 Street, 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 R. Owen, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 2278 J Woolworth Bldg., N. Y.**

MISCELLANEOUS

ARE YOU OLD AT FORTY? See our advertisement on page 12 of this issue. **THE ELECTRO THERMAL COMPANY, Steubenville, Ohio.**

WANTED TO BUY

Cash for Old Gold, Platinum, Silver, Diamonds, Liberty Bonds, War, Thrift, Unused Postage Stamps, False Teeth, Magenta 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.**



PLAY PIANO BY EAR

Be a Jazz Music Master

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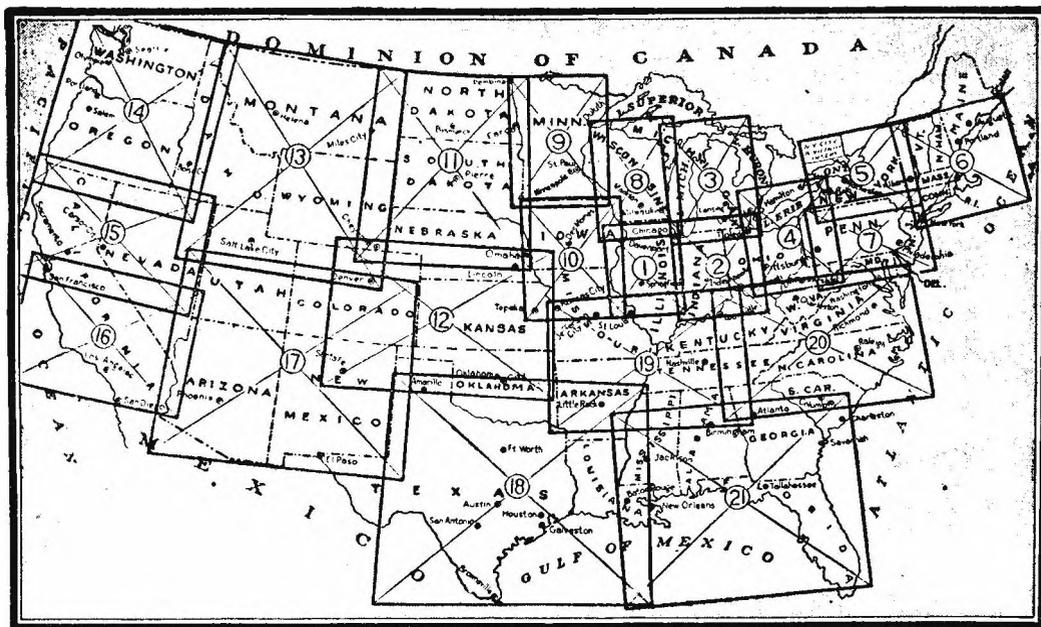
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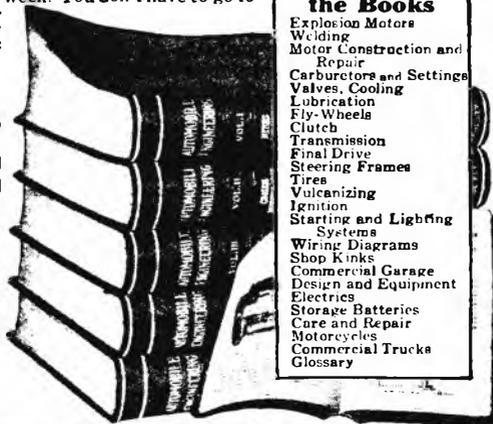
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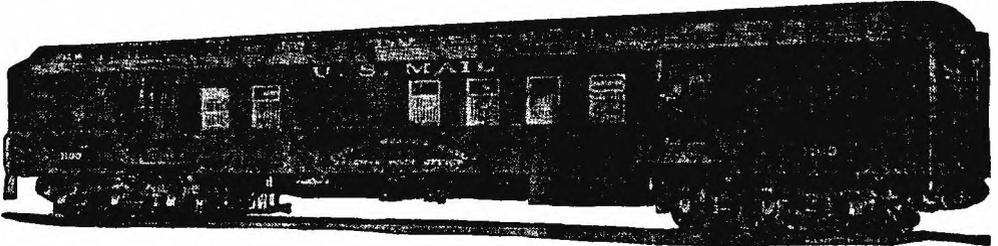
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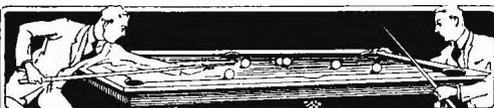
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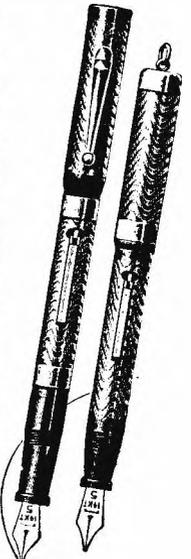
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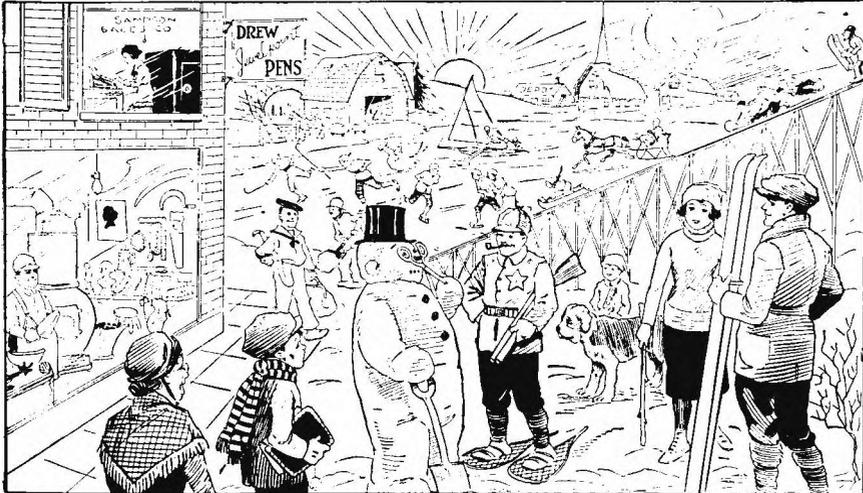
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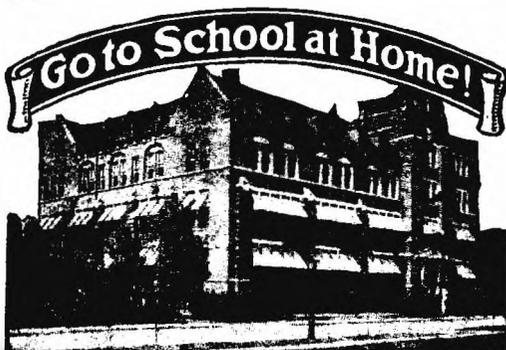
Are you a thinker or a toiler? Do you work with your brains—or only with your hands? New Year's is the time for making resolutions. Resolve now that you will be a success, and bear in mind that to succeed you MUST WORK WITH YOUR BRAINS. Brain work pays the biggest rewards. Think! Acquire wealth! \$1,000! If you give puzzle picture a little thought and make up the best, second best or third best answer. Winning is simply a matter of determination—if you make up your mind to succeed YOU WILL!

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1. Anyone living outside of St. Paul may take part in this puzzle game except employees of this company or their relatives.
2. Name only those objects visible in picture beginning with letter "S." Whichever list receives the most correct words will be awarded first prize, and so on down the list of 50 prizes. One point will be given for each correct word and one deducted for each incorrect word or omission of a correct word. In case of tie, prize tied for will be awarded each tying contestant. The correct list by which judging will be done will be made up from lists received and not from any so-called "master list." The correct list, list winning first prize, and names and addresses of prize winners will be published at close of contest and mailed to all who have "qualified" for Class "A."
3. Use only English words. An object may be named only once, but parts of objects may also be named. Either the singular or plural of a word may be used, but not both. Words of the same spelling but different meaning or synonymous words will count only once. Compound, hyphenated and obsolete words are not permissible. Webster's International Dictionary will be the final authority.
4. Write "S" words on one side of paper only, numbering each word 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., and be sure to write your full name and address at top of each sheet. All answers must be mailed and postmarked not later than February 3, 1923. Contestants may "qualify" for Class "A" up to midnight, February 17, 1923.
5. Three prominent St. Paul people have consented to act as judges: M. W. Thompson, newspaperman; W. M. Johnson, Pres. Superior Pkg. Co.; and P. M. Reagan, Pres. Wabash National Bank. All who take part in contest agree to accept their decisions as final and conclusive.
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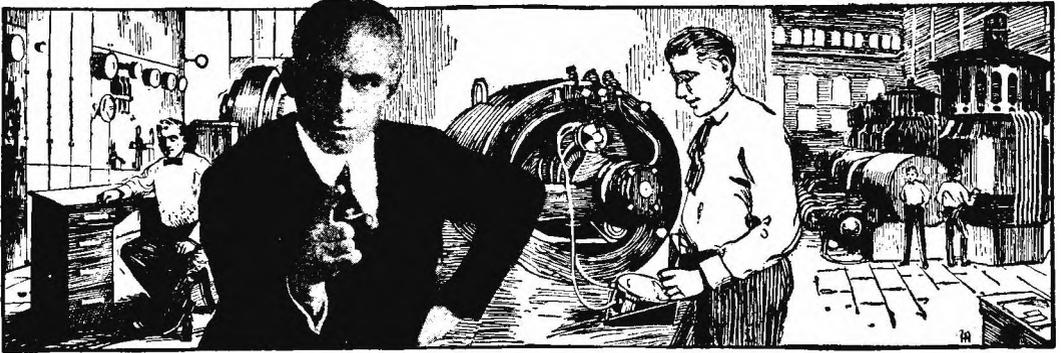
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ARGOSY-ALLSTORY W E E K L Y

VOL. CXLVIII

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 1923

NUMBER 4



Jungle Test

By **KENNETH PERKINS**

Author of "The Blood Call," "The Beloved Brute," "The Bull-Dogger," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE EDGE OF THE UNKNOWN.

BRITISHERS rarely came to Ganj. The only lodging house was an ill-reputed dak-bungalow built on the outskirts of the jungle in order to be well apart from the reeking native town. For lack of patronage the publican who kept the house had let it fall into such decay that it seemed literally to be rotten. Its whitewashed walls gave the impression of the soft pudgy white of a mushroom. Tamarind trees shut off the murderous Indian sun so that the light never pene-

trated the dampness of those broad verandas. Rattan curtains, hanging askew, dilapidated, ant-eaten, were never rolled up to admit either the heat of day or the night winds from the plains. Thick chunamed walls and warped doors imprisoned seasons of foul dampness and murky air.

Just before the breaking of the monsoons when this foulness was most oppressive, Surgeon-Major Kesh arrived at Ganj and sought shelter from the blistering heat. He was a tall angular man, his whites wet through with perspiration, his cork helmet covered with a fine layer of dust because of the thirty miles' journey from the nearest

railway station. Many monsoons of dank vapor, dry winds and shriveling heat had set their mark upon him. His long horse-like face had lost all color, his mustache was a lifeless sandy gray, his hair snow white. As the publican of the dak-bungalow ushered him into the dining room he threw himself in one of the so-called "grass-hopper" chairs, and resigned himself to the torture of prickly heat.

The keeper—a quarter white East Indian—set about to kill, pluck and fry a tough bantam for his guest. This he served up a half an hour later with small blackened bananas which the major condemned as worse than horse-plantains. After the meal the guest started to while away an insufferable evening with whisky and "English water" together with cheroots. The thick damp air was soon gray with tobacco smoke which hung in long skeins midway between the floor and the ceiling, driven first to one side and then to the other by the punkah.

The East Indian publican, lonely and loquacious, hovered in the dim doorway beyond the smoke:

"I am glad to have military men come to this house," he said. "Britishers—like ourselves—rarely cross this threshold. My house is in a dangerous place, sir, because of a tribe of devil-worshippers who inhabit the valley only beyond the jungle. People are afraid to come so near the jungle as this, sir. It is for that reason I am glad to have an I. C. S. such as you—"

"I say, look here!" the major barked out. "Keep that punkah going and put some ice in this soda! *That's* the reason white men funk at this place!"

"Honored sir, I beg your pardon. I cannot contradict a military man without great tribulation here," the East Indian pointed gracefully to his heart. "But white men avoid my house because of the valley beyond, where it is known a tribe practices thuggee on any hapless stranger who falls among them."

The punkah started to flax vociferously, clearing the air of smoke, so that Kesh observed a figure in the doorway in an immovable attitude of salaaming, the palms upturned toward the major and turban touching the floor.

"Ask that rotten pariah what he wants, crawling in here to watch me drink!" the major cried.

The publican touched the bundle of rags with his toe. "What do you want—pariah that you are—coming thus into the presence of two Britishers?"

The Thing looked up. It was a young man, clothed in rags which had once been the white costume of a groom or houseboy. His black eyes looked at the major with much the same quiet fixity with which a dog watches a man eat. But on the large mouth there was a smirk of amusement—not of disgust. He was no holy mendicant; no Brahmin piety softened that uncanny, intelligent grin. No mark of caste was on his forehead. He was a low breed, the major could tell that beyond a doubt. For one thing he lacked the regularity of features of a high caste Hindu, and his hair, instead of being straight, was curly—an indisputable mark of the aborigine.

"Honored and twice-born gentlemen," the man replied in fluent Babu English. "I am a louse. While squatted in front of my father's filthy bazaar, I noticed this Britisher pass by in his glory and come to this house. The splendor of his appearance so smote my eyes that I—"

"What the hell do you want?" the major cried in exasperation.

The man looked up as if deeply hurt by this interruption. The only other effect upon him appeared to be a change of voice to a softer, oilier tone.

"The light of the sahib's countenance was so gorgeous that I immediately conceived the desire of serving him. So I have come to hire myself out, body-louse that I am, as a houseboy. Call me *chuprassi* and I will serve. That is to say—" he rubbed his athletic hands—"for a slight compensation."

"I have no need for servants here!" the publican snapped.

"Is there a man to white my shoes and bathe me in the morning?" the major asked.

"Sir, my *punkah-wallah* and I do the work of this house. I am English and my *punkah-wallah* an outcaste. We can thus do everything, as much as twenty servants whose caste limits the duties of each."

"You need more than two for my comfort," the major said disgustedly.

"Sahib! Heaven-born and Cherisher of the Needy!" the kneeling man broke in. "I am a skilled *chuprassi*. I can cool water without ice—I can—"

"That settles it! Hire him!" the major cried peremptorily.

These words were scarcely out of his mouth before the *chuprassi* lit a coal to the major's cheroot. By this he indicated that there was no need for further argument; he had accepted the position. Vanishing instantly from the room, he returned a moment later with a wet dish towel which he wrapped about the soda bottle. This he fanned for a moment, then mixed a whisky drink for his master, and brought it to him. He did not walk across the floor; he crawled—in much the same manner as a slave about to bring evil tidings to a king who will kill him.

The major watched him, and as he watched he remarked to the proprietor: "You say these men beyond the jungle practice thuggee? Have they no fear of the British Raj?"

"They never heard of the British Raj over there, sir," the publican replied. "Between the jungle and that country there is a series of *jheels* or swamps which cannot be crossed by tonga or caravan or railroad. Government has forgotten that country, sir. The country is Jamgad, and the *jheels* have cut it off from thousands of years of history, invasions, battles. Aryan civilization, Mogul conquest. You and I, sir, white men as we are, find ourselves, I might say, on the threshold of that forgotten era which Jamgad represents. As white men we are in danger. Before the night is over you and I might disappear. We would find ourselves in a country of two thousand years ago.

"Government would miss us. An investigation. A battalion from your cantonment at Pangal would be sent through the swamps to find us. The maharajah and his counsellors would protest ignorance. Maybe we were lost in the *jheel*, they would say. Maybe the man-eaters of the Pangal Hills caught us, maybe heat apoplexy, maybe the pestilence in the swamps, maybe

crocodiles. What could Government do? Yes, they could massacre a million inhabitants. And would they know *then* where we had gone?"

"And that's why you don't have ice in this rotten little hotel? Because you don't care whether your business goes to pot or not? You're afraid to stay here?"

This brought a breathless, almost soundless, chuckle from the Being squatted in the shadows. In the ensuing silence Kesh watch the grin and the glittering black eyes. The punkah tolled off a dreary moment, and then: "If we disappeared in the night," the major said in an entirely changed tone, "just what *would* be the explanation?"

"Sir, there was no explanation when the last guest at this dak-house vanished. He was a subaltern with guns, kit and what not. We thought he had gone on his hunting trip earlier than he had planned. To bed at eleven in that room, sir." The publican pointed behind his shoulder. "And at *chota hazri* he was gone. Puff! Like chaff!"

The major muttered a string of oaths, rose from his seat, and began to pace the room. Suddenly he stopped and caught the eye of the houseboy, who was staring at him.

"Say look here, you filthy devil!" he cried. "Get your carcass out of here! You're making me crazy!"

The *chuprassi* backed away into the darkness of the adjacent room, salaaming with elaborate and abject perfection.

Surgeon-Major Kesh found himself alone. Outside in the world which seemed curiously remote there were faint unintelligible sounds, but in the big dining room Kesh was left in the silence of his own thoughts. He was not disposed to worry himself into a panic over what he had just heard. And yet it surprised him that this publican should be so earnest in condemning the very dak-house where he was employed as caretaker.

"Probably had a set-to with the owner of the place and wants to run down the business," the major smiled to himself. "And then, too, the smaller the patronage the less work for him—lazy beggar! Or

perhaps—I wonder!" He paced the length of the room again. "I wonder if the silly ass really is afraid and is brooding over giving his job up!"

Kesh paused, breathing heavily. Some one had opened the door to the front veranda, admitting a breath of hot suffocating air. The major gasped at his cheroot, feeling as if a blanket of ether were cast over him. The monsoon would break, he felt sure, for the air had become insufferable with a musty growing heat.

"Can such a horror be possible—right here under Government's eyes?" he was saying to himself. "We keep tab on the big states—the states that give us revenue, that are near the railroads, that offer us Sikhs for our armies! But these miserable little out-of-the-way holes! And to think that Britishers still vanish into the jungle—"

Surgeon-Major Kesh stopped abruptly. He wiped his hand across his eyes where sweat was streaming, and then stared speechless at what he saw.

In the darkness of the doorway there stood a girl, dressed in whites with white silk stockings and tennis shoes. The dim beauty of her features was partially veiled by the silk pugaree draped about her helmet. But the lips were visible and the major saw them part suddenly with the radiance of a smile. And in that one tired smile he saw all the excitement, joy, thankfulness of a helpless girl meeting a comrade in a strange and horrible place.

"Thank God!" were the words on her lips as she went to him.

The major was bewildered, thinking at first the girl might have made some mistake about his identity. "I hope I can be of service," he stammered. "My name is Kesh—Surgeon-Major Kesh—I—"

The publican who had followed the girl into the room, came to the major's rescue:

"This lady is in distress, sir. She was to have met a friend at the tonga-depot down in the city. Fate has so spun the circumstances that her friend—an Englishman—failed to meet her. She found herself alone in this desolate city, and has been obliged to stop here over night under my roof!"

"Everything is all right now!" the girl said with a laugh. "I had a horrible fear that there would be no Englishman in this whole city! Now I am safe! and I am going to take it all as a lark! My fiancé will surely come before morning."

"Your fiancé—here?" the major asked in bewilderment.

"Yes. If he follows my instructions."

"Your—"

Kesh curbed his curiosity for the moment. The young woman was not in a position to be brutally cross-questioned. He changed his tone:

"Yes, everything is surely all right. You are safe now." He turned to his newly hired houseboy. "*Chuprassi!* Bring me my satchel. You'll have a glass of port? Yes, yes, everything is surely all right!"

Scarcely had the words escaped from the major's lips before the Being who had already crawled unnoticed into the room, held a glass of red wine up to her. She drank, and a touch of color came to her pallid face. Before sitting in the grasshopper chair which the major swung about for her, she removed the silk-covered topi from her head, revealing a sudden beautiful wealth of bronze-gold hair. The lamplight lent a soft radiance to her white forehead, the straight nose, half parted lips and the delicate pink chin. Her very pallor, the major observed, was radiant, like the beauty of ivory, except that it was touched with the dim, almost imperceptible, glow of life.

The publican stared, showing the whites about his muddy eyes. "There are two Englishmen here to protect you," he said, rubbing his hands fawningly. "The surgeon-major and myself."

"To protect me?" A quizzical smile flickered to the girl's lips.

"Ridiculous!" the major put in. "Everything is all right. You will have a good night's rest. I can see you are exhausted from the terrific heat. A little supper, and then—"

"But, sir," the publican objected. "How can you say there is no danger. Beyond the jungle . . . the devil-worshippers—"

"Now, shut up!" the major snapped. "Get out of here and pluck another fowl—not a cock-fighter, but a pigeon."

The publican bowed himself out, rubbing his hands. As he reached the door he cast a last frightened glance at his beautiful guest. The girl was startled at his looks and as her hand went to her heart she dropped her handkerchief. With a slow and deliberate courtesy Kesh bent to pick it up, but the new *chuprassi* had snatched it from the floor where he had been squatted. He gave it to Diane Herries with a salaam, and as he lifted up his head he came face to face with Major Kesh.

The latter flushed hotly and swore while the man's eyes twinkled in response, his dark face lighting with an expression far more intelligent, it most certainly seemed, than the expression of a pariah.

"Are you here again, grovelling at my feet?" the major snapped. "Who the devil are you anyway?"

"I am an outcaste, sahib! and your hireling! Permit me to save my soul by touching the hem of your garment! Permit me to touch your foot!"

CHAPTER II.

A NIGHT WATCH.

AFTER the little supper which the publican prepared, Diane Herries seemed completely refreshed. The bloom of one who has just come to India—the bloom of sea travel—was still upon her cheeks. As Surgeon-Major Kesh watched her he reflected that in that dank, dim bungalow room she was like a flower blooming on a heap of ashes. Everything else was dead, dried or decayed—even the old major himself. The flopping moldy old punkah, the odorous oil lamp with its halo of winged insects, the ragged *chuprassi* squatted on the floor, the chairs, tables, rafters, doors—all embroidered and cross-stitched by the voracious white ants—this was the background for that one radiant figure.

"Strange how these people who first came to India can stand the heat and the dampness so much better than the old-timers," Kesh observed politely. "If I may say so, you seem to have stepped out of a May garden in England—"

"I am going to tell you everything," the

girl replied, observing that the surgeon-major had resolutely avoided asking any explanation. "You are probably burning with curiosity. First you want to know how long I've been in India."

"I know already."

The girl laughed perplexedly.

"White girls cannot keep their color in India beyond three months. I should judge you've been in the tropics considerably less than three weeks."

"Two days," the girl replied. "I was traveling with my aunt and her family and our steamer was to go from Colombo to Calcutta. I wanted to see my fiancé, Ian Dunboyne. Of course, you may not know him. India is so large."

"Every one knows every one else in India," the major corrected. "Mr. Dunboyne is in the tobacco business."

"Well, I wanted to see him. My aunt and all my relatives fought against the match, but I telegraphed to him at Suez and then at Aden. It was not until I reached Ceylon that I heard from him. At first we decided to meet at Colombo, but the family got wind of our plans, and since it would take three days for Mr. Dunboyne to get to Colombo from his station I said I would meet him half way between. I got a P. & O. map, measured the distance and found that Ganj was exactly half—"

"So you peremptorily telegraphed him to meet you at Ganj!" the major said explosively.

"I thought it a good plan."

"But you overlooked the fact that Ganj wasn't on the South Indian Railroad, and that your fiancé, Mr. Ian Dunboyne, would have to come here through the jungle in order to arrive in time?"

"I knew little of Indian geography," the girl laughed.

"And yet you traveled all the way from Ceylon to Ganj alone?"

"Why, of course."

"Upon my word!"

"Why not?"

"An English girl traveling in India—"

"I am not English. I am American."

"Oh! Bless my soul!" This seemed to have been a great light upon the whole situation and the major, instead of making

any more exclamations, exhaled a tremendous sigh of relief.

"And I arrived here, didn't I?" the girl asked. "The only thing that worries me now is why *he* isn't here."

"Lots of things can happen to travelers in India. Mr. Dunboyne, your fiancé, is visiting his plantations in the Pangal Hills on the other side of the jungle. His journey to Ganj would be by dhooly down the steep mountainside, by tat-pony, and then by tonga. Lots of chance for delay."

"As it is he is only a few hours late," the girl said, regaining her former blitheness, "so I am not going to worry."

For practically two hours the American girl and the old Britisher talked. To Surgeon-Major Kesh it was an experience. Never in his life had he met a type of woman so buoyant, so self-reliant, so happy as this girl coming rashly into the heart of India to meet her lover—as ignorant of danger as a child playing with a hornet's nest.

The girl chatted confidentially about her past life—her childhood in California on her grandfather's orange groves; her girlhood at a private school near Boston; her life with a wealthy old aunt, and now her travels about the world. Her relatives, she affirmed, had put her on exhibition in Europe as a prospective bride to the highest and most aristocratic bidders.

Diane was the first to tire of the long and enthusiastic conversation. She grew desperately sleepy and the major knew that her long ride had exhausted her. He advised her to retire, promising he would sit up until her lover arrived. Diane chatted a while longer, until sometime after midnight she fell asleep in the grasshopper chair. A little later the major picked her up in his arms and took her to the room upstairs, which the publican had prepared for her.

It was a big bare whitewashed place which was approached by a brick staircase on the outside of the house. The top of the bungalow was flat and this apartment was practically a miniature super-bungalow placed upon the roof. In one corner of the room was a bureau eaten to a skeleton by fish-moths. The bed on the other side of

the floor was a big four-poster, each leg placed in water cups to guard against centipedes. A canopy of mosquito curtain was draped from a wooden frame. Above a punkah started flapping the moment that the major entered with the girl fast asleep in his arms. He was rather glad she could not see the sort of place where she was to spend the night.

As the major stepped out again to the stairs he looked beyond the compound of the bungalow to the road that wound through the bamboos and tamarinds from the city. He heard the heavy beat of a horse's hoofs upon the earth and a moment later he could see by the diffused light of the moon shining through the mist, the form of a horseman racing madly up the hill through a top of bamboos.

Kesh hurried down to the veranda where he found the publican waiting and nervously rubbing his hands.

"Who is your punkah-boy up there?" Kesh asked, pointing to Diane's room.

"A very trustworthy old coolie, sir," the publican replied. "He has been in this city for many years, a reliable *punkah-wallah* who is gifted with wakefulness."

"Tell him to report to me if he sees any one on that roof between now and morning."

Both men turned as a horseman galloped through the gate of the compound and drew rein abruptly in front of the bungalow. The rider swung down from his lathered horse and vaulted up to the veranda with one jump.

He was a tall, well-formed man, clothed in whites which were grimy from his journey. Under the cork topi Major Kesh could see the handsome dark eyes, the regular features, the blue jaw of Ian Dunboyne.

"Congratulations, Dunboyne," was the major's greeting.

"Is she here?" the man cried breathlessly.

"Your fiancée is upstairs awaiting the bridegroom," the major replied suavely.

"Thank God!" Dunboyne ejaculated. "And give me a drink! I'm exhausted—been tearing through the Plains for forty-eight hours trying to get here in time."

The major followed him into the bunga-

low and the two gulped down a luke-warm whisky-and-soda, Dunboyne helping himself again.

"Now, then, I'm going up to see her," he said.

"Wait till morning," the major cautioned. "She fell asleep from sheer exhaustion."

The tall, grimy lover thought a moment. "It looks like a shady business this—meeting one's fiancée in a dak-bungalow and going over to a cantonment the next day to be married. Let it appear that I came here in the morning. I will not awaken her now—" He looked at his watch. "Two o'clock!"

"Too bad you missed her at the tonga-depot. That would have been quite respectable."

Dunboyne flushed angrily: "I suppose that's a leading question, major? You want to know why I was late? Well, I'll tell you. I'm generally known as a brave man—you've never heard anything to the contrary! But damned if I could get up nerve enough to go through that jungle as I had planned at first. That shortcut would have brought me to Ganj in time to meet her. I took the long tonga-route. These plantation ponies, once they get on the Plains, do nothing but sweat and pant and pound on the road."

"You mean you were late because—"

"Because I was afraid, yes—confound it! That's plain. I'll say it for you. There's some local trouble there among the devil-worshippers—nothing to do with Ghandi, and it's not important enough for Government to notice. Ghandi's in prison and Viscount Peel is taking Montagu's place as Secretary for India—you know all about it. But that's not going to make these scrub jungles safe!"

The publican at the door caught their attention by heavy breathing and a desperate wringing of his hands. "Ah, then *you* have heard!" he wailed. "We Englishmen are in a sorry plight!"

"The tribes over there I understand have a nasty habit of kidnaping white men."

The miserable Eurasian broke into a fit of trembling. "I am not white, sahib!" he cried, lapsing for the first time into his

own fawning dialect. "I am part Hindu—two annas to the rupee, sahib, because I am one sixteenth heathen! I am not immaculate—I am a mixed breed and I will confess! Do you think, major-sahib, that I am in danger?"

"It is the girl who is in danger," the major retorted. "Not rum-soaked carcasses like us."

Dunboyne rose from his seat, his face turned suddenly ashen. "The girl!" he cried voicelessly. "Major—you're out of your head. You mean to dare say that! A white girl taken by these fawning heathens right under the nose of the Central Intelligence, the army, the British Raj! Why it's too ridiculous—too horrible—"

"Judging from your blue lips, I should say you believe me," the major shot back.

Dunboyne stayed no longer to argue. He bounded up the brick steps to the top of the house, crossed the flat roof, and did not pause until he came to the very threshold of the room in which Diane Herries was sleeping.

He peered in. The punkah had stopped flapping, but a slight vapory wind from the jungle swept the room clear of the heat of day. A long blue band of moonlight fell upon the canopy of netting, and in the bed Dunboyne could see his fiancée completely clothed, as she had been when she first arrived at the bungalow. On the roof he saw the punkah-coolie who was fast asleep. A few kicks awakened him, and with sleepy cries for mercy the old man grabbed the punkah-rope and started his steady monotonous pull.

For a while Dunboyne paced about the roof—a flat space covered with tar and gravel, and surrounded by a wall of brick and lime. The bungalow faced the moonlit Plains where he could see a limitless checkerboard of squares colored in dim shades of blue. On the other side he looked toward the jungle—a huge jet black patch like a giant hand reaching down toward him with its fingers buried in the deep ravines and khors. From this direction came the wind heavily laden with quinine and spice, suffocating with its swamp breath.

At first Dunboyne felt that his fiancée

was perfectly safe. He himself was armed with a revolver, standing guard outside her door. Downstairs was a surgeon-major representing not only the prestige, but the power of the Indian Army. But as the night wore on and the moon cast lengthening shadows across the roof and upon the dim white sand of the compound, Dunboyne began to feel that the little room where Diane Herries was sleeping was surrounded by presences.

He saw figures sneaking through the mango tope over the wall of the garden—shadows or Rhesus monkeys or men—he knew not which. He saw black slender forms like gibbons swinging down from the tamarinds and scampering to the seclusion first of the white walled go-down, then of the yawning well, then of a young banyan tree which grew scrambling over the jungle road. Part of these visions Dunboyne attributed to his own dreams—he caught himself dozing even while he walked. His fatigue was conquering him—he felt drugged. The musk of the jungle wind soothed him.

For a while his ears buzzed sleepily with the droning sound of insects, the dreary flap and squeak of the punkah in Diane's room, the murmuring of dry tamarind leaves, the sighing of palms. Then the long, almost human howl of a jackal-dog brought him sharp awake.

He hurried to Diane's door. She was in the room, he could see, although the moonlight had passed her bed. He turned again to the open and for the first time noticed a presence—a bundle of rags, huddled against the lime wall.

Dunboyne stared fiercely. This was no dream, he knew. He walked cautiously toward it, stopped, drew his revolver. The moonlight cast its shadow on the white lime—a turbaned head.

Dunboyne stepped closer, but the figure remained as motionless as a Buddhist idol. Another step. The man was not asleep. The black eyes glittered. Then a smile.

"What the devil are you doing up here? You damned thug!"

"I am the *chuprassi*, Heaven-born!" the man replied. He moved for the first time, and the movement was a complete obeis-

ance so that his forehead touched the tar. "I am watching over our guest—the beautiful miss-sahib."

"You're a robber—that's what you are!" Dunboyne snapped back. "Stand up and show me your filthy face."

The servant crawled to his knees. "I am not a robber, Heaven born, but a *chuprassi* to wipe the dust from your feet. I am the son of two pigs! I am your slave!"

Dunboyne drew back his foot and gave the man such a kick as to send him rolling as far as the top of the chunamed steps.

"You come down and show yourself to the caretaker! And if you are not the *chuprassi* of this house, I'll empty the six plunks of lead I hold in my hand and then throw your carcass out for the kites to eat!"

"My carcass is not worthy to be eaten by kites, O Twice-born!" the man pleaded. "Let the crows eat me—they are as vile as I, and my carcass cannot defile them."

Dunboyne had braced himself for a second kick, but intuitively he changed his mind. This man had one trait which marked him apart from most *chuprassis*. When he had first felt Dunboyne's kick he had not yelped out the usual dismal cry of "Ayi! Ayi!" Instead he had smiled, and Dunboyne, now that his first moment of rage had passed, recalled that a strange green light had flashed out of the man's eyes. He was not exactly the sort of *chuprassi* whom it would be wise to kick twice.

The *chuprassi* waited expectantly for that second touch of the Britisher's boot, and then observing it was not forthcoming he turned and vanished down the stairs.

Dunboyne followed, his revolver still in his hand.

CHAPTER III.

GONE!

IN the chicken yard—a flat space between the bungalow and the go-down—Dunboyne collared his victim. Powerful as his body seemed, the man did not protest, but submitted to being dragged up to the veranda and then into the dining room. Major Kesh had fallen upon the grasshop-

per chair and was now snoring loudly. A touch on the shoulder failed to awaken him, but stopped the snoring. Dunboyne resolved to leave him alone. The heat of the day had been a grueling experience evidenced by the major's white drawn face.

Meanwhile the publican, having heard Dunboyne's little scuffle with the new *chuprassi*, entered the room, timid, wide-eyed, and nervously rubbing his hands.

"Who is this beggar?" Dunboyne asked, lifting the bundle of rags up as a man will hold a huge cat by the scruff of the neck.

A smile came over the publican's face. "He is the new *chuprassi*, sir," he explained. "The surgeon-major objected to the way I am running the establishment and hired this pariah early in the evening as a body-servant. He is a reprehensible man, there is little doubt."

"So! He came this evening?" Dunboyne exclaimed.

"I would advise his immediate discharge, sir. If you think best I will dismiss him from my house."

"You'll do nothing of the kind. This man's a thag—if I know anything. Like as not he's crawled out of the jungle and is plotting. We'll lock him up—that's what we'll do, and in the morning turn him over to the jail-khanna."

"A very good idea, sir," the publican said chuckling.

"Don't lock me up, Heaven-born," the *chuprassi* said calmly. "You will need my services—perhaps this very night. Who knows? Fate is spinning a web about the lovely one who is your betrothed. Let me watch over her as a dog watches over the bedside of a child."

The publican and Dunboyne, without listening to his cool calm pleading, took him out into the compound grounds and to the go-down—a small hut with thick walls and a padlocked door in which the stores and canned English goods were kept.

"The girl is in danger, Heaven-born," the *chuprassi* said, raising his voice at the last moment. "The jungle is near us—it beleaguers us round about like an enemy encamped in the night! The Lovely One—"

His words were cut off by the snapping

of the lock. Dunboyne himself appropriated the key.

"It is a good go-down, sir," the publican said. "I have used it in other days as a storeroom for valuables. And it is in full view of the bungalow. For to-night at least, this *chuprassi* will bother us no longer."

The relief which came to Dunboyne as he turned from the go-down was accompanied by an oppressive drowsiness. Stumbling into the dining room he helped himself to prodigal swigs from the major's whisky bottle. The furnace-like room and the drink failed to bring a sweat; Dunboyne gasped and had the curious impression that the thick hot night was pressing upon his forehead and eyes. He stumbled out to the veranda and sank into one of the veranda chairs, resting his legs on the long extended arms.

"Diane is all right," he said to himself, "if I can only keep awake on this veranda and watch those stairs. A dangerous practice this—sitting in the draught of those wet tattis. Doctor told me never to do it. Better than dying of suffocation though." As the din of mosquitoes, the tomtoms of the distant town and the wail of the jackals whirled about faster and faster like the noise of a merry-go-round in his brain, Dunboyne fell asleep.

Hours later he awoke with a start. He blinked at the rattan chiks where he could see the low red sunlight slanting inward in myriads of fine dusty rays.

He jumped from his chair and stood aghast, realizing the length of time he had slept. His head whirled in dizziness, and a dull ache thudded in his brain like the tomtoms in the distant city. Added to this, the draught of the tatti-curtain, which had enabled him to sleep, had also given him the ague. He reeled into the gaping black door which led to the dining room of the bungalow and his eyes dilated to the dim scene—the same scene that had met his gaze hours earlier in the middle of the night.

The punkah was hanging listless, forgotten, and the thick hot air seemed as obvious to the eyes as the tobacco smoke that lay in a gray strata across the middle of the room. The major was asleep—his face ashen gray, his mouth open, breathing heavily—but

without snoring. Rapidly the events of the night came back to Dunboyne. The major had dropped off to sleep while he—Dunboyne—was keeping guard on the roofs. He remembered he had awakened the *punkah-wallah*, chased down the suspicious looking *chuprassi*, and talked for a while with the publican, who a few moments later had returned protesting extreme fatigue. These recollections went through Dunboyne's brain in a flash while he was shaking the shoulders of the major in an effort to awaken him. And at that moment a terrifying thought occurred to him. He pulled the major up by his collar and shook his big lanky frame, like a schoolmaster shaking a big boy.

"For God's sake wake up, Kesh!" he cried. "We've been drugged—all of us."

Dunboyne abruptly hurried outside to the stairs, leaving the major crumpled in a half sitting position on the grasshopper chair, staring blankly, mumbling something about the girl.

In a few leaps, Dunboyne mounted the steps and reached the roof. He dashed across the tar flooring, kicked aside the *punkah-wallah* who was fast asleep, and rushed into Diane's room. A lizard scurried to the bureau, and the *punkah-wallah*, awaking, began a sudden frantic pulling at the cord. Dunboyne rushed to the bed, tore aside the mosquito netting even though he could already see what he had most feared. His fiancée was not there.

For a moment the *punkah* fanned the cold sweat on his forehead. Then he began circling the room like a crazed dog. He stopped at the threshold of the door for a moment, trying to collect himself. The *punkah* man was there, grunting ostentatiously with every pull of the cord.

"How long have you been asleep, boy?" he asked, steadying his voice.

"I have not slept, sahib!" the coolie cried shrinking from the stern, white figure. "All through this night I have toiled. My back is breaking, sahib, but I am a faithful *punkah-wallah*."

"Then you can tell me where the miss-sahib has gone."

The man looked into the room, lowering his eyebrows like a monkey peering against

the light. When he had ascertained that the girl was not there, he replied: "She went down to *chota hazri*, sahib!"

"A lie! She is not downstairs."

"She said she would walk for a while in the mango garden, which is a very pleasant place in the early dawn."

Dunboyne knew he could get nothing but lies from this man, who had slept at his post. Accordingly he hurried down the stairs and into the dining room where he found the major. The latter stood aghast when he saw the expression on Dunboyne's face. "The girl—" he prompted irresolutely.

"She's disappeared."

"Nonsense!" the major cried. "She's probably—" his voice faltered as the horrors that he tried to reject overpowered him. "The thag—" he began voicelessly.

"The thag is locked up!" Dunboyne snapped impatiently. "We locked him in the go-down when you were asleep." He stopped abruptly, realizing that the *chuprassi* might have escaped during the night. With the major at his heels, Dunboyne fled to the chicken-yard beyond which was the go-down.

His white hands took on such a palsied shaking when he tried to open the padlock that Surgeon-Major Kesh himself had to insert the key. Both men rushed in and stood staring into the dim room. The moment's silence was broken by a bandicoot scurrying into a rat-hole in one corner. Following this was a low moan.

A little trough of water, four inches in depth, serving as a barrier, surrounded a central platform on which the stores were kept. On this platform lay the *chuprassi*. Apparently he had just awakened from a deep sleep and he was rubbing the nape of his neck where on the previous night Dunboyne had grabbed him.

"I guess this man knows little of what has transpired," the major said. "Wake up, *chuprassi*! *Koi hai!* A light for my cheroot!"

The *chuprassi* stared vacantly. Again his hand went to his neck, and his features contorted with a puzzled expression of pain.

"He's not our man, the devil take him!" Dunboyne cried disgustedly.

"What's the matter with you, *chupras-si?*" the major asked.

"A scorpion stung me in the night. Miserable wretch that I am!" His expression changed suddenly. "Is the miss-sahib safe?"

Dunboyne turned upon his heel—satisfied that this man could tell him nothing. The major followed.

One other person remained, who from Dunboyne's point of view was not without suspicion. The publican had not yet put in his appearance.

"You can't trust these Eurasians," Dunboyne said as he led the way into the bungalow and to the caretaker's quarters in the rear. "This publican with his smug *chichi-bát* is a cut-throat if ever there was one. Everything he said and did last night makes me believe he had something to do with this abduction. God, man!" he cried, turning suddenly to the major. "Perhaps it was *he* who has fled with the girl."

"It must have been he," the major said. "You and I and the two native servants were the only other men on the compound last night—that is, the only men we saw. The publican is the only one not accounted for."

A remote wing of the rambling old dak-bungalow, a part which judging from its cracked walls and warped rafters had been built prior to the main structure, served as the publican's quarters. The wing was thrust partially into a dense growth of tamarinds which seemed so close to the jungle-rim as to be a part of it. In the bedroom the odor of dampness and decay was thickened by stale *bhang* smoke, and ghooor-scented tobacco—apparently much used by the Eurasian publican. This was the first impression that greeted the two Britishers upon entering. They could see nothing, for the place—although it was now broad daylight—was pitch dark because of the window shutters, the tatti curtains of the back veranda, and the overhanging trees outside.

The major lit a match, its first flare revealing the publican lying on his bed. To all appearances he was in a deep and soundless sleep. A butter lamp on a damask covered box was lighted, giving out a dim

smelly flame. The publican's face as seen by this light was the color of coal ashes.

The successive discovery of the spell that had been cast over one after the other of the inmates of the dak-bungalow had unnerved Dunboyne. The mystery of it now horrified him. Whose hand had been laid upon them was now beyond conjecture. What unknown presence had come out of the jungle and attacked that household? Whatever it was, not one of the six people who had been in the dak-bungalow that night—the two Britishers, the two natives, the half-breed caretaker and the girl—had escaped the touch of that hand. When Surgeon-Major Kesh after examining the publican made his announcement, Dunboyne's knees weakened and he groped for the wall to support himself.

"He's dead," said Kesh. "Not drugged. Dead a good many hours. A doctor who knew nothing of this Indian climate would say this man had been dead several days."

"The jungle is the place to look for the girl," the major said, "and, of course, the rajahdom which lies beyond—I mean Jamgad. Colonel Marquart will give us troops. I can vouch for that. But if you want to know my opinion straight-from-the-shoulder, I will give it: The girl is lost!"

"Lost!" Dunboyne cried. "With Government and the whole Indian Army behind us! God, man, we'll wipe Jamgad off the map. Every Britisher that hears of this will be in arms. I'll start a massacre, damned if I won't! I'll mash 'em by the hundreds like ants under my foot!"

The major shook his head. "You don't know India, Dunboyne. The girl has been ensnared—not by the inhabitants of Jamgad—that's simple enough."

"By whom then?" Dunboyne cried with such ferocity that the major shrank away from him.

"Perhaps we shall never know," the other rejoined. "This I am certain of: we will never find the men who actually perpetrated this deed. To me it seems as if something intangible took her—"

"Are you a heathen, major?" Dunboyne sneered. His fists doubled so that the knuckles whitened.

"Perhaps. Diane Herries has been taken away not merely by these puny weakling Hindus. We've got to realize that! It's something infinitely more terrible we've got to fight!"

"Nothing can be too terrible—"

The major's eyes narrowed and he announced with a cool incisiveness: "The power against us is something you, Dunboyne, have never faced. It's the jungle!"

Dunboyne did not answer. He turned groping for the door that led to the main part of the bungalow. As he reached the threshold he stopped, and the major came behind him thinking he was about to fall.

At Dunboyne's feet was a Being clothed in rags, and salaaming in abject worship. It was the *chuprassi*, and as his head touched the floor, the two white men could see the nape of his neck, where as he had affirmed he had been stung by a scorpion. A yellowish swelling was there like a bubble on coffee.

"Get out of my way, damn you!" Dunboyne cried.

The *chuprassi* looked up. Apparently he had recovered from his coma: his eyes, as he peered at the white men, were free from their glassy stare. They glittered—almost twinkled, as they had the night before. He lifted his hands palms upward toward Dunboyne and Kesh, then pointed to himself. It was a humble but pregnant three words that he offered: "May I suggest?"

CHAPTER IV.

A TEST OF NERVE.

"I AM an outcaste *chuprassi*. I am a wretched filthy being, prostrate in the presence of two sons of the Sun!"

"Now cut out that balmy and tell us what you're here for," Dunboyne snapped as the *chuprassi* crawled into the room and salaamed again.

"It is to you, Heaven-born, that I bring my message," the servant said lifting his face to Dunboyne. "You, who are the bridegroom of the Lovely One who is lost! You who so honored me last night with the touch of your boot—who blessed me with your sacred toe—who—"

"For God's sake say what you have to say!" Dunboyne cried desperately.

"I have come to you as a devotee comes to a saint. I offer myself to you—this poor foul body the very shadow of which is defilement to Brahmins as well as to you who are of the Twice-born! I offer my humble and wretched wisdom to help you find the Lovely One who is promised as your mate."

"You know where she is?"

"Oh, Cherisher of the Needy—yes!"

"My God, where—tell us! I'll reward you with a thousand pounds! Tell us!" Dunboyne took the man by his dirty *chuprassi* coat and yanked him to his feet. The fellow was lithe, slender, with a body that seemed youthful. Dunboyne was heavy, tense, as clumsy as an enraged bull.

"Yes, I will tell you. I will, sahib! She has been taken—Immaculate One that she is—to the jungle of Jamgad! She will be given to the Gods, as the holy wife who commits *suttee* is given, so that for many generations her family will be blessed."

The last words of this speech were uttered from the corner of the room where the *chuprassi* had been hurled bodily by the disgusted Dunboyne. "Damn you for your impudence," the latter barked out. "We know that already!"

The major joined in a disgusted string of oaths.

"But can you find her? Oh, blessed sahib? Is your wisdom sufficient for this—to find her? You who are British know nothing about Jamgad—dung heap among cities! I am Hindu—I know every palace, every ghat, temple, masjid and holy tank within its filthy walls. I speak many languages—Pushto of the Mohammedans, Panjabi of the Sikhs as well as Hindustani! I know the jungle—"

Dunboyne held up his hand. He had been staring fixedly into the eyes of the ragged servant, as had the major. A light came into the eyes of both the white men.

"You say you know the jungle?" Dunboyne asked.

"I know it, sahib, as the minah knows its nest, the spider its web, and the crocodile its fen!"

"But do you know the way to Jamgad—a secret way—"

"Honored and blessed sahibs, I follow the trails of the sambar and elephant. I avoid the haunts of pamboo and jheels and swamps through which you who are holy cannot pass without contamination of fever or viper or poison water—"

"We are going to send an expedition through the jungle to Jamgad," Dunboyne said. "We will employ you as a guide. What is your price?"

"It is not granted me in this life to be so honored."

"Your price."

"I cannot take soldiers—Sikhs or Punjabis, Britishers or Ghurkas into Jamgad."

"You can if I break a few of your bones perhaps."

"Blessed sahib," the *chuprassi* said in a wheedling tone, "if it is known that the British are coming into Jamgad the Rao will order the girl's death. She will be spirited away so that no man shall ever know what became of her. If two men—myself and one other—go into Jamgad disguised as hawkahs with merchandise to sell, then the two men who go to Jamgad may see her—and if it is so written in the stars—they will save her."

"His advice has some good points," the major commented. "If the Rao of Jamgad thinks the British know nothing of what has happened to the girl—then we have the upper hand."

"What man will you take with you?" Dunboyne asked.

"A white man."

The very thought of going into the jungle—accompanied only by this miserable fawning beggar—made Dunboyne pale. He had steered wide of it the day before when coming to meet his fiancée. Now some hideous ironical fate had decreed that he go into the heart of it—and into its pestiferous jheels—alone and on a hopeless quest. The chances of death were a hundred to one.

A moment's pause and the kneeling *chuprassi* lifted his finger, pointing at Dunboyne. Dunboyne's heart thumped like a frightened bird's.

"You are the promised bridegroom of the Lovely One!" the *chuprassi* said. "Follow after love. Many monsoons cannot drown

love: neither can the jungles smother it!"

"Let me give you my opinions of the case," the major urged. "This man—whoever he is—lowcaste beggar and all—has some intelligence—more than many a Babu I've heard rattling off his flowery English. The big point is this: the girl must be saved—and in time. It will take a disastrously long while to send a battalion across to Jamgad. No railways, no roads. Big tracts of elephant grass and swamps; fever; no water, provisions or any knowledge of the country. And, as this beggar has explained, the Rao would be scared out of his wits and to protect himself he would kill the girl."

"But if I'm to go in there alone—" Dunboyne cried desperately.

"You will not be alone," the *chuprassi* corrected. "There will be three of us: you, myself, and Brahma who is the Creator! Brahma is greater than Siva the Destroyer. He will help us save this damsel from destruction. You yourself are greater than the Rao, for at the proper time you can declare the glory of England! You will say that you have the armies of Britain behind you which are more powerful than the Rao's gods!"

"I agree to this plan," the major said. "I will get a battalion at the cantonment equipped, and in three days it will be sent into Jamgad. Meanwhile this beggar has solved the problem. It needs only your consent. If you have the nerve to go into the jungle secretly—without the knowledge of Government—without the support of soldiers—then I think there is hope."

"Hope?" Dunboyne repeated tonelessly. "What hope is there if I go into those black swamps with this man whom we suspect might even be a thag and a devil-worshipper himself?"

"I don't want to persuade you to go blindly to your death," the major said. "I must say no man ever faced a more fearful quandary than you. In justice to you I will tell you what I think your problem is: this man may be sent from Jamgad to actually entice you to your destruction. You must take that chance. In order to save your fiancée you must actually follow this horrible creature into the jungle. And you must

do it knowing that he may be leading you into a trap, and yet knowing that you are playing the one and only desperate move that may save your fiancée!"

"Love is greater than the jungle!" the *chuprassi* purred softly. "Meet me to-night in the recess of the dry well behind the dak-bungalow. I will have two horses saddled and ready!"

Dunboyne stared through the iron bars of the window. Beyond the minarets of the city he could see the simmering hills and the dense vapor of the khudds and ravines. The jungle reached toward him, its rough black hand spread out like a hand that hovers over a fly ready to strike.

"At what time shall I meet you?" Dunboyne asked.

"When it is pitch dark in the tope. No man will know that we have departed on this journey."

"I will be there," Dunboyne said.

The *chuprassi* touched his forehead to the cement floor again and remained there until the major remarked, "Get up and get out."

Dunboyne was not disposed to have the man gone so abruptly. "Wait," he said, "I want to ask you something: just who the devil are you anyway?"

"A very miserable wretch, Heaven-born. A son of two pigs who is offering his life to a heavenly cause."

"And why?" Dunboyne prodded. "Why are you doing this? You were drugged last night and I caught you watching at the threshold of the girl while she slept. Why is it you're bent on throwing your life away—"

"A miserable life, sahib," the man said.

"A pig's life is not miserable to itself. What's the reason?"

"A very reprehensible reason, sahib," the man rejoined. "I am a despicable thing. In a word, I am doing this for gain—personal gain, filthy gain. My grimy palm itches as if it were covered with *dhobie*. I am lower and more despicable than the shrewdest Khatri—a miserable caste! I am baser than a money-lender for I am setting upon this quest to save a woman's soul for my own personal filthy gain: money. I must be paid in rupees for saving a woman's soul. What mortal can

be more foul than this incarnation which is myself! When I was a pig surely I was greater than I am now—and when my soul goes into the soul of a jackal-dog surely I will have cause for pride! Money!"

"I will pay you any amount you ask," Dunboyne snorted.

"Three rupees a day, sahib. I am a wretched dog."

"Gladly. For every day you're in my service—three rupees."

"Make it five, sahib. I am a heap of offal."

"Certainly! Five rupees. Agreed!" Dunboyne said, breathing a sigh of enormous relief upon finding the key to this puzzle.

"Make it ten, sahib. My soul is the soul of a sow!"

"Ten, then. And shut up!" Dunboyne shouted, bracing himself, preparatory to letting fly a good kick.

The *chuprassi* salaamed. "Twice-born, I kiss your foot," he purred reverently.

CHAPTER V.

INTO THE JUNGLE.

DARKNESS came over the compound of the dak-bungalow at eight o'clock that night. Surgeon-Major Kesh bade good-by to Dunboyne at sundown and left for Ganj. Dunboyne waited an hour in the dak-bungalow and at eight slipped out into the mango tope and found the well where he had agreed to meet his guide.

He had scarcely reached the low mortar wall which surrounded the dry well before a turbaned head popped out from the black abyss.

"I am here, O presence," the *chuprassi* said. "Even as Karma has ordained. I come as a forerunner of the pale moon into your presence, O descendant of the glorious Sun!"

"Well, climb out of that hole, get your horses and shut up," was Dunboyne's answer.

"First, there is a little point to settle," the *chuprassi* said. "The jungle whither our way leads is a fearful place.

"I know that. A guide is not hired to terrify his employer. So come along!"

"In passing through the first banyan tree on the jungle-rim," the guide went on insistently, "we are passing, as it were, through the gate which separates this world from hell. Fever-mists cling to the swamps, the paths are tangled over with bamboos, cobras and the deadly karait snake; the hills are clothed with elephant grass so thick and impassable that a man caught within is like a fly caught in a web. Tigers roam the nullahs waiting for human flesh. In a word, O Presence, I am laying down my life—and why? To save a woman? Ha! To a Hindu woman is an abomination forever! A girl-child is a punishment for his sins, and a wife is a millstone tied about his neck! No, I am not doing this for a woman—"

"You are doing it for money!" Dunboyne sneered. "I'm going to pay you for every expense. Where are the mounts?"

"Ah! The Heaven-born sees into my soul. Yes, it is money—*chekeens*. I have been in the Heaven-born's service one day, and I desire my compensation—the promised ten rupees."

In the deep gloom of the tope Dunboyne could see the man salaam reverently and hold out his hand, clicking his thumb and finger.

Dunboyne paid him readily, and the servant disappeared into the darkness jingling the ten silver rupees in time to his step. A moment later the patter of horses' hoofs announced his return.

Dark as it was in the recess of those tamarind trees Dunboyne's first view of the mounts surprised him. He had expected to see two ratty little plantation ponies—such as the Britishers used in climbing to the hill stations in the hot season. Instead the *chuprassi* led forth a magnificent road stallion. Its long, finely arched neck, Dunboyne knew, betokened speed, and its long straight back gave signs of a good jumper.

"It is a high caste horse," the *chuprassi* said. "It has won prizes at many gymkhanas in this Presidency. And as a jumper it will serve you in good stead on the journey that lies before us."

The other horse, Dunboyne observed, was

a different specimen entirely: a large footed, goose-rumped tat-pony with shaggy mule-like ears and a vicious Roman nose, was to be the *chuprassi's* own mount. "A simple humor of my own, O Presence," he explained, "to take a horse which no man else will have. I am not worthy to ride on a prince's horse—beggar that I am. So I have chosen this miserable beast of burden—a half-breed like myself. I will follow your high caste horse as the sowars that escort the carriage of a rajah!"

"Very well then, let's mount and be gone," Dunboyne said.

The *chuprassi* leapt to his pony, belaboring it with his camelskin slippers. As the pony plunged up the steep path he called: "Follow me, O Twice-born, into the heart of the jungle!"

Dunboyne swung into his saddle and sped after the dark galloping figure. For a while there was little more than the sound of the hoofs to guide him, a pace so swift and difficult that the big racer on which he was mounted began to pant and lather. Then, just as they neared the outskirts of the jungle, the scene flooded suddenly with light.

Dunboyne overtook the tat-pony on the crest of the first foothill of the jungle range. From this point he looked into a yawning khudd the size of a small gulch. Beyond was the long upward rise of the mountain, black with teak and toddy palms, bamboo and banyan. Still further a dark blue heavily timbered range formed the second, step of the ascent. Through the moonlit mist he could see another step of a lighter blue broken by remote and stupendous crags that jutted out sharp and jet black.

Just before they rode down into the khudd Dunboyne's guide pointed down to a large banyan which like a grove of trees choked the mouth of the gorge.

"That banyan tree is the Gate," he announced. "When a man passes through it from this world into the jungle it may be said that he is born again."

Dunboyne was thinking of his own soul. An uncanny feeling came over him when he recalled that Britishers stayed out of that jungle and did their hunting elsewhere. He felt that he was giving his soul up and becoming a native. He was giving his body

up to the wilderness to do with it whatever it listed.

But when the *chuprassi* said that a man going through that banyan would be born again, he was apparently referring to himself.

"From the time that we enter," he went on, "until by the grace of Vishnu the Preserver we reach the other side of the forest I am no longer your *chuprassi*. This jungle changes every man. Some men are reincarnated into jackals, the souls of others transmigrate into flying foxes. If a huge fox comes at night and spreads its bat-wings over you, you may conceive the idea it is perhaps a goatherd's wife who perchance was lost in this jungle. Now I myself will change—I will change from a lick-spittle body-servant to a *shikari*—that is to say a pathfinder. No longer will the Heaven-born apply his blessed foot to my reborn hide. I am a new man—a man that must not be touched. Abuse me with your tongue—yes, for in the world outside or in this jungle, in heaven or hell, you are still numbered among the Twice-born, whereas I am at soul merely a louse. But touch me not. In the kingdom beyond that banyan I am king. Lowly pariah that I am, I am greater than you in the jungle—for there you shall be blind, and it is granted to my humble bleary eyes to see a few dim jungle truths. In the kingdom of the blind, so the saying goes, the one-eyed man is king."

When Dunboyne passed that banyan and entered the jungle he felt that he was suddenly engulfed in a vast perfumed temple. Arches of bamboo, bombax and poon, led to pitch dark naves on every side. Tamarind bows whipped him on the chest as he galloped past; webs clung gently to his cheeks; frightened owls winged down the limitless aisles, and in distant vistas, where the moonlight filtered as if they were beams from a stained rosace, jocks of bats zigzagged and fluttered across the glow and melted into the dark.

Dunboyne knew that into those jungles men had entered strong and come out broken. Although a terrific sense of doom clung about him like a suffocating cloud, he pressed his horse on. If he had known

something of the actual doom to which the *shikari* was leading him he might have given up his search for Diane Herries.

But his only present foreboding was an intangible dread that there was something in store for him far worse than bodily torture.

The *shikari* kicked his ugly little tat-pony into a fast silent gallop over the aisles of dhoo grass and moss. Dunboyne followed submissive and helpless through his fear.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DWARF THAG.

IN the heart of the Pangal jungle seven sepia colored men and their captive encamped for the night. To the sacred "jungle people" who gibbered and squeaked and swung from the vines overhead, the group of human beings was new and peculiar. Six were coolies, naked but for brown turbans and loin cloths. Their captive was lying in a *dhooly-dak*, a small light palanquin which consisted of little more than a box and a long bamboo pole. The last member of the party was a dwarf whom the holy jungle-folk could very easily have claimed as one of their own kith and kin.

When Diane Herries awoke and found herself lying in the coffin-like palanquin she saw this little dwarf. And the sight of him brought back in a vivid flash the remembrance of that dreadful night in the *dak-bungalow*. How long ago that night was she did not know. Her sensations at first were confused—sensuous, and not disagreeable.

On one side of the palanquin, through a bower of enormous fern trees she caught sight of a fire which sent up a heavy pillar of smoke, apparently because of the green fuel. On the other was an improvised curtain of grass upon which one of the coolies was throwing water. A breeze through this curtain created a deliciously cool draught. Diane could not remember having been so cool since first setting foot upon Indian soil—ages before, it seemed to her.

If she thrust her head out of her little canopied box, she could see a dim and ex-

quisite vista of jungle. Palms and ferns, entangled with brilliantly colored vines like streamers at a fête, swept downward in a pale red mist toward the mud channels of a river. Red beams of a low sun slanted toward crags and down to the caked mud. It was sunrise or sunset, Diane did not care which. She puzzled no more about her present state for her eyes suddenly met the eyes of the dwarf who was looking at her from under tousled white brows.

He was one of the characters from her long nightmare, who had assumed the flesh and blood of reality. A vicious little animal he was, squatted on his haunches scarcely seven feet away from her, whereas his true habitat would seem to have been among the flame-colored vines overhead. His knees were pulled up against a pigeon-chest by long hairy arms. They were puny knees scarcely bigger than a child's. But the crooked shoulders, the biceps, the fists, were abnormal, powerful, almost gorilla-like. He kept swinging the left arm about him describing a big semi-circle with his knuckles in the dirt. Except for this long restless arm he was immovable. It seemed to Diane that the man's brain was in that arm—that it was like a tentacle or feeler.

Then she remembered what had happened.

She remembered that night in the dak-bungalow when she had talked drowsily with Surgeon-Major Kesh. She had not fought against the compelling fatigue of her long journey, but she had told the major that Ian Dunboyne was coming for her, and would arrive at any moment. What they had last talked about she could not recall, but she knew definitely now that she had fallen asleep. All during that first restless sleep there had been a consistent drumming in her ears: first her pulse beating against her hot pillow, then the distant tomtoms in Ganj, then the more rapid beating of a horse's hoofs. This last had partially awakened her—at least sufficiently so that she realized that she was struggling against a horrible nightmare.

That nightmare was some indescribably horrible presence that had swung into her room from the boughs of the tamarinds outside. Now as she recalled her dreams she

knew that that presence in her room was not a figment of her own brain—but the reality. It was a small hunched figure hanging by one long prehensile limb from the rafters of the ceiling. How she had gotten in that little room she did not know, but she was there—and that Thing was there, hanging from the black rafters like a bat.

Moonlight was streaming in; the punkah was flapping. Diane opened her mouth to scream, but fear took her breath. The same fear stupefied her so that she lay in her bed staring fixedly at that huge bat. She knew that the Hindus feared a spirit of evil whom they called Mara. Was this the god? She knew also that nightmares were beings like this supposed to sit upon a sleeper's chest. She thought then that she was asleep and dreaming and that if she could awake this Thing would disappear. She fought to awake, and as she fought she saw the Mara hold a smoking light in the palm of his hand, and swing it before the flapping punkah as a monk will swing a censer. The fumes came to her, suffocating with a thick delightful fragrance. After a while a dizziness transported her. She fought no longer to awaken herself. Moments went by and the Mara's long arm swung like a pendulum, almost hypnotizing her with its regularity. She closed her eyes and still saw it black and long, rhythmical. Then oblivion.

Many events had transpired in that dak-bungalow before the dwarf thag had lulled Diane Herries back to sleep with his smoke drugs.

During the earlier part of the evening he hid in one of the dry wells. When the shadow of one of the overhanging palmyrahs protected the well-rim from the light of the moon the thag climbed out and watched as much of the proceedings on the veranda of the dak-bungalow as he could see from his hiding place. He observed that shortly after the white man, Surgeon-Major Kesh, had finished his dinner, a ragged looking native dressed in white turban and soiled *chuprassi's* costume, came up from the Ganj road. The dwarf followed this man into the bungalow, avoiding the bare moonlit space of the chicken yard by swinging from branch to branch in the tamarinds.

Most of the bungalow rooms he had to himself. He proceeded to the major's room—the one next to the dining room by crawling on his belly close to the dark-wall. This method of locomotion he preferred to swinging among the rafters—a much noisier process because of the bats he would scare out from the eaves. His first duty in the major's room was to extract a whisky bottle from the satchel, empty it of half its contents and pour into it a vial full of opium-poppy juice. When the major and the caretaker of the bungalow went out to the veranda to receive Dunboyne, the thag slipped into the dining room and exchanged the poisoned bottle for the half empty one on the table. The major was the first to succumb to its effects. Dunboyne fought off the drug until he went to the roof to find his fiancée, awaken the punkah-boy, and kick the *chuprassi* down the stairs. Dunboyne's last swig of whisky, which he took upon returning to the dining room after locking the *chuprassi* in the go-down, overpowered him. He fell asleep in one of the grasshopper chairs on the veranda.

The thag having shadowed the *chuprassi* most of the evening was puzzled by his actions. All *chuprassis* are inquisitive but this one was more inquisitive than a hungry and ubiquitous cat. He must be watched. The thag went to the go-down after this suspicious pariah was locked up. As was expected, the man was trying to break out of his prison. The thag having swung himself to the tiled roof of the go-down, found a hole from which he scared a flock of bats. Through this aperture he observed a dim light caused by the *chuprassi* holding a match in an examination of the door of his prison.

From a pouch at his waist the thag extracted a long dry reed and a thorn tipped with some arrow-poison of the nature of *dajaksh* or *derrid*. Putting the reed to his lips he aimed through the aperture at the back of the *chuprassi's* head. This was the sting which the victim upon awakening the next morning had attributed to the tail of a scorpion.

There followed then a frantic shouting and kicking at the door from the inside of the go-down. The noise was loud enough

to call out the publican, but it failed to awaken the girl on the roof or her *punkah-wallah*, who had fallen asleep at his post.

The fat publican waddled out into the moonlit compound, puffing and swearing at the imprisoned *chuprassi*. He approached the door of the go-down threatening the prisoner with further punishment, even torture, if he kept the guests of the house awake with any more of his caterwauling. He had scarcely turned on his heels to go back to his bungalow when a black form hurtled off the tiles of the go-down and landed on him.

The publican fell to the hot soft dust of the compound. For a moment he struggled frantically against the python-like arms that were gripped about his neck. His scream broke to a choking cough. His cough broke to a last frantic gasp for life. A convulsive twist for air like a fish that is landed, availed him nothing. For a moment the two forms lay in the dust, one sitting like a goblin on the chest of the other. One was breathing heavily, chuckling. The other was still.

There yet remained the most difficult task of all, the abduction of the white woman. He must have time for this. A chance passerby might see the body of the publican lying out in the open compound and noise the tragedy abroad. If a few hours elapsed before the discovery it would stand the dwarf thag in good stead. Accordingly he took the body of the publican into the rear wing of the bungalow and laid it upon a bed where he would appear to be sleeping. This would delay, as well as confuse, the investigators of the morning.

All of the dwarf thag's adversaries were now disposed of except the *punkah-wallah*, who had been awakened from the noise of the fight in front of the go-down. It was apparent, however, that he had not awakened in time to understand the dreadful significance of the noise, for the thag upon creeping up to the room, found him drowsily pulling at his punkah-rope.

The thag crawled inch by inch along the narrow strip of shadow which the mortar wall cast on the roof. When he came within four feet of the coolie, he reached up to an earthen coojah of water. This water

served as the coolie's refreshment during the long hot night. It was practically certain that he would drink from it before morning. He for one would not give the alarm of the girl's disappearance until long after sunrise. At present it made little difference whether he was awake or asleep: the thag knew that he could carry the captive girl through one of the windows on the other side of her bedroom, without the punkah-boy's being any the wiser.

Accordingly the thag circled the roof and crawled into the girl's bedroom, swinging himself up to the rafters and hanging motionless by one of his long arms. From this position he could obtain his first perfect view of the girl.

Her silken hair had become disheveled with her tossing, and now lay spread out upon the pillow. Her features were so indistinct in the blue mist with which the room was diffused, that she seemed ethereal. Her lips had curled apart and she

breathed through them in an audible succession of sighs, almost moans.

A curious thrill, partly of wonderment, partly of a mysterious fear, gripped the thag. He had come into the presence of this beautiful being after committing his five crimes, as a murderer comes into the presence of a holy image. To the beast who scarcely knew the meaning of fear there came an indescribable tremor, a consternation. The men whom he had disposed of were more powerful—he thought to himself—but they were mortal!

For a long time the dwarf hung there looking, fearing, worshiping. His heart began to thump in the big pigeon chest—why he did not know. It kept a sort of barbaric rhythm with the punkah—three beats to every flap, and as an undertone delicate and beautiful there was the girl's breathing.

A savage syncopated sort of music had come into the soul of the thag.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



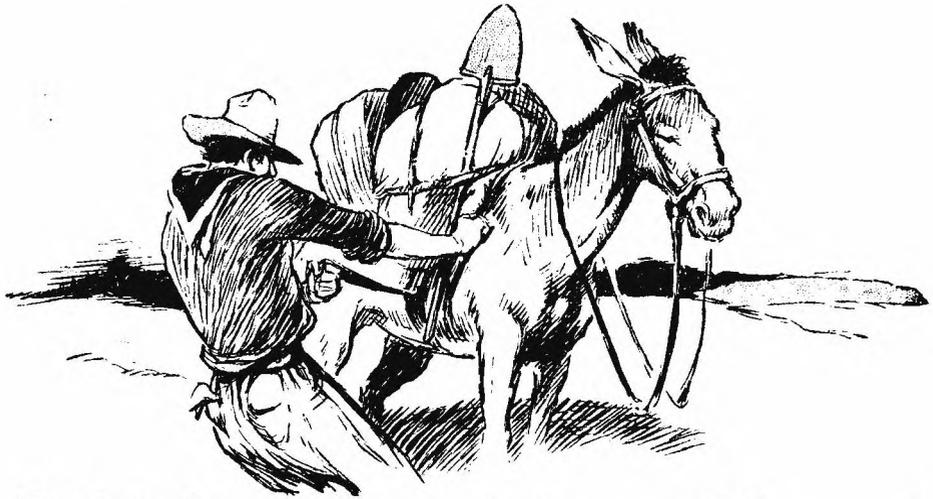
RAINBOWS

WHEN the weather's damp and drippy,
 Why be short or why be snippy?
 Why complain?
 There's a rainbow coming to you,
 But its glory isn't due you,
 Till you've had a spell of rain.

When the weather's bleak and gloomy,
 Why be charnelly and tomb-y?
 Don't you know.
 If you want the curve and color,
 You must have the sky grow duller
 As a background for the bow?

When the weather lacks in laughter,
 There's a rainbow coming after,
 After while;
 But because it's still expected,
 Be a lesser bow reflected
 From the sunshine of your smile!

Edmund Vance Cooke.



When a Man's Broke

By L. H. ROBBINS

A NOVELETTE—COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

CHAPTER I.

THE STAGE DRIVER.

STEVE BROWN drove up to the Palace Hotel in one of Zeke Pelham's mountain stages. A pair of city men there wished to be transported into the hills to Daniel Frazer's ranch in South Boulton Cañon.

It was atrociously early. The last morning star, doing a fade-out overhead, marked the end of the moving picture of the night. Sparrows in the maples tuned up jazzily for the day's work, regardless of the contralto solo of a robin in the tall cottonwood across the way. Mountain water gurgled pleasantly in the street gutters.

In the hotel doorway Lon Madigan leaned on a broom and yawned like an abyss.

"Yeowp!" said he. "Your people are still feeding their faces. Want their trunk?"

The driver dragged out the trunk and roped it to the tail of the wagon. He shook the small stout wheels to test them, for it was a rough trip over the plateau to Frazer's. Then he looked up at the waning star and pondered the hopeful thought that the night was always darkest just before dawn.

That was a dark time in the Colorado town of Boulton. The gloom from the big blow-up in Europe still clouded the sky and made it hard for young men to see jobs.

When Steve Brown came back from purifying the Argonne, he found that the Honeyman Post-Hole Digger factory, where he had been salesmanager, had let its home fires go out. Half of the mines in the district were closed, too; the Boulton smelter was struggling along at part time, and the irrigation project had collapsed.

On the vacant lot back of Pelham's livery barn the dump carts of the irrigation

company stood rusting—forty or fifty of them in rows like parked cannon. That was industrial Boulton as it looked to a man in search of a time clock. The chief sign of those times was "No Help Wanted."

Still, a fellow could pick up a five-dollar fee now and then by driving parties into the mountains for Zeke Pelham, if he didn't mind the social disgrace of the thing. Pelham's livery stable was considered a low place. Steve Brown had his eye on such a fee this morning.

There was a stir in the hotel, and the city men carrying satchels and overcoats came out from breakfast. Short was the elder in stature and temper; a fussy little man of close to sixty.

"Ye gods—what coffee!" he spluttered. "I tell you, Arthur, I'm poisoned!"

The younger stranger laughed at him, helped him into his big coat, stowed the satchels under the seats, and said: "Well, chauffeur, how does she look?"

She looked like a good day, Steve Brown opined.

"A good, long day, all right," grumbled the testy one. "Let's go, and get it over. No! Wait! Whoa! or whatever you say to a horse. Arthur, where in perdition are my tablets?"

He found them in a bottle in the second satchel, popped three at once into his mouth, and muttered: "Now, let the murder begin."

Steve Brown knew more about these city gentlemen than they supposed; for Daniel Frazer, whom they were going to visit, was the father of Steve's best girl.

The cross little man who took tablets was undoubtedly H. H. B. Lutwell, president of the Lutwell Mining Syndicate of New York and London. His signature on the Palace Hotel register was scarcely legible, but it didn't fool Steve. The younger man, Arthur Laird, was probably a mining expert of Lutwell's. He looked like a man who knew a lot.

They had come to Colorado to inspect something that Daniel Frazer had discovered on his ranch. Just what it was Nell Frazer had not said. That it might be valuable Steve could believe, for here was

the great H. H. B. Lutwell himself to view it.

Dawn seemed to be breaking for the Frazer family, and Steve rejoiced for them. It was ten years since Daniel Frazer, a sick man, had brought his two motherless daughters to Colorado. They had known hard work and hard sledding ever since.

He had been a college professor in the East, and "Professor" his Western neighbors called him, though often in mild ridicule.

A queer, vague, timid, forgetful man he appeared to the plain little workaday community of Boulton. People heard that his wife had been killed before his eyes in an accident—the falling of an elevator—and that he had never got over the shock of the tragedy.

In the winter Daniel Frazer dwelt in town, and Nell and Janet kept house for him and taught school. Summer found the family at their homestead in the hills, where Frazer played at prospecting while the girls directed the farm work.

Rovers discovered him tapping away with his rock hammer almost anywhere between the town and the range. It was said he had taught rock chemistry in his Eastern college; and Dr. John Hamilton, the mayor of Boulton, declared he had been a great man in his line. But Frazer was only the shadow of a great man now.

The June sun was high by the time Steve Brown's team had dragged the stage to the top of Greenleaf Gulch. Mr. Lutwell complained still of the Palace Hotel coffee, and maintained that he had been poisoned.

"Cast your jaundiced gaze on the scenery, my dear uncle," advised his companion, "and you will forget your bally old belly. The view up here would cure anything."

Behind and below them the plains lay upon the world like a grass rug with thousand-mile latitude and longitude lines for its warp and woof. Ahead, beyond a wilderness of forest and foothills, the range came marching down out of Wyoming across the western sky. Its peaks wore snow patches still on their gaunt shoulders.

"The stony-hearted old dowagers sport their winter furs in warm weather. They

know they look well in them," the junior passenger poetized.

The senior passenger took no interest in the landscape. Instead, he asked suddenly: "Driver, do you know Daniel Frazer?"

"Sure," Steve answered.

"What do people think of him?"

Local pride requires that a man shall stand up for a neighbor when the inquirer is an alien. Steve's reply was therefore optimistic.

"Why, people respect Mr. Frazer highly. He leads a Christian life, pays his bills, minds his business—"

"Just what is his business nowadays?"

"Well, he farms some, and prospects a little. He knows rocks better than a miner, they say."

"He does that, all right," the junior passenger commented. "He was the greatest mineralogist of his day."

"You know him, then?" said Steve, surprised.

"I was a student of his," Laird answered. "By the way, I used to meet a couple of small girls in his home. They must be grown up by now. Are they still with him?"

Steve became absorbed in his driving. Was it the business of any good-looking, swell-dressed Eastern man that Frazer had for his housekeepers and guardian angels the pluckiest pair of daughters south of the Arctic Circle?

As for the deplorable fact that Nell was still with her father, Steve would not have discussed that with the President of the United States.

There had been a time, just before the war, when the Honeyman post-hole diggers were selling so well that Steve felt warranted in asking Nell Frazer to name the day when they could marry and get to living, and Nell had felt warranted in naming it.

The war had spoiled all that. Kaiser Wilhelm had hung a huge detour sign across their road to happiness. By now Steve should have excelled in advertising and distributing the Honeyman diggers and risen from wages to dividends.

Yet he was fooling along at juvenile jobs like driving stages for Zeke Pelham, and

Nell was waiting while age crept nearer to her with every tick of the clock. In December she would be twenty-four.

Lutwell cleared his throat. "Driver, would you say the old boy was—ahem—was all there in the head?"

"What old boy?" Steve retorted.

"Frazer I'm talking about. Wasn't he a bit off when he came out here?"

"If he's off," replied the driver sharply, "how is it nobody in town ever trims him at chess?"

A guileful parry this, for Daniel Frazer, so far as Steve was aware, did not know king's bishop from little casino.

Steve's first inclination to warm up to his passengers was turning to distrust. These men, rich, clever, spoiled—listen to Lutwell going on back there about his stomach!—were coming to look at something that poor old Daniel Frazer believed to be precious. Why were they so keen to find out if he were a fool? And this glib and dapper Laird person who asked for news of Nell and Janet—he looked enough like a lady killer to be horsewhipped on sight, blamed if he didn't.

The road was vile. There were steeps that drew squeals out of the brakes, and rocky thank-you-ma'ams that extracted groans out of Mr. Lutwell. Perhaps the travelers would have had easier going if they had not put so many leading questions.

At noon they arrived at a cluster of weather-beaten houses and barns standing amid lonely upland fields and pastures. This was the Watkins mule ranch.

The long-eared black creatures glowering at them over the fence were the mules. The heavy-set and red-cheeked man limping out on two canes to meet the stage was Thomas Watkins.

He swapped greetings with the driver. His rheumatiz, he allowed, was some days better, some days worse; and he bade the strangers welcome to such of the midday meal as his five sons might have left.

Aiming to serve his war-stricken country to best advantage, Watkins had guessed wrong and gone in for mules. By the time his first crop of two-year-olds was ready

the market had slumped, leaving the ranch to become a boarding home for indigent beasts of burden, pending the return of prosperity. His black mules were white elephants.

"Look at the vermin," he would complain, waving his canes toward his pastures. "Look at 'em, eating me out of house and home, and I can't even kill 'em for meat." Still his dark cloud had one strand of silver lining. He said: "Thank the Lord they ain't Belgian hares."

William, his eldest son, had been breaking a span of the brutes this morning. An educated mule would bring more than an ignorant one when the sun of good times shone again. Broad of shoulder and grin, Bill came to help Steve put up the horses for their noon feed.

Said he: "Are these the capitalists I heard about over at Frazer's Sunday?"

"What," Steve asked, "were you doing at Frazer's Sunday—or any other day?"

The grinning Bill was enamored of Nell's sister Janet, as Steve knew. It was necessary to scuffle a bit over this matter before they reverted to the visit of the city men.

On Janet's authority Bill could report that Daniel Frazer had hit into something rich with his busy rock hammer. No, not gold. Nobody could get excited over gold in those times. With the world's yellow metal flooding America, a gold mine was as much of a liability as a mule ranch.

"What, then, Bill?"

"Platinum."

"Go on! In these hills?"

"That's what they all ask him—the Denver people he went to see last winter. They won't even come look at it."

"You don't suppose it's just one of the old man's dreams?"

"Well, Janet and Nell are buying steam yachts and planning a tour of the world, Steve. And they've got a book about Paris."

"No place for girls like them," Steve grunted. "Wasn't I there two days?"

Mr. Lutwell continued to produce a poor impression upon Colorado public opinion when, filled with good ranch food, he came out from the house to resume his travels.

"How much?" he inquired, pocketbook in hand, of Thomas Watkins, who leaned on his two canes near by.

"Says which?"

"The honorarium, you know—the tax."

"Oh, yes, the tax."

The red face of Watkins went redder.

"Hark ye. When you druv in here, did I stand and bang a danged gong like a danged waiter in a railway eating house? Or did I invite you like a reg'lar feller Christian to light down and take pot luck with me? I'm asking you."

The urbane Mr. Laird apologized handsomely. His chief, he said, was a pilgrim and a stranger; he hailed from a greedy city where diners who left without settling for meals were pursued by mobs of citizens and hunted by the police.

"I gar!" the ranchman chuckled. "That very thing like to happened to me down in Denver one time. I like to got jailed. It's all in what we're used to, ain't it?"

He shook hands with his guests and asked them to drop in again, yet Lutwell was not mollified. When the stage was safely out of the ranch yard, the syndicate president vented his vexation in such words as: "Mules! Course he raises mules! Condemned mule himself!"

"Forget it," said Arthur Laird. "The old fellow's feet are full of gout."

An unfortunate remark was this, for gout suggested its next of kin, dyspepsia, and started Mr. Lutwell to raging against the criminality of setting corned beef and cabbage before travelers afflicted with pathological disturbances in the alimentary tract. Where were those tablets?

CHAPTER II.

THE FRAZERS.

THE Frazer homestead lay deep in a gorge walled by steep bare cliffs and wooded mountain slopes. The house, commodious for one in the wilds, stood on a rise of ground shaded by silver spruces, with South Boulton Creek foaming and singing past, and a noble peak looking down from the range, miles away up the cañon.

Behind the distant peak the sun was turning in for the night and flinging his robes of glory recklessly here and there upon the sky, when Steve Brown's stage rounded the bend below the house. The tired team lifted their heads to answer a whinny from the corral.

Daniel Frazer, tall and thin, came hastening from the house.

"Ah, Stephen," he said in the grandly courteous way of his that made people smile at him. "And one of these gentlemen is Mr. Lutwell?"

His eyes behind their black-rimmed spectacles were as eager and appealing as a child's.

"That's me, or what's left of me," the senior passenger groaned as he got down. "So this is Dr. Frazer? I'll say you live a long way from civilization nowadays, doctor."

"We have no trolley service out here yet," the old gentleman replied. "But, welcome to our suburb, such as it is."

Impulsively he yielded his hand to the New Yorker. Steve had never heard him called "doctor" before.

It appeared that the two men had had business dealings with each other in past years, but had never come face to face until now.

"Here, though," said Lutwell, "is a chap I'll bet you've met."

The second passenger stepped forward with a smile. "I've changed for the worse, sir, since you sent me to work for Mr. Lutwell," he said. "So it won't be surprising if you don't recall me."

Professor Frazer tried to think.

"Just a minute, please. Your name is Laird, sir. You are the lad who poured cold water into a flask of boiling vitriol and blew up the laboratory."

"And you saved my eyes, sir. If it hadn't been for you I'd be sitting on a cold flagstone to-day with a tin cup in my lap. And while I was still in surgical gauze and unable to go home for the holidays—"

"We had you with us on Christmas Day," Frazer finished proudly. "My daughters still speak of you. Let us see if their memory is as good as mine."

Delightedly he took his guests each by

an arm and escorted them up the hill toward the house, making a brave try at appearing to be the man they once had known.

"A small world it is, gentlemen. Once I assayed unusual ores for one of you and taught blowpipe analysis to the other; and now—"

"Now," Lutwell's voice came back, genial as honey, "the tables are turned, and we are going to do something for you."

A sturdy Mexican, trailed by a brood of half-dressed small boys and girls, all brunettes, drew near to help with the team. This was Miguel, the Frazers' farm hand; the children belonged to him and his buxom wife Nita, who inhabited the log cabin beyond the straw-thatched stable.

"Well, Mike, how's everything?"

"Everatheeng is vera bum," answered Miguel gloomily. "Nita, she got tweens these year."

"Twins, eh? What's the total score now?"

The Mexican held up eight fingers and two thumbs. Romance had profiteered with him.

"Anahow, all right," he added, brightening. "Maybe that we all gone be reech; gone have planta cows, new suit clothes, piano, guitar, everatheeng. Maybe have Ford aut'mobile. Yess."

A girl came dancing down from the house through the twilight. "Oh, you Steve!" she called.

Her young man's heart missed an explosion, as it usually did at the sound of her voice.

Ordinarily, here in the hills, Nell Frazer dressed in free-and-easy khaki, but this evening she wore a muslin house dress instead, in deference to the gentlemen from the prim and fastidious metropolis, who might not be used to the idea of liberated legs. The spot of biscuit flour on one of her round and capable forearms accentuated the neatness of the rest of her.

Although the daylight was dimming, Steve could see a multitude of excellent reasons for folding her tight and warm from the chill of the evening air. He throttled the worthy impulse, however, and thought of his jobless lot.

Restraint was upon him to-night. She

was "gone be reech." The thought raised a barrier like a plate glass window between them and left him on the outside in the Miguel class looking in.

They sat up in the stage for a visit when Miguel had led the horses away. "Let Janet do the honors," said Nell, "while I cool off from old Stromboli."

"Who's he?" queried Steve.

"Stromboli? That's our latest name for the volcano we use as a cook stove."

The unwonted glow in her cheeks did not lessen her beauty in Steve's eyes. She always made him think of a rose; a rich and self-reliant one, with her dark hair and warm cheeks, and kindness in her eyes.

"How's your mother, Steve?"

"She's well, thanks. She sent her love."

"And Boulton?"

"Dead as ever."

Her eyes twinkled as she put her next question. "Have you had any more fights?" Seeing his quick frown, she was instantly penitent. "Poor Steve—full of punch, and nothing to punch but policemen."

She alluded to a recent episode in which her young man, bursting with unexpected energy, had thumped Town Marshal Hummel in the nose for blackjacking old Abe Whittlesey, the town drunkard.

"Never mind, Mr. Dynamite," she went on blithely. "Maybe there will be a job for you this summer, right here in our cañon. Then you won't feel so explosive."

"What kind of a job?" he asked.

"Are you particular? Mining, then. We are going to open a mine, and we shall need a nice young man with nice yellow hair and nice blue eyes and a nice firm chin to help us."

She settled back in the wagon seat with a little sigh of contentment. "I can tell you our good luck at last," she said.

"Bill Watkins has told me already," Steve remarked. "When do you hop off for Paris?"

"For Paris?"

"Bill says you've got a guide book."

"Is that why you are so merry and gay this evening, Steve—because your old friends are happy? Look here, little boy. Look at me and stop sulking."

No man alive could look at Nell Frazer and sulk. Stephen knew it very well, so he looked instead at her father's workshop down by the garden. And since the garden was bright with the wondrous flowers of a Colorado June, he thought of roses, and so of Nell.

"Steve, do you think all this is going to make a difference? Listen, Steve. You know why we came to Colorado. We came to save papa. And just this summer, after ten years, he has begun to be himself again. It isn't the money. He doesn't care about it any more than we do. It's just that he has found something that will help the world and bring him credit in his old profession.

"He is like a new man. For hours at a time he forgets to brood over his memories. You know what they are."

Steve knew, in a vague way, that Daniel Frazer believed himself to have been to blame for Mrs. Frazer's death. They had been leaving a crowded elevator. Frazer, discovering that the elevator was falling, had jumped to safety. His wife, following close behind, had been killed.

"He is even planning," Nell continued. "to go to London next year to tell the world convention of mining men about the wonderful sperrylite lode he has found here in the hills. That's why Janet and I are studying guide books. If we encourage him in the plan we help him to get back his lost faith in himself.

"And still you don't care, Steve? You aren't glad for us? But I know you are."

Before he could find words to confess his thoughts, Janet hailed them sportively from the house.

"Hi, you love birds down there, don't you ever stop to eat?"

After supper Nell and Janet entertained the dashing Mr. Laird, who chatted charmingly of his college days, and of the two small girls he had often seen playing on Professor Frazer's lawn in the old Eastern university town.

Steve preferred to listen to Frazer and Lutwell. He learned that platinum was scarce, the war and the Russian revolution having cut off the world's chief supply, which came from the Ural Mountains. The price of the precious metal to-day was ex-

travagant. Frazer's dream was to bring it down.

"And I can do it," he boasted. "I have literally thousands of tons of sperrylite in sight. It assays one Troy ounce to the ton. I can flood the market."

The matter-of-fact Lutwell laughed at his altruism and asked: "If you make the stuff as cheap as tin what will there be in it for you?"

Steve found himself agreeing with the syndicate man. With platinum fetching one hundred dollars an ounce, Daniel Frazer's duty was to sell it at that price as long as he could.

As bedtime drew near, Steve's mistrust of the New Yorkers evaporated, and he began to believe that Frazer had fallen into good hands, after all. Shrewd birds they were, yet the interest they showed in their host was convincingly friendly. For instance, Lutwell said:

"That chap out here who first wrote us about your prospect—what's his name?"

"Horner, you mean," replied Mr. Frazer.

"That's it—A. P. Horner. What's his reputation around Boulton?"

"An excellent one, sir. Mr. Horner is one of our leading business men."

"And chattel loan sharks," Steve added, under his breath.

"He's a darned poor promoter," Lutwell continued, "if the letter he wrote us is a fair sample of his work."

"I am surprised to hear you say so," returned Frazer. "It seems strange also that he has let you come up here without him."

"Good reason for that," Lutwell grunted. "He doesn't know we are in Colorado. Arthur, get my bag, will you?"

Laird fetched a satchel from the guest room, and Lutwell delved in it and brought forth a file of correspondence.

"Here's what he wrote us."

Daniel Frazer steadied his black-rimmed spectacles, and holding the letter to the swinging lamp above the table, read it through.

"Well?" he asked when he had finished.

"Pretty conservative, don't you think?"

"Mr. Horner certainly left out a number of important points," Frazer admitted.

"I should say he did," Lutwell exploded.

"He doesn't tell us who you are; doesn't say you are the Daniel Frazer already known to us from years ago as a scientist of standing. Just barely mentions your name. It was only through luck that Laird saw the letter and wondered if you were our Daniel Frazer who came out here from the East."

Frazer looked dazed. "I can't understand it, sir. Mr. Horner knew that I was known to you."

"Why didn't you write us yourself, direct?" Lutwell asked. "Why did you bother with him at all?"

"Let me answer, papa," Nell spoke quickly.

She turned to the syndicate man.

"When papa found the lode and saw what it was worth, he went to Denver and tried to interest people there. But he was a stranger to them, and perhaps he wasn't very aggressive. When he found it was no use, he talked to Mr. Horner, our neighbor and friend, and Mr. Horner offered to find capital for us."

To Steve Brown all this was news, and extraordinarily interesting. He had three excellent reasons for disliking thoroughly the man they discussed.

His father and A. P. Horner, president of the Boulton Investment Company, had been in business together in the old days. Misfortune had come, and Mr. Horner had ridden the wave safely, while Stephen Brown, Sr., had gone under, to die soon, broken-hearted. That was one thing.

When the Boulton troops came home from the war Mr. Horner, presiding as toastmaster at the Chamber of Commerce banquet given in their honor, had called them the saviors of civilization, which was all fine enough. But Mr. Horner had since then lost no chance to censure Steve to his face for his idleness, and to give him a bad name behind his back.

Seeing Steve flapping helplessly on the sands of time like an able-bodied codfish cast up by a tidal wave, Mr. Horner would urge him to be the master of his fate. His oft-quoted remark: "Let me tell you, my fellow citizens, the cure for hard times is hard work," which he uttered with a reproachful eye upon the unemployed young

men of the district, had become a sort of slogan among his more substantial neighbors.

This was Steve Brown's second reason for abhorring Mr. Horner. His third reason was the most potent of all, and had to do with Bruce Horner, the model son of this virtuous man. The whole town knew that Bruce stood ready to marry Nell Frazer and give her a good home as soon as she could be cured of her infatuation for the wild Steve Brown, who hung around low livery stables.

To see the lean, sharp-featured, important-mannered A. P. Horner in the flesh was to reach instinctively for one's hat and stand uncovered. To see Bruce, the model son, was to reach for a brick.

And, behold, unbeknownst to Steve, the Frazers had placed their affairs in Mr. Horner's hands. He wondered suddenly if they had borrowed any of Mr. Horner's money.

Nell was going on with her explanation to Mr. Lutwell.

"We had wanted papa to write you about his prospect, and he wouldn't. He was too modest. He thought it would be presuming on old friendship. But Janet and I took the matter out of his hands and asked Mr. Horner to write you, and then we told papa what we had done."

"And this is the letter we got," said Lutwell in disgust. He took the letter from Frazer's hand and read aloud Mr. Horner's last paragraph—

"I must tell you frankly that some Denver investors had a look at the opportunity last winter and turned it down. But I still believe that Frazer could interest some one who was not in a hurry for immediate returns."

Laird put in a word. "Some live wire, this agent of yours, Dr. Frazer."

"He couldn't promote a sand bank for me," snorted Lutwell. "Why didn't he say something about the process you've invented for smelting this queer ore of yours?"

"I—I can't understand," Frazer faltered.

"The most important point!" Nell gasped.

"The worst is yet to come," Lutwell pursued. "Arthur, tell 'em about the ore samples."

"It will hurt you to hear this," said Laird, "but you ought to know the truth. The stuff Horner sent us showed hardly a trace of platinum."

With saddened faces the Frazers pondered this charge against a neighbor whom they had trusted. Seeing how badly shocked they were, Lutwell brought the matter to a quick conclusion.

"We wrote and turned him down," said he cheerily, "which was just what he wanted, I reckon. Then I wrote you personally to find out if you were you, and you were. And you sent us some real samples, and here we are, Horner or no Horner. Tell me one thing more. Has A. P. Horner any contract or agreement with you that would stop you from selling us an interest in your mine to-morrow?"

"None whatever," Nell answered for her father.

"Good. To-morrow, then, we'll have a look at your rock and talk business."

And Mr. Lutwell winked at Janet in a way that Steve Brown thought quite fatherly.

Nell remarked that it was a wonderfully clear night. Had the gentlemen ever seen the stars from the depths of a cañon?

"I'd rather see a good soft bed," the travel-jaded Lutwell answered. "Stars are for the young. Go take a look, Arthur."

So Laird and Nell went down the path under the spruces until they came out under the open sky; and there they walked and talked a long enough while for many new stars to swing into sight above the cañon rim.

When they had returned out of the dew and Laird had followed his chief to bed, Steve entered the lamp-lit sitting room, where Nell was putting things to rights for the night. He saw that her eyes were bright with tears. Laird, the family friend of better days, had probably talked with her about her father.

Words, even kindly ones, are sometimes an invasion. Steve knelt down before the fireplace, laid the charred stick ends against the glowing backlog and banked the embers in ashes.

She paused beside him on the hearth and rested her hand on his head.

"Good night, Steve."

He looked up at her. "Good night, Nell. I'm sorry I was a crab, you know."

"I know, Steve. Don't think Janet and I haven't been through it, too. We know all there is to know about pride, and all that."

She had never told him so much before. Long as he had known these brave people, he had never guessed through what dark shadows of spirit they had passed.

But all that was over now. Lutwell would buy their mine. The dawn of a happier day had come for the Frazers.

CHAPTER III.

A SHOCK.

WHEN the Frazers and their visitors took the trail up the cañon next morning to view the sperrylite lode, Nell walked beside her father, lending him the steadying influence he so plainly needed. Daniel Frazer was in an ecstasy of hope and fear, and showed it in a rush of volubility as unrestrained as the flow of the mountain stream beside them.

Steve Brown saw the syndicate men exchange glances. They could not have failed to recognize their host's weakness and his inability to cope with a hard-headed world.

The party came in sight of a steep hillside where a recent winter landslide had swept away all trees, brush and alluvium in its path and left the gray country rock exposed. Up from the creek and across the devastated area ran a streak of darker gray, twenty feet wide. The eye could trace it to the top of the slope, a quarter of a mile above. This streak was Daniel Frazer's lode.

They clambered along the great vein, gathering bits of crystalline ore, and Frazer's chatter never ceased. They examined the rusty tin box tacked to a pine tree beside the creek, with which Frazer had marked a corner of his claim. All the while it was clear to Steve Brown that the visitors thought rather of the man than of the mine.

On the return trip down the cañon the shrewd-eyed Lutwell indicated by no word

or sign his opinion of the prospect. At dinner he seemed to avoid the subject and to wish to draw out his host on others. More than once his eye caught Laird's, after something Frazer had said. Steve Brown, a humble and silent witness at the foot of the table, observed these things and worried. In the hands of two such men of the world the old gentleman was just a babe.

"Arthur and I want to do a little figuring," said Lutwell when dinner was over. "Do I see a bench down there by your workshop? Come along, Arthur."

On the porch at the house Daniel Frazer read the Denver papers that Steve had brought him from town. Nell sat beside him, busy with her sewing, never leaving him in this hour that meant so much to him. For surely the New Yorkers would not come back to him without a proposition of some sort.

An hour they remained in conference at the workshop before they returned up the hill and stood before him. Steve Brown drifted nearer. Janet, in the house, came to the door to listen. Even Miguel, at work in the garden, knew that the moment was fateful, and, resting on his hoe, he watched the group on the porch.

Mr. Lutwell wasted no words. "Dr. Frazer," he said bluntly, "I'll give you five thousand dollars cash for your lode as it lies."

Frazer's face pictured an inner emotional conflict. His indignation at the paltry offer clashed with his settled doubt of himself and for a moment had the upper hand.

"Will you repeat that figure?" he said.

"Five thousand cash."

"Mr. Lutwell, I suppose you are joking."

"No, I'm not, Frazer. I'm making you a business offer. If you don't like it, of course—"

"I assure you I don't, sir. I have not asked you to buy my claim. I have asked you to help me develop it. I thought I had made it clear to you that I am not hoping to make a little money, or much money. My aim is to produce platinum."

Nell's anxious hand on his arm restrained him as his voice rose. Janet turned away. Hard and unsentimental as Lutwell looked,

he must have been aware of the shock his words had given the Frazers; for his face was red and moist as he went on to say that it was a poor time in the mining world; no capital was to be had; no development was being done.

"Within a year," Frazer answered pointedly, "this country has invested twenty-five millions in platinum mines in Colombia."

"Yes, in placer mines—river sands—easy pickings," said Lutwell. "But look what you've got here. Ore that will have to be freighted to Boulton, thirty miles, up over a nine-thousand-foot plateau and down again, for smelting. And when you get the stuff there at last over this awful road of yours, who in creation knows how to smelt it?"

Frazer's eyes flashed. "I have planned a process, as you know very well—"

Then he subsided. The manly fire faded out of his eyes, and a vacant, troubled, hopeless look took its place. The syndicate men saw him as the town of Boulton had seen him for ten years.

"No, my friend," Lutwell continued, red to the roots of his hair; "there's only one way to make money out of a prospect like yours in times like these. I don't go in for such games myself, but if you like I can steer you to people who do."

He shot a scowl at Steve Brown. "Must we have an audience?" he hinted.

Steve went away, boiling. The fair dream his friends had entertained so hopefully had gone to smash. Their lode was worth no more to them, here in their isolated cañon, than a chest of doubloons to a castaway on a desert island. What a world it was! And how at the mercy of those who had were those who had not!

For a time he heard the murmur of voices on the porch; then he saw Daniel Frazer stalking away under the spruces, looking straight ahead, and Nell running after him and taking his arm to lead him back to the house.

In the other direction went the syndicate pair, too intent in an argument to note that they passed close to Steve.

"Don't be soft," Laird was saying. "Where's your nerve?"

Hotly Lutwell answered: "Soft, perdition! Look at the harm we've done!"

"Queer talk from that pair of buzzards," thought Steve as he made for the house.

Janet's golden head was buried in her arms on the table. Nell entered with her father, guided him to his easy chair among his bookshelves, and pleaded with him as a mother to a child.

"Don't feel angry, dear. It isn't really an insult. It's only the way of their world."

"But, Nellie, for them not to know the kind of man I am!"

She stroked his gray head. He pushed away her gentle hands.

"Don't," he said. "Don't, please. I mustn't be soothed. I should be a man. I should order them off the place."

At the door Lutwell appeared. Something very like remorse was written on his brow. Before he could speak Laird came from behind and drew him away.

Frazer, having risen to confront the man at the door, looked around in a dazed manner at Nell, vigilant beside him, at Janet, gazing up tearfully from the table, and at Steve Brown, standing by to help and not knowing how to begin.

"I—I must lie down," said Daniel Frazer.

They helped him across the room to the couch. He slept even before they had placed a pillow under his head. Nell covered him with a blanket and said, as they looked down at him: "He has never been like this before. Can it be a stroke?"

"Doc Hamilton says sleep is the best medicine there is," Steve told her, finding no better comfort to offer.

A quiet voice spoke behind them.

Arthur Laird, subdued and grave, had come in.

"It may be a good thing for him, this upset," he said. "I knew of a case—"

"Your sympathy comes late," Nell broke in.

His glance wandered uneasily from her burning face to the form on the couch, then he turned on his heel and went out of the room.

"Steve!"

Her young man had followed Laird

swiftly to the door. At her command he came back.

"These men are our guests," she cautioned.

He went out, anyway. Laird seemed to have waited for him. The two eyed each other up and down.

"You are a friend of the family, I take it," said Laird.

"A better friend than some," said Steve.

"Don't be too sure of that," was the city man's cool retort.

It was upon Steve's tongue to demand what the strangers had meant by proposing something to Frazer that had brought tears of shame to Nell's eyes. But Laird's quiet tone disarmed wrath as he said:

"A pathetic case, Frazer's. Reminds me of one in my wife's family. Chap came home from the war with his personality in rags. Physically and mentally he was sound as a dollar. Psychologically he was a wreck, like poor Frazer. Will you smoke?"

Laird held out an opened cigar case.

"No."

"You were in the service?"

"Yes."

"Then you know about shell shock. Well, this chap got over his. thanks to an emotional jolt such as Frazer has had this afternoon."

Steve's eyes rested on a service button on Laird's lapel.

"A relative of yours, you say?"

"My wife's sister's brother-in-law."

Around a corner of the house Lutwell came bustling, with determination in his face and manner. He made for the door, but Laird intercepted him, led him down the hill to the garden, and kept him there in vigorous talk until Janet rang the supper bell.

CHAPTER IV.

A BARGAIN.

AFTER supper—a stiff and silent meal, during which Daniel Frazer continued asleep on the couch—Steve Brown repaired to a big rock under the

spruces, and there sat down to brood over the misfortunes of his friends.

What had Laird meant by his talk of shell shock? The chap he mentioned was his wife's sister's brother-in-law. Was Laird talking about himself? But what had shell shock to do with the present matter? Daniel Frazer had not been in the war. He was just a half-sick, broken old man.

Swarthy Miguel drifted near with the milk pail on his arm.

"Meester Steve, now."

"Yes, Mike."

"Is it so that we gone be reech?"

"Not right away, Mike. Don't order your piano yet."

"But how can that be? I hear them say it is maybe worth meillions, our claim."

"You heard them say that?"

"Yes. When they was at the forge these afternoon I come quiet to get my file for sharp my hoe. Maybe that I leesten."

So these smooth ones who pretended friendship for Frazer were practicing upon him the usual tactics of greedy investors. Their talk of taking his mine off his hands as a kindness was bunkum. They would buy the property for a song—and it was worth millions.

"Just what did they say about it, Mike?"

"They say it is only need to show what the mine can do, then planta reech men will be crazy to buy heem. They say it is beeg companies in France that is now afraid of Russia and got to have mines some other place."

"What else?"

"The leetle fat one, he say what good is a meillion dollar to a man if he is always gone be a nut. And then they talk seeck soldiers, and how Meester Frazee' was a beeg man once, and got lots friends yet where he leeve long ago. And someheeng will be a cruelty to his girls, but yet it must not do to tell them, for they would say no."

With a soulful sigh Miguel ended: "I tell Nita they are gone be kind to heem, gone buy the mine. And you say not?" Shaking his head, he went away to his evening chores.

His disclosures, although incoherent, confirmed Stephen's estimate of the syndicate pair. At least these sharpers admitted that the lode had immense value. Here was a little solace for Nell.

Another comforter, it seemed, awaited her in the spruce grove. Laird spoke from the shadows as she slipped away from the house.

"Miss Frazer, may I have a word?"

"Surely."

His manner was courteous and concerned. "I want to hint to you, Miss Frazer, that there was a reason behind what happened this afternoon. There will be another offer."

"A hazy hope, don't you think. Mr. Laird, to hold out to a man whose heart you've broken?"

"Things aren't what they seem," he persisted. "Lutwell's peculiar. Don't take him too seriously."

"I don't--any more," said Nell.

Upon the bowlder under the evergreens she settled wearily beside her other sympathizer, the lowly Steve Brown. He covered her hand with his.

"Poor child," he said.

"Now that we both are poor, do you feel better?" she asked with a sigh.

They compared notes on the trials of the day.

"What was their proposition," he asked, "that rasped your father so?"

"Steve, they asked him if he would like to let his lode be used in a stock-selling campaign—a swindle that's just within the law."

"It was rotten advice, Nell. You people mustn't have any more dealings with these crooks."

"Mr. Laird hinted just now that they would make us another offer."

"Put them off," said Steve. "Give me time to go to Denver and drag a couple of millionaires up here. You don't have to do business with pikers."

"Papa has tried Denver, Steve."

"Maybe he was a poor salesman."

She granted that readily. Her father's code of ethics was that of the professional man: he dreaded the notion advertising any product of his own.

"But mining is a business," objected Steve. "You can advertise a business, can't you? Did I debase myself when I advertised the Honeyman post-hole digger?"

"No, Steve; but you know papa. Mr. Lutwell spoke of buying pages in Sunday newspapers to tell about our prospect. It hurt papa as much as the temptation to be dishonest."

The song of the mountain creek was almost a dirge to-night, and the tips of the spruce boughs swayed in the breeze like funeral plumes. Through the gloom stole Janet to take her place with the mourners.

"Is he still asleep?" Nell queried.

"Yes, sister."

"What made you leave him?"

"Mr. Lutwell asked to sit beside him a while—and I didn't want to sit beside Mr. Lutwell."

"We must go back in a minute," said Nell.

To the family disappointment Janet had resigned herself except in one particular.

"I can give up the bungalow in Pasadena," she declared, "and the houseboat in Florida, and the voyage to Europe. But how can I look Billy Watkins in the face again, after my bragging last Sunday?"

Her sister sympathized. "Poor Janet. A little magnificence would have pleased her so. She's only nineteen, you know."

Steve offered brotherly counsel. "Janet, my child, if Bill Watkins ever says platinum to you, just you say mules to him—"

And then, thinking of the Watkins mules, he began to hear a whisper out of his inner consciousness, or wherever it is that attacks of inspiration have their start.

He sprang up from the rock so vigorously that Janet asked: "What stung you, Steve?"

"An idea," he answered fiercely. "Keep still. Let me think."

They kept still and let him think. The spruce boughs ceased their somber tossing, and the creek seemed to liven its tune as he tramped up and down before the rock. His pace increased as the idea fastened its hold upon him.

From his pocket he pulled a knife, a tobacco plug, and fifty-five cents in silver. Scornfully he glared at this meager wealth.

"All I can offer!—and I want to lease your mine for six months."

He gave the young women a glimpse of the lively thought that possessed him. He showed them the idle mules at the Watkins ranch, the field of rusting dump carts behind Zeke Pelham's livery stable, the dozens of good fellows of his own age who were out of work in the district; and Sam Schwartz's little smelting plant struggling along at half time below the Boulton freight yard.

"If we could get up a coöperative company—"

"Steve!" cried Nell in wonder. "I believe—"

"So do I," said Janet.

"Work? Of course it 'll work," he declared. "There's nothing but work in it. No millionaires, no syndicates, no promoters taking their slice. No help wanted from them! Just labor—man labor and mule labor—earning its way as we go along—and the mine all yours!"

Quickly Nell spoke. "There must be a consideration to bind the bargain, so we can tell Mr. Lutwell it is closed. How much do you offer us?"

He remembered a couple of Liberty Bonds at home, bought with his soldier pay. He offered them.

"No, but just now—"

She caught and opened his hand and looked over his treasures. She counted the silver, inspected the knife. Her fingers closed upon the plug of tobacco.

"You need your knife and your money. This horrid thing you can spare. Janet, you are a witness that I accept it as advance payment for a six-months' lease of our mine."

The lessee straightened. "I'm not fooling," said he.

"Neither am I, sir. Shake hands if you mean business."

They shook hands just as the sound of Daniel Frazer's voice came from the house. He was awake—and wide awake, if his tone was any indication.

Nell slid down from the rock and sped away, leaving behind her an exceedingly solemn young man.

Her father stood before the fireplace, his

hands clasped behind him, his shoulders back, his head high.

The gleam of sardonic humor in his eyes was new, and so was the dry drawl in which he addressed Arthur Laird, down-cast and apologetic before him.

Seated at the table, Mr. Lutwell lifted a perturbed hand for attention and parted his lips to speak, yet was silenced by a frown from the man on the hearth.

"Such an outbreak against visitors under my roof is in bad taste, I know," Frazer was saying. "At the same time, I must tell you, Laird, that I am disgusted with you. Mineralogy was only a side line with me, after all. Professional honor was the main subject I tried to teach you. And you were the honor man of your class. Yet you have fallen so low as to serve as a jackal for this wolf."

He favored the squirming Lutwell with another scowl.

"I can find excuses for him. He was born a pirate and can't help himself. But you, Laird, were born a gentleman and educated as one, and there can be no excuse for you."

Here both culprits spoke. Their speeches, uttered simultaneously, neutralized each other and left the situation where it had been.

"I feel grateful to you, nevertheless," Frazer went on cuttingly. "Somehow, your presence here and your unspeakable proposal this afternoon have done me good, though not, perhaps, in the way you intended to—er—do me good. Your visit has been most stimulating."

He saw his daughter, wide-eyed, listening at the doorway.

"Nellie, these gentlemen will be going back to Boulton in the morning. Will you speak to Stephen about it, and see that they have breakfast at daybreak?"

CHAPTER V.

A THEORY.

A MAN remembers his first success a long while, and never quite loses faith in the methods by which he won it. First success is a holy and wonderful

thing, like first love. Therefore, had Steve Brown always thought highly of himself as an advertising expert, ever since his days of making good with the Honeyman post-pole digger.

He had gone to Mark Honeyman and said: "Mr. Honeyman, I was in Midvale yesterday, at McAllister's store. A farmer was looking at one of your diggers, but he bought one of the old-fashioned kind at last, because he had seen that kind work, and he never had seen yours. He wanted to take your stock sample outdoors and try it, at that. But you know McAllister. Now, Mr. Honeyman, listen."

Thus Steve got his first job. In a year he had sixteen field agents, who would operate in county towns on market days along lines laid down by him. Selecting a spot near the local post office, the agent would bore holes in the earth. Farmers in large numbers would gather around to see him work, after which they would hasten to the nearest hardware shop and buy Honeyman diggers.

"Let 'em see it working and they'll want it," was his golden theory. This theory he now purposed to bring to the aid of the Frazers.

But he did not tell them so. They had a code of ethics. They did not believe in advertising. They didn't know what was good for them.

The town of Boulton would probably laugh at him for trying to produce platinum by main strength and awkwardness and without benefit of capital. But he would be digging post holes for something more than the holes. Some day the sight of the Frazer mine in operation would attract an investor with a million dollars. Then he would have the laugh on the town.

At dawn Daniel Frazer found him at the straw-thatched stable, harnessing the team in preparation for removing the obnoxious Lutwell Syndicate from the homestead.

"Nellie has told me of her bargain with you," said the old gentleman.

"Yes, sir. Will you stand for it?"

The question was scarcely necessary, save as a courtesy, since Frazer was almost negligible in the decisions of the family.

"She is the business head of the house,"

Frazer answered. "But I must know your plans." And when he had heard as much of them as was good for him to know, he said: "At least, you won't be idle this summer. Go ahead and see how far you can get."

Uncommonly brisk he seemed this morning, and, as he stood by to see his guests off, uncommonly cool. There was no sadness of farewell when they embarked.

"Well, doctor," said Lutwell breezily when he was settled in the stage, "we're going to see you again."

No response made Frazer. Tall and straight and stern, he watched the wagon roll away.

"Now, young fellow," said Lutwell to Steve as they drove down the cañon, "will you kindly tell us why, when you are in our employ, you butt in on our affairs and corner a property you know we want?"

"You didn't seem to want it very hard," Steve responded, "so I put in a bid myself. I hate to see a good thing go begging. Worse yet, I hate to see friends of mine flim-flammed."

He thought he heard a chuckle from the back seat, and when he looked around, Laird was grinning, sure enough—grinning at Lutwell, who, for his part, was scowling tremulously.

"One for you, uncle, old bean," said Laird, then he addressed the driver.

"What did you pay for your lease, Mr. Brown, if the question is a proper one?"

"A heavy price," Steve confessed. More than once since breakfast his hand had wandered to his tobacco pocket. He was now chewing a bit of leather trimmed off the end of a rein.

"If your idea is to hold us up," said Lutwell, "what's your figure?"

"Ask me in December, after we have the ore running." Words that Miguel had overheard lingered in Steve's memory. "We only need to show what the mine will do. Then plenty of people will want it. Don't you think so yourself, Mr. Lutwell?"

They might have cut out the Watkins mule ranch, for Nell had supplied them with a noonday lunch. But Steve had personal and pressing business there, so they stopped.

The rheumatic Thomas Watkins and his

broad son Bill heard the great idea as expounded by Steve and fell for it instantly. "Why, sure," said the ranchman. "What good are the consarned critters to us?"

Steve had expected his passengers to be about as congenial company for him on this day's drive as a cargo of nitroglycerine, but they came through without an explosion. Indeed, their light-heartedness got on his nerves.

Strange it was that men so bitterly disappointed should indulge in song and merry quip. Yet Lutwell actually sang "The Last Rose of Summer" most feelingly. And he mentioned stomach trouble not once.

They seemed cured of their greed for platinum. They talked of Nevada, and of silver and tungsten interests there, and of New York, where, it appeared, they had friends, belonged to clubs, and played golf, like honest folk.

One final effort they made as they drove into Boulton. "Young man," said Lutwell, "you are going to need help. Now look here—"

But Steve was disdainful.

At the Palace Hotel they got down, and Lutwell's purse came into view.

"That will be thirty dollars for the trip," said Steve.

The syndicate president counted out bills. "Thirty for the livery stable and twenty for you," said he. "Oh, don't be a chump," he added when Steve would have declined the princely tip. "In the mining game you never know when a little reserve may come handy."

Well pleased with his parting shot, Mr. Lutwell waddled into the lair of the poisonous coffee.

The queerest pair of sharks they were that Steve had ever run across. He was still pondering their queerness when he went forth, after supper, to conduct the third move in his new undertaking.

He had leased the mine from the Frazers. He was assured of all the mule power he could use. His next step was to secure those idle dump carts of the bankrupt irrigation company, rusting behind Zeke Pelham's barn. And this was likely to be the toughest task of all; for the receiver for the irrigation company was that excellent citizen,

that shining example of industrious probity, A. P. Horner, who had volunteered, as a neighbor and friend of the Frazers, to find capital for them; who had indeed written, at their suggestion, to the Lutwell Syndicate in New York, omitting much vital information.

With misgivings Steve approached the Horner residence, the handsomest house facing the court house square. Mrs. Horner, a pale woman who had never thriven in the shadow of her husband's greatness, was resting on the piazza and watching Bruce, the model son, tie up the crimson rambler. Mr. Horner, they said, was around in the side yard.

Reeling up the lawn hose, and turning the reel very slowly so that every last drop of the water might run out, Mr. Horner started at the footfall behind him. He seemed annoyed to be caught in the visible enjoyment of a parsimonious action. He had bought that lawn hose in 1899.

"Yes," he confessed, "I'm receiver. If it's a job you want, there's nothing doing this summer."

"Then what about those company dump carts and the harness that goes with 'em? Can they be bought or rented?"

Mr. Horner gave the inquirer a sharp, lean look of displeasure and went on reeling up the hose. "Who wants 'em?" he asked.

"I do?"

"What for?"

As the applicant stated his aims and intentions, Mr. Horner's indifference turned to amazement.

"You've leased the Frazer mine?" he cried. "You? But you can't do it. They can't let you have it. They—"

Though greatly agitated, he controlled himself.

"Where'd you get the money? Who's behind you?" he demanded.

Steve told him more. It was to be a coöperative scheme and finance itself from its earnings. Two months, or three at the outside, would see money coming in. All he asked was credit enough to start.

But Horner shook his head. "Too visionary, Stephen. Life is no fairy tale. You can't ask business men to help you when you don't risk a cent yourself."

"I'm risking my sweat," said Steve, "and I'll find forty other fellows who'll risk theirs. Daniel Frazer is risking his ore, and Watkins is putting in his mules. Now if you will let go of those carts, we'll make 'em earn money for you."

"After a month on that plateau road, how many of our carts will be left?"

"We're going to mend that road," Steve pleaded.

"No," said Horner curtly. "I'm not impressed. But I expect you can get backing from your good friend Zeke Pelham, can't you?"

He asked it invidiously, then trundled his hose reel away to the garage.

Coming out and finding his visitor departed, he went around in front and told his wife and Bruce that Stephen Brown had begun to feel the divine retribution that soon or late overtakes wild young men who squander the golden hours of youth.

"What did he want, papa?" asked Bruce.

"The fool says he has leased old Frazer's platinum mine."

"But he can't do that," cried the model son. "The Frazers put their mine in your hands, didn't they?"

"They did, yes; but we kept things on a friendship basis. There was no writing."

Bruce sat down on the piazza steps and laughed. He laughed so hard that Steve Brown heard him clear across the court-house square.

"How rich! How unutterably rich!" screamed the Horner son and heir. "Papa schemes to tire old Frazer out and then buy a half interest in the mine for thirty cents. And Steve Brown cuts around him and runs off with it. Whoopee!"

"Bruce dear," cautioned Mrs. Horner, "what will the neighbors think?"

Scornful was A. P. Horner's retort to his derisive offspring. "If you had a spine in your back, you would go after Nellie Frazer and get her, and the mine along with her, and then—"

"And then," Bruce finished, "you would not have to plot to get it some other way. Papa, as I've told you all along, you make me sick."

Which shows us that some sons are not always as model as the neighbors suppose.

Nor are shining examples of commercial probity always invulnerable to criticism, as an episode later in the evening was to demonstrate.

An ever ready and hospitable refuge for the afflicted was Zeke Pelham's livery stable. People wrinkled their noses when told that Pelham was the best friend that down-and-outers had in the district. They asked if he had been so altruistic in the days when he was suspected of holding up stage coaches in the Poudre River country. But lowly folk in trouble were not so critical.

This evening Zeke Pelham lounged in his office chair, with his feet on his cluttered old desk; a lank sphinx of a man with a game eye, a magnificent pair of mustaches, dyed jet black, and a stogie that matched those hirsute adornments in color. He squinted his good eye at a print on the wall, a picture of the late Sunol, a race horse, and puffed thoughtfully at the black stogie as he listened to certain bitter remarks from Stephen Brown anent dump-carts.

"Huh!" he grunted at the end of the story.

Reaching for the telephone and stationing it on his diaphragm, he gave a number, cocked his stogie at a sinful angle, and waited. He never moved any more than he could help. He had bullets in him, people said.

"Mrs. Horner? Like talk your husband, please."

His voice had the quality of the foot-pedal notes of a pipe organ.

"Horner, this Pelham. About those carts."

A pause.

"Yes, yes—I know all about that. But listen here."

Another pause.

"Sure he ought to go to work. If he don't work he don't eat. Yet soon's he finds a job you play dog in the manger."

Conservative sounds from the receiver.

"I don't give a blank dash about that. I'm not talking business; I'm talking religion. Say, do you call it fair for a shining light like you to let a shady character like me do all the welfare work that's done in this town?"

Dignified tones from the party of the second part.

"So that's how you feel, eh? Not taking instruction from me, eh? Then I guess I'll have to breathe a little word to you that I been saving up for two, three years. A sort of distress signal, Horner, in the Grand Lodge of Erring Sinners of the World. A street number in Denver. Want hear it?"

Raucous vibrations over the wire.

"Oh, sure—sure it's a lie. These stories always are. All the same, hadn't you better take one more quick think about this dump-cart proposition? S'pose you do, Horner. G' night."

Pelham put aside the telephone, relit his stogie, winked his good eye and observed: "In this slippery world, my boy, never set up as a model of purity unless you wear cleats on your shoes."

Reflectively he added: "I rather think you'll get those carts."

The evening was yet young. There was time for one more stroke of business before bedtime. Steve hastened down Arapahoe Street and turned in at the office of the *Boulton Weekly Pioneer*, Moses Lambert, publisher; Dick Lambert, editor, reporter, business manager, and advertising solicitor.

It was press night, and Editor Dick was on duty correcting galley proofs; a blithe young man whose eyes shone with the light of good cheer, in spite of the fact that his left sleeve hung empty at his side.

"'Lo, Steve," said he, looking up.

"'Lo, Dick. When do we go to press?"

"Going in a few minutes now, Steve."

"Print me an ad on your front page, will you?"

Borrowing the editor's pencil, Steve wrote:

SERVICE MEN
LIVE WIRES
HERE'S JOBS

SEE

S. BROWN
Pelham's Barn, Boulton.

"Since when have you had jobs to lavish around?" Dick Lambert derided.

Steve told him about it; told him much more than he had told the Frazers; in fact,

told him all. Dick Lambert was a newspaper man, therefore a safe man to intrust with a secret. Moreover, he and Steve Brown were friends beside whom the late *Damon* and *Pythias* would have looked like mere nodding acquaintances.

Having robbed orchards in partnership in their innocent childhood, they had naturally stuck together in the larger undertaking of cleaning out the Argonne Forest. Since then they had indulged in no joint exploits, for Dick had lost an arm to the Prussians and, shortly thereafter, his heart to Deacon Worrall's pretty daughter.

His eyes shone now with the old zest of adventure as he listened to his friend's plan regarding the Frazer mine.

"Beautiful," he declared, "but wild. Can it be done?"

"Gotta be done. If I could do it with the Honeyman digger, I can do it with a mine. Will you help?"

"I suppose so," the editor assented, "although I've been jolly well warned by a certain party to shun evil companions if I want him for a father-in-law."

Steve grinned. "All right. For a starter, print this ad."

He swung out into the street and sauntered homeward. On his way through Elm Street he passed the home of the mayor of Boulton.

At a corner of the lawn where there was a view of the mountains the mayor had built a summerhouse. There were people in the summerhouse to-night; and since the sidewalk passed close by, their voices came clearly to Steve Brown's ears.

One voice said: "There's a lot of imagination in dyspepsia. I find it so in my practice." That was Mayor Doc Hamilton.

"All I can say," spoke another voice, "is that I haven't had to take a tablet since that morning we drove up to the mine. I don't even know where the bottle is. Do you, Arthur?"

Steve walked on, feeling badly jarred. What were those buzzards doing, calling on Mayor Doc Hamilton? Why, the mayor was a prince and a gentleman, and the best friend the Frazer family had in Boulton. And he was entertaining Lutwell and Laird!

"I guess he had better be warned," thought Steve Brown, looking back to where their cigars glowed in the dark.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIOT.

IF the human race had been able to stand up under a few more years of the World War, the one-horse plant of the Boulton Smelting and Refining Company would likely have grown into a two-horse one and become a credit to the town. To-day, however, with half the mines in the district closed, it was too big for the work it had to do, and not very big at that. It fooled along at half capacity and enabled its despairing founder, Samuel Schwartz, to hold the record as the thinnest man in town.

Mr. Schwartz was nervous this morning. He did not care to talk with the two young men who demanded his attention. He said he had a date at the bank.

But Stephen Brown and Dick Lambert were not to be denied. They trotted beside him as he went to his appointment. When informed by him that to extract a troy ounce of platinum from a ton of gangue was a somewhat more arduous feat than to squeeze a gallon of gore out of a turnip, they showed him Daniel Frazer's assay figures. Thereupon he calmed down.

"So that's what the old codger was doing in my muffle room last winter, eh? I supposed it was gold he was monkeying with."

Still, Mr. Schwartz added, a new process would have to be schemed out, and new equipment installed, before his plant could handle such ore. Sperrylite was a rare and difficult mineral. Furthermore, he couldn't afford to bother with small quantities.

A process had already been invented, Steve replied. And by December 1 they could lay down eight hundred and sixty-four tons of ore in the smelter yard, every ton worth one hundred dollars at current prices, less the cost of mining, hauling and smelting.

Schwartz smiled in spite of his evident state of nerves and worry. "You couldn't make it eight hundred and sixty-five tons, could you?"

"By straining the mules we might. Watch us try."

The smelter man took Frazer's report and some ore samples into the bank with him. "See me this afternoon," he said.

He did not feel obliged to tell them that by afternoon his plant might be closed. His creditors had called a meeting at the bank this morning to consider his sad case.

A boy driving past in a livery rig hailed: "Hoy! Steve Brown, they's a bunch of guys waiting for you down at the barn."

"It pays to advertise," observed Dick Lambert, and let his enterprising friend continue down the street alone. He himself crossed the way to the Red Star Garage, where he spied Town Marshal Hummel, the Boulton policeman, splendid in brass buttons and a nickel-plated star. Presently Dick and the town marshal were conversing earnestly.

"Mind you," said Dick, "I don't know that they will spring a parade or a demonstration; but you never can tell. There's riots all over."

"Let them try anything in this town," replied Hummel, expanding with importance. "Let them try—that's all. Steve Brown's in it, you think?"

"Well, there's forty or fifty of 'em at Zeke Pelham's barn right now, and they're all asking for him," said Dick significantly.

Sensitive was the town marshal. While his nose had healed since Steve Brown punched it, his self-esteem was still very sore. Had not Judge Cooley reprimanded him for blackjacking old drunken Abe Whittlesey, and discharged Steve Brown without a fine or even a call-down?

Spurred by Dick Lambert's hint that a labor disturbance was brewing, Marshal Hummel marched straight to the town hall. There, to his disgust, he learned that Mayor Doc Hamilton was out of town this day.

"Where'd he go?" he demanded.

"Over to South Cañon, over to Daniel Frazer's place," replied the town clerk.

"A good thing we all ain't mayors, with days off whenever we like, and the times so lawless," declared the marshal.

The burden of public office rested heavily upon him as he took a walk down Arapahoe Street and a cautious look around the corner

into Pueblo Street. Certainly an unusual number of young men were hanging around Pelham's barn, as Dick Lambert had warned him.

By eleven o'clock Zeke Pelham's establishment resembled a rally of the A. E. F. The ad in the *Pioneer* had not gone unread. A. P. Horner should have been there to see how many young men of Boulton and environs hated the idea of a steady job.

Mr. Horner was present, however, only in voice, when he phoned to Stephen Brown to say that after their little talk he had considered the matter of the carts from all angles, and was now ready to discuss terms at Stephen's convenience. When could they close the deal?

"I'll see you when I can," Steve told him.

Since there was not room in the stable to hold the convention, the crowd trailed S. Brown, job finder, to the lot in the rear, and took roost on A. P. Horner's valued wagons. Dick Lambert, on hand to represent the press, counted thirty-four men, but Town Marshal Hummel testified afterward that the mob exceeded one hundred.

Without oratory, S. Brown began.

"How much," he asked, "is your time worth?"

Instant, noisy and morose were the responses.

"It seems unanimous," he went on. "All right. Suppose I gamble a month of my time and labor against the chance of pulling down four dollars a day for the month—I stand to lose nothing but a few pints of perspiration, don't I?"

"Sweat, Steve, sweat," some one corrected, and in turn was harshly corrected by the crowd. It was argued that if good old Top-Sarge Steve Brown desired to perspire, then he should be allowed to perspire freely, untrammelled by carping purists.

"If the scheme pans out well," he resumed, "I'll be ahead four bucks a day. If it fails, I'll at least have three square meals a day for the month. The meals are guaranteed."

The cheering was heard as far away as the town hall. Information was requested as to when the bugle would begin to render soupy-soupy.

"To-night," Steve answered.

He sketched the layout for them. Thirty miles away in the hills was a body of valuable ore. He had mules and carts. Provided he could make arrangements with the smelter people, he would need twenty teamsters, four rock drillers, two blacksmiths and as many cooks, and a dozen odd-jobs men.

With this force he planned to deliver six tons of ore daily at the smelter until snow should fly. Before the hauling could begin, and while the rock men were starting the drilling and blasting, the rest of the outfit would become road menders.

The enterprise would have to finance itself. There might be no pay until the end of the summer. The first month would determine whether there would be any pay at all. Half of all the ore in excess of eight hundred and sixty-four tons carted out in the course of the season would go to the workers as a bonus. And shoes, overalls, and plug tobacco would be supplied at cost.

"Yes," shouted a big roughneck named Howfer, from the Midvale section, "but what do you get out of it?"

"Four a day and found, same as the rest."

"Four for me," Howfer groaned; "six hundred for the greasy capitalist that owns the mine."

"Out of his six hundred," Steve argued, "he pays one hundred and fifty a day in wages; he pays for the chow you eat; he pays for the carts, the mules, the machinery, the upkeep of the outfit, and the cost of smelting. On a bad day his income stops and his outgo romps right along. He will call it a good season if he breaks even."

"Then," Howfer demanded, "what's he doing it for?"

At this juncture Zeke Pelham sauntered over from the stable with an urgent telephone message from Samuel Schwartz, the unhappy smelter man.

"Oh, Steve," called Mr. Pelham; "they want you at the bank."

"Yah!" yelled Howfer. "They want him at the bank. I knew there was a greasy banker in this somewhere."

The others were so intent upon howling

down the malcontent from Midvale they failed to see the Boulton police wagon roll up at the edge of the lot. They discovered its presence only when Town Marshal Hummel, flanked by his occasional deputies, Chester Grice and Peter Bowlby, came stalking among the carts and confronted the chairman of the meeting.

"What's all this row?" Hummel asked. He had his club in his hand, ready for action.

"Take seats down in front," said Steve, "and you'll hear all about it."

"We'll hear about it when we ask," Hummel insisted. "Once more—what's going on here?"

The crowd bunched up close to listen. Steve Brown stood bareheaded in the middle of the ring, his yellow hair blowing in the wind, his blue eyes snapping. Dick Lambert, his publicity man, danced around the edge of the throng and hugged himself with the only arm the Germans had left him.

"Chief," said Steve Brown, resting his gaze on the mark that still showed where his knuckles had connected with the town marshal's countenance in the Abe Whittlesey case of a few weeks before, "you really ought to nose—that is to say, know—you really ought to know what we are up to. This is an anarchist meeting. The comrades are starting a riot. We plan to burn the court house."

At this interesting moment some one gave him a tremendous shove from behind. He had time to recognize his impelling force as the roughneck Howfer. Then he tripped over a pair of feet and lunged into the town marshal, who tripped in his turn and fell, with Steve on top and Grice and Bowlby adding their weight to the pile-up, down among the legs of the crowd.

There was a season of yelling and scuffling and trampling, and the thud of fist on bone was heard in the land; and then, trumpetlike, Steve's voice raised in warning.

He was up. His arm waved above the mêlée. In his hand was the town marshal's club, its tasseled cords writhing like snakes. And facing him, as the crowd shrank away right and left, stood Marshal Hummel with a drawn gun.

The circle melted away from Steve Brown's side. He had plenty of elbow room.

"Put up that gat, you boob!"

He advanced a step, keeping his eyes on the foolish, angry, earth-grimed face.

"Stand back!" Hummel raged, lifting the weapon. "I call you all to witness—"

The baton flew whirling from Steve's hand at Hummel's head, Hummel ducked, and Steve was into him and clinching, while a dozen hands were getting the gun.

"Now bring 'em along," Steve commanded those who held Grice and Bowlby. He had Hummel's neck snugly locked under his arm.

They rushed the prisoners in at the rear of Pelham's barn, slammed the door on the bloodcurdling yells of the pursuing mob and turned the captives loose. "Beat it," said Steve, "out the front."

The town marshal fled, with Grice and Bowlby at his heels, while S. Brown returned calmly to the back lot, where thirty vociferous job hunters clamored to be taken on as partners in his gamble against hard times.

It was noon before he remembered that Samuel Schwartz wanted him at the bank.

CHAPTER VII.

FINANCIAL.

PASSING the Palace Hotel on his way to the bank, Steve Brown was reminded of the New Yorkers, those sagacious rich men whom he had seen in an apparently friendly call upon Mayor Doc Hamilton the previous evening. Were they still in town? If so, the mayor had need of being warned against them.

Queer birds, those two. If they recognized the value of the mine, why had they made Professor Frazer so absurd an offer for it? Why had they been so gay-hearted on the drive down to Boulton yesterday, after Frazer had virtually kicked them off the place?

Into the town hall Steve turned. The mayor's office was locked. He put his head in at the town clerk's door.

"Mayor around?"

"Nope. Won't be in to-day. Gone up South Cañon. Up to Frazer's."

"Up to Frazer's?" Steve remembered the professor's strange sleeping spell. Mayor Doc Hamilton was the Frazer family's physician. "Anybody sick up there?"

"Not as I know of," replied the clerk.

Wondering, Steve went on. Had those New Yorkers undertaken to use the mayor in getting the better of Frazer? Was there any relation between their visit to the mayor last night and his trip to-day?

Banker Benjy Dawes sat at the head of the table in the directors' room concealing his soul behind a leathery face as lacking in expression as a complexion mask.

Facing him from the foot of the table was Samuel Schwartz, the smelter man, dispirited and apprehensive. Between them were Moses Lambert, father of Editor Dick; Lem Quinn, the hardware man; Peter Harley, the wholesale grocer, and A. P. Horner. Substantial citizens all.

They looked up as Steve Brown entered, and all nodded to him except Mr. Horner, who gazed out of the bank window at the gasoline pump of the Red Star Garage across the street.

"Mr. Brown," spoke Banker Dawes, "we all are friends and—ahem—friends, as I say, of Mr. Schwartz, here, and we are more or less interested in his smelting plant. He tells us of a proposition you made him this morning. We should like to hear about it from you."

Promoter Steve Brown repeated what he had told the smelter man at an earlier hour. The ore was in the hills, waiting to be mined. The smelter was here in town, waiting for work. What he proposed to do was to bring the ore to the smelter.

Said Benjy Dawes, "How do you know the ore is worth \$100 a ton?"

"Frazer guarantees it. The Denver assayer's figures back him up."

"You say the Lutwell Syndicate of New York has been there?"

"This week. They made Frazer a sort of offer. He didn't like it, so I put in one of my own."

"What's the matter with local capital?" the banker snorted. "Why didn't Frazer let his friends come in on this good thing?"

"Perhaps Mr. Horner can tell," Steve suggested.

"Tell what?" snapped Horner, taking his mind off the red pump.

"Why," said Dawes, "did an Eastern syndicate get wind of Frazer's find before we did? Why did he leave us out in the cold? There's money in Boulton. I might have taken a flyer myself."

"I don't know why," Horner answered, with a stare at Steve.

The man lied, as Steve Brown knew. Horner had dared to dream of owning the Frazer mine in part or whole. He had counseled the Frazers to keep strict silence regarding the thing. He had not wanted any one in Boulton to hear of it.

True, at the instance of the young women, he had written the Lutwell Syndicate in Frazer's behalf; but such a letter as to discourage the Lutwells from taking any interest in the matter. Steve had heard that letter of Horner's. Only through a chance remembrance had the syndicate learned Frazer's identity and so followed up the tip with a personal inspection of the property.

Steve shrugged. It was not for him to call a prominent business man a liar. Banker Dawes glanced from the young man's face to Horner's and shrugged likewise.

"Thank you for coming in, Mr. Brown," said he.

All spoke as soon as Steve had left the bank. But A. P. Horner spoke loudest.

"Gentlemen, as friends of Professor Frazer's we can't let that fool boy's scheme go any further. It's crazy. Besides, young Brown is unsafe. We all know his record. How can he make good on a shoestring gamble like this? He will run Frazer in the hole. He—"

Banker Dawes lifted a hand for order.

"A friend of ours," said he, "has come forward with a lump of money to invest in smelter stock."

"Who?" cried Horner.

"Mayor Hamilton, if you have to know."

"But he—but he hasn't got any money," Horner protested. "Why, he's so blamed poor—"

"We know all about that," said Dawes

dryly. "He is poor because he gives his money away. And being the kind of man he is, he has more friends than all of us put together. And not all of 'em are poor. It's none of our business where he got this money, is it?"

"In smelter stock, you say, Mr. Dawes," spoke Samuel Schwartz, his anxious eyes wide open.

"The stock is to be chosen at our discretion," Mr. Dawes went on. "Now, gentlemen, as a banker I don't like to take a low-down advantage of an implicit trust like that. At the same time, as a director in Mr. Schwartz's company I am prepared to grab this money as a windfall from heaven and use it to keep the smelter going, provided there seems a chance for the smelting business to brace up immediately. Does this platinum thing offer any promise?"

Schwartz was on his feet. "Our pickings out of a thousand tons of that ore will be thirty thousand dollars," he asserted. "It will keep us afloat till September. By then the new copper from Mullica Hill will be coming in—"

Peter Harley interrupted. "Will young Brown make good, though? Horner says he's no account."

Benjy Dawes stepped to the window. "Look here, if you think he's no good," said he.

In front of the Red Star Garage their late visitor was doing battle with a roughneck, whose name, if the gentlemen at the window had cared to ask, was Howfer.

They saw Howfer swing a heavy foot to kick. But the kick was never delivered, for something happened that caused Howfer to execute a sudden retrograde movement through the clear mountain air and land on his shoulders underneath the red pump. Next minute he was running for the railway yard.

"Right spang on the jaw!" cried Banker Dawes, in excitement rare for him.

"There has been talk here to-day that makes me tired," observed Moses Lambert, as the committee of creditors returned to the table. "I'll tell you how no-account Stephen Brown is. Through the worst night of my boy Dick's life Steve Brown stood by him, though Dick didn't know it.

And when Dick opened his eyes in the field hospital next morning, there was Steve Brown, fighting the doctors for him."

Mr. Lambert glowered at A. P. Horner.

"And I'll tell you another thing. Both Dick and I have urged him to come in with Dick on the *Pioneer*. We've offered to make a job for him. But he won't listen to us. He knows the paper is barely making expenses. Yet Horner calls him unsafe. Gentlemen, I move we extend Mr. Schwartz's loans for three months."

Scarcely had the motion been carried when cries arose for ice water. The overwrought Sam Schwartz had turned up his toes in a first-class faint.

CHAPTER VIII.

FLOOD TIDE.

IT is not written in the Good Book or anywhere else that there is virtue in admiring failure. If the neighbors who had frowned at Stephen smiled on him now, they violated no law of heaven or earth.

Boulton was his that week. The thing that did most to turn the tide of feeling in his favor was his behavior on the day of the so-called "riot."

People said the witless town marshal and his deputies would have been slaughtered, and good enough for them, but for Steve Brown's presence of mind. And see how finely he acted when Mayor Doc Hamilton offered him Hummel's job. Turned it down and asked the mayor to give the man another chance.

All the town read about the riot. The *Denver Globe* printed a long piece about it on the first page; a piece written by Dick Lambert, who was the Boulton correspondent for that great newspaper. Big and black were the headlines:

OFFICIOUS POLICE

Raid Mass Meeting of Boulton Unemployed

Challenge Right of Ex-Service Men to Learn of Jobs in New Platinum Mine

Stirringly Dick Lambert told how earnest young S. L. Brown, while coping single-

handed with the unemployment problem in the Boulton district, had been attacked by the local constabulary, and how his coolness in rescuing blunderers from the wrath of the outraged crowd had prevented bloodshed.

It was a gorgeous chance to fill space, and Dick Lambert seized it. He was to be married to Daisy Worrall soon and he needed the money.

He informed the world why the meeting was called, what Frazer had in the hills, how the moneyed men of Denver had let an opportunity slip by, and how S. L. Brown planned to outflank the hard times and beat the game of a covetous Eastern syndicate, not named. He made Steve out to be a considerably greater hero than the French generalissimo then visiting America.

Publicity begets more of the same. The *Globe* on the following day printed an editorial entitled, "Sweat Versus Dollars," and told the story over again, interpreting it as a sign that the good old American spirit was still alive and kicking.

Here was a fearless son of Colorado who saw a fortune in the hills. Did he fold his hands and wish for a millionaire to happen along and help him? Not so. He went after that fortune with true pioneer courage. He created his own capital out of hard work. He said, "People believe that nothing can be started without the aid of a plutocrat. Watch us blow that superstition higher than Pike's Peak."

Came a staff reporter and a staff photographer to work up a full-page Sunday article. Dick Lambert piloted them around. They took pictures of S. L. Brown's humble home, of his proud little mother, and of the tent in the Brown back yard, which his teamsters would occupy as sleeping quarters while in Boulton.

They went up to the homestead and, despite Daniel Frazer's objections, photographed the girls and the lode. They snapped the mules at the Watkins ranch, and even aimed their camera at the Schwartz smelter, the homeliest object between the range and the Atlantic Ocean.

People never think less of a neighbor when they see him written up glowingly in an out-of-town paper, nor when such men

as Mayor Doc Hamilton, Lem Quinn, Peter Harley and Benjy Dawes speak well of him. Steve Brown's stock stood at par, as in the days when he was a rising young advertiser of post-hole diggers.

Bill Watkins and his brothers came to town with a drove of twenty sophisticated mules. Next day ten of A. P. Horner's carts went into the hills with loads of provisions which Peter Harley & Sons, wholesale grocers, had been glad to let the new magnate have on credit.

Down came more mules and up went more carts, these laden with cook-stoves, kettles, dishes, cots, mattresses, blankets and wall tents, all rented, through the intercession of Dick Lambert, from his best girl's father, Deacon Worrall, trustee for the Boulton Campmeeting Association of blessed memory.

Along with this cargo went picks and shovels and mauls, a portable forge, a kerosene air pump and a barrel of fuel for the same; a pair of rock-drilling machines and a keg of giant powder, purchased on tick from the implement house of Lem Quinn.

As the report spread that Steve Brown had a good thing in South Cañon, he began to hear speeches like this: "If you had let me know, my boy, I'd have been glad to stake you. Could you use a little ready cash?" Such inquirers he would promise to keep gratefully in mind. Thus his rolling snowball grew.

Proud was little Mrs. Brown of her son, as any mother would be when people took to calling upon her to tell her what a winner he was. Still she had her doubts. She had seen snowballs before—Stephen's father had been an artist at rolling them—and she had seen them fly to pieces ingloriously at the foot of the hill.

One evening she rested on her piazza and looked at the mountains as the sunset faded behind them. Some weeks she scarcely noticed them. At other times they oppressed her, burdened her with their vastness, their mystery, their cruelty. What a storehouse of treasure they were—and what a tomb for luckless treasure hunters!

Their hunger for men's lives had no appeasing. They changed their lures as often as a trout fisher. In her grandfath-

er's time it had been placer gold. Later it had been silver. Stephen's father had worn Mr. Bryan's crown of thorns up there in Middle Cañon. Then copper and nickel and, more recently, tungsten had set men's hearts to thrilling. To-day it was platinum. The stories printed in the Denver papers had brought fifty strangers to Boulton within a week. And her son was no less bewitched and enticed than any of these.

A merry whistle came down the street and turned in at the gate. Her son looked so fine these days. He reminded her of his father, coming to court her in the long ago.

"Hello, my girl," said Steve, and sat down on the porch steps at her feet. He had taken supper with Dick Lambert's people and listened to Moses Lambert's tales of State politics. Full of gossip and good cheer, he failed to note that his mother was worried, until she said:

"Mrs. Worrall was here to-day, Stephen."

"Yes?"

"She says Mr. Horner is telling around that he is glad he has nothing to lose but some carts and harness."

"What does he mean by that?"

"He says you won't make expenses. Worse than that, you are letting the Frazers in for a crash. The debts that you are running up will take their mine."

"Hoot!" said Steve.

"It is all very grand and fine, Stephen. But what will the end be?"

She had tried her hand at making a budget for him. Suppose he should succeed in putting down a thousand tons of the Frazer rock in the smelter yard before winter. Suppose the ore should yield \$100,000 worth of metal. Out of that he would have to pay a third for smelting and refining, and a third more for wages and bonuses. Add \$10,000 for food for his crew, and \$5,000 for operating materials and incidentals, including rent and replacement of equipment. There was more than \$80,000 gone, and he had still to settle with Thomas Watkins for mule hire and feed.

"What will the Frazers make, Stephen?"

"Mother, I know what I'm doing."

"I surely hope so, son." She gazed

thoughtfully across her side-yard garden to the blue shadows of the foothills. "But I don't know how you can be so sure."

It had been hard for him to keep his ulterior aim from the knowledge of this clear-eyed little mother who had been his best friend and counselor all his life. Yet he had not told her, enthusiastic though he was over his idea. To-night she was worried, and he saw suddenly that she had a right to worry. More than that, he saw what his real reason was for withholding his plan from her. He was not sure that she would approve.

"Mother, you are going to know the great secret before long," he said. "I'll give you a hint. To-morrow I'm driving some Denver people up to the mine."

"Some Denver people, Stephen?"

"Capitalists, mother. Now don't you see?"

She looked perplexed. His plan, as she and the town understood it, was to work the mine himself, disregarding capitalists. That was why everybody praised him so. That was why the newspapers printed pieces about him. That was why her pastor, the Rev. Mr. Small, had preached a sermon on Doing With Our Might What Our Hands Find to Do.

"No, I don't see, Stephen, unless you mean that you are trying to sell the mine for the Frazers."

"That's it."

"But's all this talking and planning and hard work and preparation—"

"Press agent stuff, mother, the same as Dick's stories in the papers."

Her eyes snapped. There are human weathervanes that point any way the wind blows. There also are human compass needles that point true under any and all circumstances. Mrs. Brown's reaction to her son's disclosure was instant.

"Then all this fine splurge of yours is only a bluff?"

"Call it that if you like," her son answered lightly. "I call it advertising. We are doing with the mine what I used to do with the Honeyman digger. We are demonstrating it, that's all."

"The Frazers don't know this, Stephen."

Nell Frazer had been in town only a few

days before, and had talked long with Mrs. Brown of the brave thing Steve was doing.

"They think you sincerely mean to work the mine for them. They have no idea of selling."

"When they see half a million dollars they will sell quick enough."

Her silence told him what he had known in his heart all along. She had no approval to give to such a course as he had taken. She was disappointed in him.

"You are old-fashioned, like the Frazers," he told her. "You don't understand modern advertising methods."

"I don't understand gambling with other people's property," she replied.

He rose from the steps, stretched his long arms, kissed his mother good night, and went indoors to bed. He had to be up early to drive his capitalists in to South Cañon. But he did not sleep until long after he heard his mother come in. He lay awake arguing with his conscience. What was there in his scheme that was wrong? Nothing—except that he had not told the Frazers.

Well, he would see them to-morrow.

CHAPTER IX.

GOOD SAMARITANS.

MAYORS of the right sort do more than preside at council meetings and respond to toasts at civic banquets. They know a little of whatever goes on within their town, and take a fatherly interest in the affairs of their constituents. Such a mayor was Dr. John Hamilton, the biggest and jolliest man of medicine in Colorado, now serving his fifth term as chief executive of Boulton.

Early in the year of our story, Dr. Hamilton received a letter from one Arthur Laird, of the Lutwell Mining Syndicate, New York and London, inquiring into the health and worldly condition of Daniel Frazer. It was a courteous letter, and he replied in the same spirit.

Daniel Frazer, he said, was his most interesting patient and one of his best friends. A tragedy, the death of his wife, had left him badly broken up, and the passage of

the years had not healed the effects of his blow. Sensitive, intellectual, ridden by a New England conscience, he believed he had been to blame for his wife's death; and though sound enough in brain and body, he suffered from a state of mind from which Dr. Hamilton, with all his curative arts, had been unable to recall him.

"His trouble," the physician wrote, "might be classed as a mild form of shell shock."

In June two strangers called upon the doctor. The younger was Arthur Laird; the elder, a fussy little man of evident importance, was H. H. B. Lutwell. They desired to learn more about Daniel Frazer, whom they expected to visit in the hills next day.

It was soon apparent to the good-natured mayor that the strangers had the friendliest intentions toward his oddly afflicted patient.

"He saved me a fortune once," Lutwell declared, "in a mine-salting case, the slickest trap I ever walked into."

"We both owe him a lot," Laird added. "And now that my carborundum-hearted associate here begins to grow soft and philanthropic in his old age—"

"To blazes with you," snapped Lutwell. "Am I soft when I go after a mountain of platinum ore worth a hundred dollars a ton?"

Dr. Hamilton rejoiced in the good news. Intimately as he knew the Frazers, he had not heard of their mineral find.

"Mr. Lutwell has looked forward for years," said Laird, "to the pleasure of doing good with his money. Thus far he has been deterred from his purpose by his chronic dread of acquiring a reputation as an easy mark."

"And who will blame me?" Lutwell demanded. "Look at the poor Rockefellers—a thousand begging letters a day!"

"This seems to be the chance he has waited for," Laird continued. "He will emulate the good Samaritan of Holy Writ, and, like that excellent man, he will go a long way from home to perform his charitable act. The Samaritan was traveling in Judea at the time, if you recall, on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho."

Mr. Lutwell writhed under this exposure

of his kindly intentions. It is clear that he was one of those rare souls who dislike to be caught in good works. He changed the subject.

He said to the doctor, "You wrote us that Frazer's case is like shell shock."

"Speaking broadly, it is. I don't set up as a psychologist. But his trouble is of that nature."

"Lost his grip, eh?"

"Lost his faith in himself, I should say, as a result of brooding over the accident that cost Mrs. Frazer her life. He saved his own—he jumped when he saw the elevator falling—and he has called himself a coward ever since."

Lutwell and Laird exchanged glances, and the older man volunteered, "Laird and I are experts in shell shock."

"Indeed?" said the doctor.

"Tell him about it, Arthur. It was your case."

Laird turned to the physician. "I came home from the war a wreck, sir. All gone in my nerve. Some days I was myself. Then somebody would drop a book behind me, perhaps, or —"

"I know," Dr. Hamilton added.

"My wife happens to be Mr. Lutwell's favorite niece," Laird resumed, "and our children are like grandchildren to him. So when the doctors gave me up, he got busy. One evening Mrs. Laird and I went to the opera. A brute in the crowd jostled her, gave her the eye, insulted her with a remark. He was a big chap, but I walloped him all over a block of wet asphalt paving. When the cops dragged me off him I was all right again. Been myself ever since."

"Remarkable," the doctor commented.

"The man I thrashed was one Bing O'Brien, famous in the prize ring," Laird concluded. "Mr. Lutwell had hired him to stir me up and make me rediscover my soul, or whatever it was that I had lost."

"It cost me one hundred dollars," Lutwell grumbled.

The recollection hurt him so that he fished a bottle of tablets from his pocket and medicated himself.

"Doctor, could we work some such cure on Daniel Frazer? Get him fighting mad, you know, and—"

Dr. Hamilton frowned. "Frazer has enough to stand already, I think."

"You might say that of a drowning man," Lutwell argued. "Yet if handing him a hard knock on the bean would help you save him, you would let fly, wouldn't you?"

They spent an hour with the mayor, then went back to the Palace Hotel.

Three days passed. On the evening of the third day he saw them coming up the street.

"Here we are again," they announced gloomily.

When they had sat down with him in his summer-house at the edge of the lawn, they told him a tale that caused him to open his eyes as it progressed, and to shout with laughter at its conclusion.

"Rich!" roared the doctor. "You gave Frazer a psychotherapy treatment, and he kicked you out."

"It's no laughing matter with me," said Lutwell. "I've been called a pirate and a wolf, and it hurts."

"We figured it would be easy to explain to him afterward—like saying, 'Excuse it, please,'" Laird observed. "We didn't calculate what a roaring lion we were going to rouse. There seems to be nothing for us to do but to fold our tents like the Arabs and silently steal away for a season."

"That's one kind of stealing I've never been accused of," Lutwell growled. "Steal away? My foot! Think of my good name. And think of all that platinum."

His feelings got the better of him. "A sweet pair of good Samaritans we look like!" he exploded. "Never again will I go out of my way to be kind, I swear to Mahomet. Never as long as I live!"

Laird stated their object in calling upon Dr. Hamilton this evening.

"Our wounded vanity aside, the first consideration with us is the Frazer's welfare. We want to make sure, before we leave town, that their present plan will go through without a hitch, if there is any way we can guarantee it."

"We want to befriend them though they have wronged us," Lutwell added virtuously.

At their farewell breakfast that day

Daniel Frazer had said enough to give them an idea of the lease that Steve Brown had taken and the operation that he contemplated. Mules were involved, and certain carts, and a smelter in Boulton.

"Sam Schwartz's smelter?" queried the doctor. "Schwartz is to be closed up. His creditors meet at the bank to-morrow. It means that young Brown will have to ship his ore to Denver."

"He can't afford to ship his stuff an inch beyond Boulton," Lutwell declared. "I've done some figuring. He may go in the hole, as it is. Probably will. Probably won't be able to scare up enough credit to get started. Absurd idea, doing without capital. Might as well do without his head."

The speaker puffed out his cheeks indignantly.

"Driving into town this evening I asked him if he wouldn't take us in as silent partners and let us put up the money. What did he do? Pointed his whip at a sign on a dirty little factory. Sign said, 'No Help Wanted.'"

"In brief," said the physician, "you would like to capitalize their scheme for them without their knowledge."

That was it, the good Samaritans agreed. That was what they were getting at. And since the closing of the local smelter would be an obstacle in the Frazer's way, what could be done to keep the plant going? What was needed?

Cheerfully Dr. Hamilton undertook to take them to see Banker Benjy Dawes.

"We stay in the dark till the grand finale at the end of the season," Lutwell warned. "Then we breeze in like a couple of fairy godmothers and knock that old ramrod of a professor man off his pins with a scuttle of coals of fire. He called me a land variety of Captain Kidd, remember."

Next morning the good Samaritans resumed their interrupted journey to Nevada, where they had properties to inspect. At the same hour Dr. Hamilton was high on the Boulton Plateau, speeding his pair of brisk bays toward the Frazer place. The city men had told him something that interested his medical mind far more than their account of the platinum lode. They had

said that Daniel Frazer had come back to himself.

Returning from South Cañon, the doctor had a strange story to confide to Banker Dawes.

"Frazer is a different man; you'd hardly know him," he reported. "Although I take no stock in new-fangled therapies and opathies and isms, I'm obliged to believe the change in him came as those New Yorkers told us it did. They stung him hard where he lives—in his sense of honor. And somehow it brought him to."

"Did you let him know what they had done for him?" asked the banker.

"No, I didn't. The treatment is still working on him. You ought to hear him discuss them and all their breed. Whoosh!"

As the days went on the mayor watched with interest the progress of the Frazer venture and listened to the many rumors afloat regarding it. One report had the Lutwell Syndicate trying to buy the smelter as a move to bring Steve Brown to time. Somewhere a distorted fragment of the truth had leaked out. Dr. Hamilton smiled at this yarn and held his peace.

But he did not smile when he heard that Stephen Brown was closeted with three new strangers at the Palace Hotel. He went thither and had a talk with Lon Madigan, the hotel keeper, then sought and found Benjy Dawes at the banker's home.

"The thing Lutwell was afraid of is about to happen," said he. "Tudor Wheeling and his crowd are at the Palace. Young Brown has been with them all afternoon. He's to drive them up to Frazer's to-morrow."

"Those cutthroats!" cried the banker. "They'll steal Frazer to death."

"More than that, they will capture the mine from Lutwell. I regard Lutwell as a client of ours."

"We want him interested in the Boulton district, certainly. We must protect him. What have you heard?"

"Wheeling has had scouts reconnoitering Frazer's lode. They went up disguised as laborers looking for jobs. They came down yesterday. Wheeling heard their reports, then sent for Steve Brown."

"Where's Lutwell now?"

"Somewhere in Nevada?"

"Better wire him," the banker advised.

"And send word to Frazer to look out."

"I'll have a talk with Steve Brown," said Dr. Hamilton. "He can't know what a chump he is, taking that bunch of reptiles up there."

Puzzled, Dawes asked: "What's his idea, anyway? I thought he was going to work the mine himself."

"I don't know," the doctor confessed. "I can't make him out."

A busy mayor who is also a busy physician cannot attend to everything he sees to do. Before Hamilton left the banker's home he had been summoned to an all-night battle for a patient's life at a fruit ranch five miles away. When he returned to town in the morning he was too late to have his talk with Steve Brown, who had left at daybreak with three of the leading spirits of the notorious Tudor Wheeling ring, bound for the Frazer homestead.

Dr. Hamilton paused only long enough to send a telegram, then headed his team of bays for Greenleaf Gulch.

CHAPTER X.

A MATTER OF HONOR.

IT is a curious thing, and worthy of a passing glance, that Mr. Lutwell, when making his preposterous proposal to Daniel Frazer, had kept Tudor Wheeling in mind as a horrible model to imitate in what he had to say.

Only by imagining himself such a scoundrel as Tudor Wheeling had Mr. Lutwell been able to assume and put over the rôle of iniquitous tempter. Known and detested was Mr. Wheeling wherever mines were bought and sold.

We may think of this creature as black-jowled, small-eyed and corpulent. In broad horizontal stripes of black and white he would have seemed more appropriately clad than in the skirted broadcloth coat and the high silk hat which he wore habitually in public.

His air as he walked the streets of the Colorado capital was the self-conscious and

superdignified air of one who expects to meet his ancient history at any turning and is ready to face it down harshly.

He had three offices in Denver, and at least as many homes; which may or may not explain why the law, while everlastingly finding him out, could never find him in.

Not in vain had the adroit Dick Lambert plied the Denver press with accounts of the heroic undertakings of S. L. Brown. For Mr. Wheeling read those accounts and said to himself: "Frazer? Ain't that the old gink who was mooning around the mining exchange last winter? Sure it is."

Further he cogitated: "Platinum, eh? Let me see. Have I ever sold platinum shares to the masses? I trow not. And platinum is attractive. I must look into this."

With a golf cap on his head in place of the high silk hat, yet still invested in broadcloth, he rode beside S. L. Brown on the front seat of the mountain stage and regaled his ingenuous young driver with flattery.

If flattery be ever justified, Mr. Wheeling's was; for there were signs of business—Steve Brown's business—all the way.

Men with picks and shovels were filling a washout at the top of Greenleaf Gulch. They greeted S. L. Brown with loud and glad cries. At the mule ranch the Watkins boys were starting with loads of hay for the Frazer place. Their rheumatic sire, elated over the increase of industry in those parts, had dispensed with his canes.

Below the long hill where the road dipped from the plateau to South Boulton Creek a tent was pitched, and three span of harnessed mules were picketed. From the tent emerged a hard-looking young man with a love-story magazine in his hand. It was the roughneck Howfer.

Contrite and useful he looked as he touched his hat to Steve Brown and the Denver strangers. His job there was to hook on the spare teams and give the ore carts a lift to the table-land.

In another mile the travelers turned aside into the brush to let a procession of laden carts trundle past. The drivers of the carts waved and shouted. The last one blew a kiss from toothless gums, and swept his arm in a wide gesture of drinking a health

to Steve Brown. He was old Abe Whittlesey, the town drunkard, in whose defense Steve had lately clashed with the police.

The carts would make the Watkins ranch by sundown, rest there overnight and finish the trip to Boulton on the morrow.

At the Frazer place things were lively. Nell, clad now in khaki, was sending Miguel with a wheelbarrow load of red-hot dried-apple pies for the work camp up the cañon, where stood the tents, near enough to the house to be neighborly, far enough away not to be a nuisance.

Smoke rose from the cook tent. Men were washing up for supper. A dozen black mules munched hay in the corral. Enough ore had been blasted and broken that day, Nell said, to start six carts on the road next morning.

"And you have done it all without a cent!" exclaimed the convinced Mr. Wheeling. "I'll say you are a wizard, young man."

Nell's brown eyes looked up at Steve and echoed the sentiment.

But when, late that night, she and her father sat on the porch, with Stephen Brown between them, there was only sorrowful reproach in those eyes that had so warmly beamed.

The men from Denver had gone to bed. A splendid moon filled the cañon with light and spread a carpet of tree shadows across the dooryard. The creek sang its never-ending song.

"Stephen," spoke Daniel Frazer, "who told these men our mine was for sale?"

The sharpness of the question was not lost upon Steve.

"Because it is not for sale, you know. Certainly not to men like Tudor Wheeling. I wonder you brought him here, after our experience with Lutwell."

"I didn't ask him to come," Steve replied.

"He says you encouraged him to think he might buy us out."

"If he makes you an offer, there's no harm done, is there? You don't have to accept."

"The harm, Stephen, is that he was led here by an assurance, clearly stated to him, that the mine was in the market."

"His coming won't hurt us, sir. It's good advertising. He will go back to Denver and talk. By and by the right people will hear—"

"The right people, Steve?" This query was Nell's.

The moment had come to which her young man had looked forward uneasily ever since the evening when he had conceived his great idea, down there on the boulder among the tree shadows. He drew a long breath and took the plunge.

What he was aiming at, of course, he said, was to sell the mine for the Frazers at a suitable price, or to bring to their aid enough capital to make the mine pay.

The selling method he had chosen was getting results. Tudor Wheeling had not been the first inquirer from the outer world. The Dorado Litharge Corporation, with millions to spend, had also been attracted by Dick Lambert's publicity. The Litharge people had an agent in Boulton this week, nosing around at the smelter, securing samples of the Frazer ore and shipping them to Denver by registered mail.

Tudor Wheeling's visit was a blessing in disguise. It would become known to the Litharge crowd and serve to whet their interest.

"In fact," Steve concluded, with more boldness than the silence of his listeners warranted him in feeling, "everything is playing into our hands. Lutwell and Laird went to the courthouse with Lem Quinn to look at your title. That proved to Lem, that we had something good. Result: he gives us credit for all the hardware we need. Poor old Hummel gave us our biggest boost of all when he raided our labor meeting. And now Lutwell, I hear, is trying to buy the smelter so as to control our output. That will help us with the Litharge people when they get wind of it."

"So," said Daniel Frazer in a strange, new, chilled-steel tone, "all this activity on your part"—he swept his arm toward the sleeping work camp—"is only a pretense, a sensational trick."

"I call it good business," Steve replied. "We defraud no one. We simply take a new way to tell the world what we've got. Instead of hiring a high-priced promoter,

we sell the mine ourselves and save his commission. Instead of paying thousands of dollars for newspaper space, we put on a practical demonstration that gets us the space free of charge. The newspapers even pay Dick Lambert for filling it."

Frazer brought down his hand with a slap on the arm of his chair. "We borrow the goods and the good will of the business men of Boulton under false pretenses," he declared. "They help us because they sympathize with us. We use their help for another purpose than the one we stated."

Nell spoke, and her voice sounded grieved. "Do you mean, Steve, that you have never once intended to go through with the plan as you told it to us? You have schemed all the while to fool people—our friends in town, and us as well?"

It was more than he could take sitting down. He rose before them, rebuked yet defiant.

"We cheat nobody," he maintained. "The people who help us will get their money back when we sell the mine. Whether we sell the mine or not, we shall break even by December and pay them what we owe them. And the people who buy the mine will get their money's worth, don't worry."

"Suppose we should sell out to-morrow," said Nell. "What about all these men you have coaxed to come here and help you? You promised them six months of work."

"I'll take care of them," he answered. "The buyer will have to settle with me for my lease, remember."

Daniel Frazer sprang up and paced to the end of the porch and back. "The humbug of it, Stephen—the hypocrisy!"

"Look here, sir," Steve insisted, pacing beside him: "anybody can see we can't make a cent the way we are going. Not in fifty years. Anybody who stops to think a minute knows there's a catch in it. A. P. Horner knows; so do other men."

"They know," Frazer sent back severely, "that we are sharpers; that morally we belong in the Tudor Wheeling class."

"If we dispose of the mine at a good price they will say we belong in the Morgan-Rothschild class."

Impatiently the old gentleman waved away that bright prospect.

"You were to tell me your plans, Stephen, and you did not keep your word. And why? Because you had deceit in mind, and you knew I would never be a party to it."

"That's a hard word, sir."

"No other word fits."

"Back in 1914," the culprit retorted, "I had deceit in mind, I suppose, when I demonstrated the Honeyman digger and took orders for diggers on the strength of the holes I dug. Am I doing a worse thing now? I'm showing people our mine at work, that's all."

"Listen!" Nell warned.

Down by the stables Dr. John Hamilton's team and runabout came into sight.

Through the moonlight Frazer went to meet him, Steve Brown following dutifully.

"Hello!" hailed the newcomer. "I heard you were selling your mine. Is the deal closed? Am I too late to say a word?"

"We are not selling the mine," Frazer answered stiffly. "We have said we will work it ourselves, and work it we will until our debts are paid and our promises kept. Stephen, will you look after the doctor's team?"

CHAPTER XI.

AS ADVERTISED.

PERHAPS the moon should have shimmered in zigzags across a startled sky, and the mountains tumbled their bowlders into the cañon; but the moon sailed serenely on her scheduled course, and the hills maintained their stony decorum. The catastrophe was all in Steve Brown's soul.

For the life of him he could see nothing dishonorable in his scheme, beyond the fact that he had kept his inner purpose from the Frazers until he had set the wheels in motion. He had meant only to do for them what they could not or would not do for themselves.

Bitterly he vowed to show Daniel Frazer an example of honor that should make the

rigorous old gentleman's head swim. He would go on with the plan as he had first explained it to the family. While it would not profit them, it could be carried out without any loss to them, aside from a few hundred wagonloads of ore; and it would at least provide jobs for the bunch of loyal good fellows asleep in the tents up there in the moonlit cañon.

And when he had finally redeemed his word, what then? Was it not significant that he had been sent to-night to put up Dr. Hamilton's horses?

Reduced to the ranks of the unemployed, a captain of industry no longer, he would hang around Zeke Pelham's barn again, a codfish on the sands of time, urged by the virtuous A. P. Horner to be the master of his fate, and warned by Mr. Horner in the same breath that vaunting ambition often o'erleaps itself and falls with a dull and sickening thud.

No, on second thought, he wouldn't stand that. Boulton might laugh; he would not stay to hear. He saw a lugubrious picture. He saw himself bidding Nell good-by in December, when his lease had run its fatal course. He would clear out, leaving the field to the strictly moral Bruce Horner, the model son who had never tricked, cheated or lied in his pure life.

Yet never! Nell in the arms of that shrimp?

A silent figure in khaki, venturing down from the house, pitied him as he sat alone on a log beside the stables, counting his dead hopes.

"Steve."

He did not look around. But that was all right.

Lightly she went to him, sat down beside him, tried to thrust a small object into his hand. He looked. It was a dark brown and misshapen lump exhaling a faint odor of licorice—his pledged plug of chewing tobacco.

"Is the lease canceled, then?" he asked.

"Not necessarily, Steve. But since you have bought everything else on the deferred payment plan, why not the lease? Rather than deprive you of your favorite means of consolation I'll extend you credit. What they call a moratorium," she explained.

He took the humble token of her compassion and laid it down in the moonlight and the dew.

"Listen, Nell; the Dorado Litharge people will be here next. They are big and sound and respectable. Suppose they offer your father a whale of a lot of money—a fortune. Will he still balk?"

"Yes, Steve, if they come in answer to your advertising."

After a minute he asked: "Do you think I've been dishonest?"

"No more than any man who takes a sporting chance," she answered. "The debts you have run up are ours, of course."

"Not legally."

"Morally they are. But they will be paid by the end of the year, and your promise to the men will be kept, so that's that."

"I used to think I was square," he complained, "but I haven't got corners on me like your father has."

She had no comment to make on the angularity of her parent.

"Will he go ahead with the work as planned?"

"He will if you don't," she replied.

"Have I said anything about quitting?"

"But our bargain is a hard one, Steve. I wouldn't hold you to it for the world."

He reached for the symbol of agreement on the grass before them. "It takes two to break a bargain," said he, and dropped the dark brown object into hands that closed upon it quickly.

"You will have your year's work for nothing, Steve."

As his biographer I am proud of the response that he made. He said: "Oh, well, I'll get to see you oftener than other summers—maybe once a week. Tobacco's a filthy weed, anyway. It stunts the growth."

A rabbit bound for the garden came hopping along in the moonlight and looked them over without fear. Something rose and fell with a plop in the purling waters of the creek; possibly the big rainbow trout that lived under the farmyard bridge.

"Midnight," said Steve. "Shall I see you home?"

Her answer was irrelevant. "Dr. Hamilton thinks," she remarked, "that motor trucks could get in here from Boulton."

"So could airplanes," he sighed. "But we haven't got 'em."

"Now that you have mended the road, a five-ton truck could make the round trip in two days, couldn't it?"

"In one," he declared, remembering the lorries in France.

He had thought of motor trucks before; had spoken of them that day with Tudor Wheeling. If he could increase his delivery of ore without adding to his operating expenses he could put the Frazers on the way to fortune. But with his present equipment six tons a day was his limit.

If Thomas Watkins had only gone in for motor vehicles instead of mules!

Again Nell changed the subject. "When Mr. Lutwell and Mr. Laird were here, did you hear them speak of papa's health in any way?"

"No, but Miguel did, at the workshop that afternoon; and they talked to me about it coming up."

"What did they say?"

"Oh—asked questions."

"About his mentality?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Why, Nell?"

She ignored his query and asked: "This evening, at supper and afterward, did you notice any—any difference in him?"

He could answer yes to that. Uncommonly cool and alert Daniel Frazer had seemed in his talk with Tudor Wheeling. As for the briskness with which he had later hurled the harpoon of his displeasure into another poor fish—

"You mustn't mind, Steve. He has had a good deal to stand in the last few days. Your men have taken possession here with hardly a word to him. They have come to me about everything, as you told them to. That would have been all right a few weeks ago, but it is different now."

After a minute she asked: "Did Mr. Lutwell and his friend talk about mind-healing and things like that?"

"The young one did. He gave me a line of talk about shell shock. Why do you want to know?"

"I just wondered," she answered vaguely. "Dr. Hamilton has told us some very strange things in the last hour."

She rose and put out her hand. Imagine

telling a girl like her good night with a handshake. But Steve was in disgrace tonight.

Next day, driving back to Boulton, he expected hazing from Tudor Wheeling and his men.

"A peach of a salesman you are!" Wheeling snarled. "What do you mean, wasting our time, offering goods you've no title to sell?"

"If people take you for a burglar," Steve retorted, eying the big biped calmly, "is it any fault of mine?"

Thereafter he was left free to reflect how handsome a line of motor trucks would seem, rolling over the plateau road. A vain day dream now.

Had he foreseen Daniel Frazer's opposition, he would have plunged deeper at the start and managed somehow to place a string of such vehicles in service.

It was too late, however, to correct the mistake. This morning, when he suggested that his credit might still be good enough to add such rolling stock, Frazer's answer had been an uncompromising, "No, not one more cent of other people's money do we risk."

CHAPTER XII.

COALS OF FIRE.

THROUGH the rest of June and the weeks of a hot July Steve Brown went on, according to the terms of his bargain, at the treadmill task he had wished upon himself.

How many people knew of his plight he neither knew nor cared. Now and then he caught sight of a smile of pity, and held his head a little higher, tightened his jaws and stuck to business.

The fellows at the mine strained their hearts for him and worked by no rule of hours save the ancient rule of sun to sun. They understood what he was up against.

At the smelter in mid-July Sam Schwartz put through his first run of the ore. Within a week he placed in Steve's hands a flat plate of silvery metal no larger or heavier than a man could carry in a suit case. It

looked small for all the work that had gone into it.

The check that came from Denver looked bigger, but it belonged to other people, and had melted to its decimal point in a day.

Dick Lambert wrote in the *Pioneer*:

It is rumored that the Dorado Litharge Corporation has made overtures to Daniel Frazer for the purchase in part or whole of his mining claim in South Cañon, about which so much has been said this summer.

We are authorized by S. L. Brown, the lessee of the property, to say that Mr. Frazer contemplates no change in the ownership of the mine at this time.

A shaft sunk in the lode has reached the depth of thirty feet, at which point the chalcocite continues to be as rich in the platinumiferous mineral, sperrylite, as at the surface.

We understand that the first month's clean-up went above thirteen thousand dollars.

On the day when Steve Brown, armed with one of Zeke Pelham's historic guns, went to Denver with his first platinum bar, Daniel Frazer came down from the mine, driving his own team and light wagon. Having stabled his animals in Pelham's barn he made for Dr. Hamilton's home.

Town Marshal Hummel was swinging his official club in front of the Palace Hotel. "Why, hello, there, perfesser!" he exclaimed in the facetious tone of one who greets the village fool.

Frazer fixed him with a look, left him abashed and passed on.

In due time he swung in at Dr. Hamilton's gate, mounted the steps and halted at the screen door.

Sounds from within betokened a dinner party. Silver tinkled on glass. Mrs. Hamilton's society voice was heard to urge some one to have a second cup of coffee, and some one responded gallantly that since he left home he had not, until this evening, tasted real coffee; and if Mrs. Hamilton would be so good—

Another voice spoke. "Chief, aren't you forgetting the coffee they gave us at the Palace Hotel? You praised that to the waitress, if I remember."

"I suppose he praises every woman's coffee," Mrs. Hamilton laughed. "I suspect that Mr. Lutwell is a great flatterer."

Daniel Frazer rang the bell.

To the summerhouse on the lawn the men folk retired after the late-arriving guest had been regaled. The cigars lighted, Dr. Hamilton remembered that he had some telephoning to do, and left the three to hold their peace conference without him.

The moment was an awkward one for Arthur Laird, and more so for Mr. Lutwell, who, now that he had his enemy in his power, looked cross-eyed at his cigar, fidgetted in his chair, cleared his throat noisily and otherwise betrayed an uneasiness odd in one so astute and worldly wise.

He had not reckoned on the gleam of quiet humor that shone from under Daniel Frazer's gray eyebrows.

"Hamilton advised me you would be here to-day," Frazer began. "I am more deeply touched than I can tell you."

"Let's don't discuss it," said Lutwell.

"But we must," Frazer insisted gently. "You are good to come back this way."

"Good? The dickens!" Lutwell puffed.

"Is a man good when he comes after something he's greedy for?"

He blustered in a grizzly manner.

"I tell you, Frazer, I've set my heart on owning a partnership in that mine of yours. I've talked nothing else all the way to Nevada and back. Ain't that so, Arthur?"

Laird nodded gravely, closing one eye to his mentor of other days.

"Before we discuss the mine," said Frazer, "I must speak of the great service you did me when you were here in June. Hamilton has told me everything."

"Pooh! Pooh!" said Lutwell.

"And of the injustice I did you when you were my guests. I am not ashamed, for I acted according to natural instinct."

"We all do that," Lutwell broke in. "I'm doing it now when I covet your mine."

"Nevertheless, I offer you my regrets for what I said, as well as my thanks for what you did. I called you hard names, Mr. Lutwell. A pirate, for instance."

"Did you? I'd forgotten."

"And a wolf."

"Shucks!" Lutwell growled. "You ought to hear what they call me in Wall Street."

He laid his cigar on the rail of the summerhouse and began a series of strange masagelike movements, patting himself on his sides, his chest, his legs, until Laird brought forth from somewhere a small bottle and passed it over to him.

"Saved!" Mr. Lutwell muttered, swallowing a tablet. "Now let that woman's coffee do its worst."

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEW START.

ON the first day of August there were queer, wide, cleancut tire tracks in the dust of Steve Brown's side street as he came home to dinner. He had noticed them in Arapahoe Street, too, and, behold, they turned the corner with him.

In the shade of the maples in front of his mother's cottage stood a caravan of box trucks—motor trucks, all of a kind, all in army gray, all new; six of them.

Small children were clambering over their sides. The neighbor women were out in a swarm to view the odd sight in that quiet thoroughfare.

And here came Dick Lambert, grinning, holding out his one hand—the hand that was such a good hand when a friend needed help.

"Congratulations, old bean," Dick was saying.

Yes, and here was A. P. Horner, brushing Dick aside to exclaim: "Stephen, my dear boy, let me be the first one in town to tell you how proud of you we are. I speak, I believe, for every man, woman, and child in the community when I say—"

"Sign this receipt, will you, Steve? And here's your bill of sale."

It was Max Herring, proprietor of the Red Star Garage. "I think you'll find 'em all in good order. Pretty, ain't they?"

Steve stared at a painted legend on the side of the first truck. The legend stared right back at him as follows:

THE FRAZER-LUTWELL COMPANY,

S. L. Brown, Gen. Man.

"When you get ready to insure them,"

spoke Mr. Horner suggestively, "just let me know."

S. L. Brown escaped to the cool, dim quiet of home. His mother, hastening in after him, paused at the door and finished her entrance softly, and sudden tears blurred her sight.

For a young woman whose cheeks looked much like roses had her arms around the young man's neck and was kissing him where it would do the most good.

"We couldn't stand it, Steve," said Nell Frazer some time afterward, "to see you working your head off for nothing. And papa had to make amends to Mr. Lutwell sooner or later, anyway. Besides, he wanted to cinch a man of honor for a son-in-law when he had one in sight. And so—"

But Steve had taken pencil and paper and was calculating weeks until December, tons per week, and other dry matters of a purely commercial nature.

Their check to the Lutwell Syndicate at Christmas more than paid for the trucks. They paid all bills outstanding. They enabled the Watkins mule ranch to show a profit for the first time in four years. They made it possible for eleven marriages to take place in the Boulton district around New Year's. And, best of all, to Steve's way of thinking, they deposited in Benjy Dawes's bank to the credit of the Frazer family a sum of money closely resembling thirty-two thousand dollars.

Steve says there is a lot of comfort in having an heiress for a wife in this uncertain world.

These events happened last year. To-day prosperity has begun to visit Boulton again.

If you follow the example of that ever-welcome goddess you will hear explosive sounds at times from the mountains west of town—sounds like the popping of machine guns.

By this you will know that motor trucks are climbing Greenleaf Gulch up to the plateau, and so over to Frazer's. There are a score of them in operation this year, and the lode has yet to show the first sign of pinching out.

THE END.



The Ledbury Fist

By ELIZABETH YORK MILLER

Author of "The Greatest Gamble," "Diana the Hunted," "Doubles and Quits," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PART I.

DICK ARDELL, about to be married to Evelyn Harland, goes with a friend to spend the evening at the house of Marchesa di Trevi. The next morning he wakes up to find himself on a bench on the embankment with a valuable diamond-studded pendant in the shape of a cross in his pocket. It develops later that the marchesa has been murdered and the cross stolen. All Dick recalls is that, missing his cigarette case, he went back for it. He has a fearful pain in his head, so his pal, Jimmy Creigh, takes him to his rooms, summons a doctor and builds an elaborate alibi to the effect that the crack on his head was sustained by slipping on the stairs of the underground railway. Meanwhile, the valuable pendant has been stolen from Dick's pocket and later sent to Evelyn with a card from Dick, apparently in his writing. But he and Jimmy realize that this is the Ledbury list, a style of penmanship all members of their unit at Clavering School acquired. Dick tells Evelyn that he did not mean to give her the cross; she suspects he intended it for another woman and breaks the engagement. Meanwhile, he and Jimmy have a call from the real Marchesa di Trevi, from whom it appears that the woman who impersonated her had stolen the famous pendant. She is engaged to Bruce Norwich, a bounder who was at school with Jimmy and Dick. Events are now at such a pass that Dick resolves to go to the police and tell the truth regardless of what the result will be to Jimmy and himself.

CHAPTER IX.

WAVERING.

DICK was confronted by a very disagreeable task, no less difficult because self-imposed.

He was supposed to be still an invalid

and the doctor protested vigorously when he announced his intention of getting up and out.

"Young man, you are very rash," said the doctor.

"He's sixteen kinds of an ass," muttered Jimmy Creigh.

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for January 6.

"I must go down to Ravenstoke," Dick said. "There are things which must be attended to."

Jimmy looked a little hopeful.

"Oh, you're going to Ravenstoke before—before you plunge into solitary confinement?"

"Yes. I'll let you know in plenty of time," Dick replied.

The doctor did not understand this veiled allusion. "You are most unwise—most rash," he said severely. "If anything happens to you, please don't blame me."

"I wish to heaven something would happen to him," Jimmy murmured *sotto voce*.

Dick said he would go down to Ravenstoke the next day.

Jimmy Creigh retired to his box of a study and wrote to Evelyn. He had a great horror of jail. He had never been confined in one in his life and the idea was sickening. His family would hate it, too. This may read as though intended for a joke, but it was anything but that to Jimmy Creigh. The letter he wrote to Evelyn was composed with the main intention of keeping himself out of further trouble. He wrote desperately.

Did she, with her sweet, gentle nature, desire to drive Dick Ardell to suicide? "To-morrow—" he wrote, "which is Tuesday, when you will get this letter, Dick is going down to shut up Ravenstoke. I happen to know that he is making a new will to-day. He is not quite in his mind, I think. By your cruel desertion of him over such a little thing, you have broken his heart and blasted his life. He has as good as told me that he doesn't care about living any more, and the doctor is terribly worried over him. Whatever you decide to do, you mustn't let him know I've written to you. He would never forgive me, but I am so fond of Dick that I can't help doing what little I can to prevent a catastrophe. Perhaps you could get word to the housekeeper at Ravenstoke to put away that revolver Dick keeps in a drawer in his dressing-room. A man in his mood shouldn't be subjected to unnecessary temptation."

Jimmy's round face was bathed in perspiration as he composed this letter. In a postscript he thoughtfully added the time

of the train by which Dick would arrive at Tunbridge Wells.

Evelyn received the letter at breakfast the next morning. Fortunately, her mother had not yet come down and her father was absorbed in the paper. He followed the development of the Kensington murder mystery as avidly as a morbid flapper.

"They've got that butler!" he exclaimed. "I knew all along he had something to do with it. They're holding him on a charge of theft. Some of the jewelry's been recovered, but not the pendant she was wearing."

Evelyn paid no attention. She had read Jimmy Creigh's letter and it had upon her the effect which he hoped for.

Mrs. Harland bustled in, consciously over-cheerful, and Evelyn put Jimmy's letter out of sight.

"Well, my darling, and what are you doing to-day?" The remark was not addressed to her husband and he knew it. "It's such a lovely day—a perfect June day, all sunshine and flowers. Good to be alive, isn't it?"

"I hadn't thought of doing anything special," Evelyn replied.

"Oh, but you must. I can't have you moping all the time. What will people say? First thing you know, somebody will be spreading a rumor that Dick Ardell jilted *you*."

Evelyn hung her head and tears glittered on her eyelashes.

"Leave the gel alone, can't you?" grumbled Thomas Harland.

Evelyn got up, excusing herself from the table. She had finished her breakfast.

"I think I'll go over to Tull's and see if he's got any settings to spare of those fancy Leghorns."

Evelyn, as the prospective bride of a gentleman farmer—until recently—had been interesting herself in poultry.

"If you'll wait an hour or so, I'll go with you," said her mother.

"I'm going to cycle," Evelyn objected.

"My darling, you'll get fearfully hot!"

"I want to cycle, mother."

Thomas Harland laid down his paper.

"Why can't you let the gel do what she wants?" he demanded.

His wife stared coldly at him. "She generally does—without any need for you to back her up."

Evelyn slipped away and left them arguing.

Could it possibly be true what Jimmy Creigh had written? It suddenly occurred to her that a world without Dick would be no world at all; that she had never really believed their separation could be final. Yet if what Jimmy wrote were true, Dick had seen no hope for reconciliation, even in the remote future. Had Dick felt himself to be too wicked even to pray for forgiveness?

But Evelyn didn't particularly want him to pray for forgiveness now. Rather, she felt that the rôle of suppliant should be hers.

She had always adored Dick. Looking back, when had she not loved him? She blushed to remember that at the youthful age of ten she had made him promise to wait until she grew up. How jealous, then, she had been of twenty-years'-old Gertrude Morrison, now married this long time. Dick, at seventeen, had been just a little sweet on Gertrude.

All the same, he had waited for Evelyn to grow up, and now—on the eve of their wedding—at the very first demand upon her trust in him, she had thrown him over. She was agonized by what she had done, and cruelly tortured by jealousy. At one moment she felt that she wanted him at any cost to her self-respect; and the next, that she could not share so much as one of his thoughts with another woman.

But Jimmy Creigh's letter had frightened and shocked her into a complete realization of the truth. It was that she belonged to Dick even more than he belonged to her. Perhaps she had no claim on him; but if he still wanted her, he had every claim on her. It was weak, if you like; but one feels that it was woman, at her sweetest and best.

Mrs. Harland had been right about the perfect June day.

The countryside shimmered in a haze of golden sunshine. There was a delicate riot of butterflies over the blossoming hedges; a waft of warm fragrance from the flower gardens with their burden of early

summer, a hum of bees, a murmur in the tree-tops and the sweet, sharp cry of the lark.

Evelyn cycled into the town, bought a newspaper for herself, then pedaled back to Smeeth Farm and interviewed Mr. Tull on the subject of Leghorn settings. Smeeth Farm lay in the hollow just below Dick Ardell's estate, and it was a long push up the hill to Ravenstoke. Evelyn reached the top as warm as her mother had predicted she would be. It was fiercely hot, more like August than June.

The train by which Jimmy Creigh had said Dick would arrive was due in about twenty minutes now. How quickly he reached Ravenstoke would depend upon whether he motored or took a horse-drawn cab from the station. Evelyn felt that she dared not risk a pretence at meeting him by accident. The "accident" might not occur conveniently. So she cycled boldly up to the house and told Mrs. Morley, the housekeeper, that Mr. Ardell was coming and that she would wait for him.

Rumors of the broken engagement had already reached Mrs. Morley.

"Yes," she said. "I've had a telegram. Won't you come in, Miss Evelyn?"

Evelyn said no, she would rather wait outside. It was such a pleasant day. She propped her bicycle against a tree on the lawn and settled herself in the summer-house, from which she could obtain a full view of the driveway, and not fail to be observed. Then, in order to appear occupied, she opened the paper she had bought. Of course, the first news she turned to was the Kensington murder mystery.

It was true, as her father had said, that both the butler and most of the jewelry had been found. The butler confessed to theft, but not to murder. His story was long and circumstantial and included an emphatic statement that he did not even know his mistress had been murdered until the next morning.

There was only one article of jewelry still missing, the jeweled cross which the woman had been wearing. The real Marchesa di Trevi had given a detailed description of this to the police, and a full-sized sketch was reproduced.

Evelyn Harland stared at it, scarcely believing the evidence of her own eyes.

CHAPTER X.

FOR THE WOMAN'S SAKE.

COULD such things be?

One knew, of course, that a murder had been committed; that murders are committed. But they lay so outside the ordinary person's experience as to seem unreal.

Warm as it was, Evelyn Harland turned cold from head to foot. The clover-scented breeze blowing from Ravenstoke meadows seemed like an icy blast. That missing pendant—eight large pearls and eight diamonds set in a cross of ebony—it stared back at her from the newspaper literally as large as life. That was the ornament which had come to her with Dick's card, the wedding-gift as she had assumed, and which he had demanded back, saying it had been sent "by mistake."

She remembered that Dick had shown considerable agitation over it: that Jimmy Creigh, apparently, had known nothing about it. It was impossible to imagine that it was anything but the same pendant. Evelyn had examined her supposed gift too closely not to recognize this detailed description.

She was suddenly afraid.

What did it mean? How had Dick got hold of that cross? He was in the bogus marchesa's house the night she was murdered. But, of course, he left, he and Mr. Charles, before any of the others.

Murder! A terrible word. To slay a fellow creature, a helpless woman at that—what fiend could have done such a thing? The butler, probably. But Evelyn could not bring herself to read about the capture of the butler and his long-winded statement. Her attention, her whole and horrified attention was only for the drawing of that jeweled cross which in some way had come into Dick's possession, and which the police had not yet traced. Dick had it. Why hadn't he explained?

The sense of horror increased. She dared not let her thoughts run to speculation.

There were some things which would not bear thinking about, and could not possibly be true.

One of the maids came across the lawn with a pitcher of lemonade.

"Mrs. Morley thought you might be thirsty, miss," she said.

"Oh, thank you very much," Evelyn replied.

The maid set the tray down on the summer-house seat.

"Mrs. Morley wonders if you'd like a few sandwiches or biscuits?"

"Thank you, no. That lemonade looks delicious. Tell Mrs. Morley it was awfully kind of her to think of it."

Evelyn drank some of the lemonade. It was as delicious as it looked. Never had she felt so thirsty.

There was the rumble of a vehicle approaching as she set the glass down, and presently one of the station cabs hove into view.

With this new knowledge upon her, this horrified sense of fear, she wondered what she could find to say to Dick. So much would depend upon his own manner.

He jumped out, paid the driver and the old cab rattled off. Then he saw her standing in the entrance of the summer-house, and hurried across the lawn to greet her.

"Evelyn! How did you know that I was coming down to-day?"

Jimmy Creigh had asked her not to mention his letter.

"Mrs. Morley said she had a telegram," she replied breathlessly.

Yes, there was a decided change in Dick. Could it be due only to his illness? He was ghastly white and seemed to have aged incredibly. She felt that an immense barrier had reared itself between them.

His restless gaze fastened on the newspaper she had left on the seat. Then their eyes met and he realized what was in her mind. She could scarcely have helped recognizing the description and sketch of that unique pendant.

"Well?" he asked quietly. "Did you come over to ask me if I killed Alma Stern?"

"No—no, Dick. I came for quite another reason. Because I wanted to tell you

how sorry I am we quarreled the other day. I bought the paper in Tunbridge Wells and read about—about that only a few moments ago.”

“Well?” he asked again. “And what do you think about it?”

There were queer little lines at the corners of his mouth which disturbed her. They made him look hard and cynical.

“I don’t know what to think, Dick. But I—oh, I won’t believe you ever did anything so horrible. I won’t—I won’t! Nothing could make me believe it.”

“‘Former sweetheart convinced of prisoner’s innocence,’” Dick muttered. “Thanks very much, Evelyn.”

“Don’t!”

“That’s how it will read. I’m sure I ought to be grateful. Is there—something I can do for you?”

She stood looking at him, her soul in her eyes, drooping pitifully.

“I thought perhaps you needed me, Dick—as I felt I needed you. Oh, I don’t care what you’ve done!” she blazed out suddenly, her love for him eclipsing every other emotion. “I don’t care, Dick. You could only have been mad if—but, then, I don’t believe that. Even if you were mad, you couldn’t have done that. Why, Dicky dear, the only thing dad ever held against you was that you hate hunting and say it’s cruel.”

Dick laughed sharply.

“Therefore, I couldn’t have strangled a woman for her jewelry—or whatever other reason it might have been.”

“Don’t!” She put her hands to her face.

His voice was hoarse as he turned away.

“The truth is, I don’t know myself,” he said. “If what Jimmy says—if all this talk about the subconscious mind has anything to do with it—I might even have bought a case for that confounded thing and sent it to you. For one thing is certain: if I suddenly went mad and killed that unfortunate woman, it was because I admired the pendant she was wearing, and wished I could get one like it for you.”

Evelyn sank down on the seat where she had waited and cradled her head in her arm.

The housekeeper, peeping out for a moment at one of the windows, exclaimed to herself: “They’re a-making of it up, the dears! Well, that’s a blessing.”

She retreated to the rear of the house and kept the maids busy about her. Perhaps the young master would persuade Miss Evelyn to stop to lunch, after they had “made it up.” It mightn’t be absolutely proper, but it would be pleasant, and surely, just for once, that particular Mrs. Harland couldn’t complain.

“I went back to the house afterward,” Dick was saying. “Only Bill-Charley and Jimmy know that. I’d left my cigarette case, and I went back to fetch it. I’ve cabled Bill-Charley that he must come home. I don’t know what I’m in for. That’s all very problematical.”

“You—went—back!” Evelyn exclaimed.

Dick pulled himself up sharply. The last thing in the world he meant to do was to make a bid for her credulous sympathy. She might pity him, if she liked, but she must not be persuaded to believe him innocent. The risk for her was too great.

It was bad enough to have Jimmy lying for him, unasked, and messing things up generally with tales of orange peel and the underground railway stairs, without dragging Evelyn into it.

“Yes, I went back,” Dick said.

“And—and then what happened? You got your cigarette case?”

“No, I didn’t. I came away again without it.”

“Dick, I don’t think I understand.”

“There’s nothing more I can tell you. Evelyn, will you go home now? Whatever happens, I don’t want you to worry too much. You were right when you said you were through with me. It’s done—finished. I’m not worthy of you, and thank Heaven. I’ve still got enough decency in me to know it.”

“Dick, you’re going to kill yourself! I know you are. Jimmy says you keep a revolver in your dressing room—”

“So Jimmy’s been writing to you, has he? For what it’s worth, Evelyn, I give you my word of honor that suicide is about the last thought in my mind. I—I’d rather hang.”

"You've got to let me be with you—"

"I don't want you," he said determinedly brutal. "Can't you understand? I'm not quite the person you thought I was—nor that I thought I was myself."

"You don't want me—even when I say I believe in you? And I do believe in you, Dick."

"No—I don't want you."

"You don't love me?"

He hesitated. What right had he to adopt half measures with this sweet child who adored him as passionately as he adored her?

"I tell you, I've changed. That ought to be enough for you, Evelyn. You don't want to force me to speak more plainly than that."

He let her go away by herself, a pitiful little figure pushing her bicycle, shaken to the very soul and blinded with tears.

"After this," Dick muttered to himself, "there isn't anything I can't go through."

CHAPTER XI.

TAKING IT UP WITH THE POLICE.

BUT Dick had to go through a few things which he had not counted upon.

His "confession" directly involved quite a number of other people. It was not merely a matter of going to the police, telling his story, and letting them do whatever they chose with him. To his horror, he found this out too late. He had expected that Jimmy Creigh might come in for something verging upon the unpleasant, but it never occurred to him that Evelyn would be drawn into the affair.

Detective Inspector Lewis, who had charge of the case, received him in an office in one of the towers of the old stone building known as New Scotland Yard. Despite the fact that it was sunny, it could not be called a cheerful room. Inspector Lewis evidently had a passion for collecting souvenirs.

There was a glass case of handcuffs, each pair labeled with the name of the notorious criminal they had served to manacle; there were old revolvers, guns and other weapons arranged in patterns as wall decorations;

there was a bullet-riddled shield with which some unfortunate police constable had protected himself during the famous Sydney Street siege; there were framed photographs of criminals, their victims, and the scenes of their crimes. Short of the Black Museum, Detective Inspector Lewis's office was probably the most interesting and most gruesome of all the apartments in Scotland Yard. Dick Ardell wondered, uneasily, if one day he would figure in some way among these morbid exhibits.

"I've come to tell you what I know about the Stern murder," he began bluntly. "Or, rather, what I don't know."

The inspector, from behind his big flat-topped desk, invited the visitor to be seated. "I haven't been informed that you knew anything," he replied. "Will this be in the nature of new evidence?"

"I believe so."

"You wish to make a statement, Mr. Ardell?"

"Yes—that is what it would amount to," Dick said.

The inspector coughed and pushed a button, which brought a tall young policeman with a notebook.

"This is Mr. Richard Ardell, who was one of the party who went back to Alma Stern's house the night of the murder. He wishes to make a statement, which may be produced as new evidence. Will you take it down, please?"

The policeman secretary nodded and seated himself with his notebook at the side of the desk. Another man—also in uniform—entered the room and stood near the door.

A series of chills chased themselves down Dick's spine. He had let himself in for it now with a vengeance.

"This is a voluntary statement, of course?" Inspector Lewis queried, but more as a fact than a question.

"Oh, yes—quite. How—er—how should I begin?"

"Just as you like. What is it you most particularly want to state?"

Dick cleared his throat.

"The truth is, inspector, I may be the man who murdered that unfortunate woman—"

The official raised his eyebrows, but did not appear to be overwhelmed by this startling announcement.

"Are you giving yourself up on that charge, by a voluntary confession? Because in that event I must warn you that whatever you say may be used against you as evidence."

"Yes, I know that perfectly. And certainly I am not making a confession of murder. I say I may have done it, but if I have, I have no recollection of such a—such a monstrous act. I had left my cigarette case behind and went back to fetch it. It was probably my ring which the butler heard. The dead woman, who was known to me as the Marchesa di Trevi, came to the door herself. I remember speaking to her. I have now a vague recollection that she asked me to wait while she went upstairs to fetch my case. Inch by inch my memory has crept back to that point. The next thing I remember is being on the Thames Embankment at dawn, with a damaged head."

He went on, gaining a little confidence as he proceeded. The secretary took it down, and it seemed to Dick Ardell that the sound of his own voice, challenging the silence of that gruesome room, was a terrible thing.

Every now and then Inspector Lewis interrupted with a question.

"You believe that somebody picked your pocket?"

"Yes. I can account for the loss of the pendant in no other way."

"Yet you have it here?"

Dick had produced the jeweled cross, together with the case it had acquired and his own visiting card.

He told how it had come back into his possession.

"Somebody sent it to Miss Harland," he said. "She thought it was I. I let her believe that it had been sent by mistake. In fact, she jumped to the conclusion that I had really intended it as a present for some one else. You see, it is my visiting card."

"And your handwriting?" the inspector asked.

"You must judge of that for yourself,"

Dick replied. "Or experts must. I will copy down what is written."

He did so, and was pleased to observe that his hand did not tremble perceptibly.

Inspector Lewis examined the two specimens and pursed his lips.

"This is a very characteristic fist, Mr. Ardell," he observed.

Curious that he should have hit upon that word.

"At my school—Clavering—it was called the Ledbury fist," Dick explained nervously. "Ledbury, our old housemaster, inaugurated the style, but no one ever quite achieved his precise perfection."

"You mean that quite a lot of other men have adopted this method? It is more like printing than ordinary handwriting."

"Yes. It was old Ledbury's theory that modern handwriting had degenerated, and that legibility should be the first aim of chirography. His own writing had almost a Greek form—I mean as regards neatness. It was very small. My own, if you notice, is smaller than the writing on my card. Mr. Creigh, who was also at Clavering, writes even more loosely than this forgery."

"Oh, Mr. Creigh was at your school?"

"Yes."

"I see. And you say that Mr. Creigh can corroborate some of this evidence?"

"Yes. He was present when I found the pendant had been taken from my pocket, and he was also present when I got it back from Miss Harland."

"And Mr. Creigh made up the story of how you were injured?"

"Well—yes. You see, I was not myself at the time—"

"A Dr. Thatcher you mentioned, who attended you?"

"Yes."

"Was he your own doctor?"

"No. Mr. Creigh's."

"I see. And you have no idea, Mr. Ardell, who put the pendant into your pocket, who took it out again, and who sent it, with your card and an inscription, to Miss Harland?"

"No, I haven't."

"You cannot account for this case, or for the card?"

"No, I cannot."

"You mentioned that when you first found the pendant in your pocket there was a length of broken chain attached?"

"There was."

"Are you aware that a part of that chain—which had evidently been torn from the neck of the dead woman—was found close beside her body?"

"Yes, I read that."

"Have you the portion which you say was attached to the pendant when you first discovered it to be in your possession?"

"No. The envelope in which I had placed it was left in my pocket, but the piece of chain was missing as well as the pendant."

"How long would it have been?"

"I couldn't say, exactly. Perhaps about five inches. Just a fragment."

"Thank you, Mr. Ardell. In view of some evidence we already possess, which has not as yet been published, this is most useful and interesting. Will you please give me Miss Harland's address? We shall require a statement from her."

"What for?" Dick exclaimed.

"Her address, please," Inspector Lewis replied, rather tersely.

CHAPTER XII.

SIFTING EVIDENCE.

THE next day the gruellings were continued, and this time Jimmy Creigh came in for his share of it. Evelyn Harland—attended by her mother—and Dr. Thatcher, were also present, and there are no words to do justice to Mrs. Harland's feelings.

The pendant had been shown to the real Marchesa di Trevi, who identified it as her property.

Dr. Thatcher described the injury to Mr. Ardell's head. He had been told by Mr. Creigh, he said, that Mr. Ardell had slipped on a piece of orange peel and fallen backward on the stairs of Charing Cross underground station. The nature of the injury was quite compatible with such a story and he had accepted the explanation without question. He had known Mr. Creigh about ten years. Mr. Ardell, he had never met

before he was called to Mr. Creigh's rooms to attend him.

Then came the turn of Jimmy Creigh.

"May I ask," was one of Inspector Lewis's first questions, "why you took it upon yourself to make up this story of how Mr. Ardell hurt his head?"

Jimmy, it may be supposed, was not feeling any too comfortable. His round moon-face looked the picture of dejection.

"Well, you see, inspector, it's like this—if a chap's your pal, why—"

"Just a plain answer if you please. We can save a lot of time by sifting out these things before the magisterial inquiry. Why did you make up the story?"

"Because I didn't want Mr. Ardell to be arrested," Jimmy said bluntly.

"You thought it likely that he had committed that crime?"

"I thought it jolly unlikely."

"Did you believe his various statements about the pendant?"

"No, not all of them. I thought he was off his head, and I still think so."

"Do you realize that in taking the liberty of making up that false story you have laid yourself open to a very serious charge?"

"I suppose so."

"You sent a wireless telegram to another of Mr. Ardell's friends, a gentleman who might know something about this affair?"

"Yes, I did."

"And that telegram was so worded as to convey a warning or a double meaning?"

Jimmy drew in a long sigh and mopped his forehead.

"Well, why don't you arrest the whole blooming lot of us and get it over with?" he exclaimed. "This isn't a court of law, I take it."

"No, and if you prefer to answer questions in a court of law, you are at perfect liberty to do so." Inspector Lewis said severely. "I can arrest you on a very serious charge. It is within my discretion to do so. To be quite frank with you, Mr. Creigh, the only reason why I'm not issuing a warrant for your arrest, is because we want to save ourselves unnecessary bother."

"Thank you," said Jimmy, hoping that his voice sounded humble enough.

"Very well, sir. In short, you went to

all these pains, merely because you believed your friend was incapable of the act of murder?"

"I told you he was off his head. He talked a lot of wild nonsense. It seemed only fair to give him a chance to get well and think things over."

"Thank you, Mr. Creigh. I'll come back to you later."

It was now Evelyn's turn.

Dick walked over to one of the windows and stood with his back to the room while it was going on. This inquiry, informal as it was, had quite unnerved him. How was it going to end? It was his first experience of what may go on behind closed doors, and it seemed a most peculiar proceeding altogether.

Evelyn was talking, giving her evidence in very low tones, but with none of the hesitation Jimmy Creigh had so foolishly betrayed.

She said in reply to a question that Mr. Ardell's manner that day she and her mother lunched with him was noticeably strange only because it was so unusual for him to suffer from headaches. Her mother had drawn the conclusion that he had been drinking heavily the night before.

No, on that occasion, Mr. Ardell did not mention having gone to the house in Kensington. He had mentioned dining with a friend at the Savoy.

About three days later a package came to her containing the pendant in a case accompanied by Mr. Ardell's card. She had assumed the pendant to be a present for herself, but had not shown it to her mother as she was still feeling unkindly toward Mr. Ardell.

"And you—did you feel unkindly toward him?" Inspector Lewis asked.

Dick drew in a long breath and pressed his hand to his forehead. All this talk of headache made him feel ghastly, and he remembered Dr. Thatcher's warning.

"I was a little hurt because I did not understand," Evelyn said.

"Are you at the present moment engaged to be married to Mr. Ardell?"

"Must I answer that question?"

"Just as you please. But as I explained to Mr. Creigh, it will be less embarrassing

and troublesome if you give me all the help you can. What we want to find out is who murdered the Stern woman. Your evidence, Miss Harland, may not be necessary in court, but it is very necessary for me to have as full a knowledge of everything pertaining to the case before a charge of murder is brought against anybody. I asked you if you are still engaged to be married to Mr. Ardell, but if you don't care to answer—"

"I am not engaged to him now."

"Thank you. Will you look at that card very carefully and tell me if you can identify the handwriting?"

There was a breathless silence. To Dick Ardell, with his back to the room, it seemed never-ending.

Then came Evelyn's answer: "No, inspector, I cannot identify it."

"When you received the card with the pendant did you assume it to be the writing of any one you knew?"

"Yes, I thought it was Mr. Ardell's, but it isn't."

"You are quite certain?"

"Positive."

"You would take your oath on it? You may be required to do so."

"Yes, I would swear that it is not Mr. Ardell's handwriting."

"Have you any idea whose it might be?"

"No idea at all."

"You have no theory as to who might have sent you this piece of jewelry, or his or her reason for doing so, if it was not sent by Mr. Ardell?"

For the first time Evelyn hesitated, but the hesitation was not because she feared to get Dick into further trouble, but because she was turning over something in her mind which had occurred to her before.

"I have thought a great deal about it," she said slowly. "Particularly since learning that Mr. Ardell did not send it to me."

"What you mean is, since learning that he claims not to have sent it."

"Yes. I have thought that it must have been sent by somebody of his acquaintance who dislikes him and wants to have him accused of that horrible crime."

"Do you know of any one who dislikes Mr. Ardell to such an extent?"

"No, I don't."

"Does it seem to you a sensible idea?"

"It seems the only sensible one to me," Evelyn said firmly.

As soon as Inspector Lewis had finished with her, Mrs. Harland began to hurry Evelyn away. Dick walked quickly to the door and Evelyn turned a white but pitifully smiling face to him.

"Good luck," she said. "It's rather beastly for you, isn't it? I wish I could help you more."

"You have helped me, and much more than you realize," he replied gravely.

Inspector Lewis looked up from some notes he was making and spoke to Dick.

"I have nothing more to ask you now, sir," he said.

"You mean I can go?"

"Yes, but I want you to hold yourself in readiness whenever we may require you. That is to say, don't leave London. Where are you staying?"

"With me," Jimmy Creigh put in hopefully.

It seemed almost incredible to him that old Dick wasn't immediately to have a pair of those ghastly handcuffs screwed on to his wrists; or that he himself wasn't, for that matter.

"I believe you have Mr. Creigh's address," the inspector said to the stenographer, who nodded.

"Oh, just one thing, Mr. Ardell. Can you think of any one who might have sufficient cause to dislike you to the extent of trying to fasten this crime on you? Yesterday you mentioned that type of handwriting to be characteristic of your old school."

"By jove, yes!" Jimmy Creigh chipped in. "There was Bruce Norwich—he didn't love you much, did he, Dick?"

CHAPTER XIII.

TRACING BRUCE NORWICH.

IT was very irritating as Jimmy Creigh said to Dick that evening when they were having a subdued meal together in the privacy of his flat, most irritating that that inspector Johnnie with his haw-haw manner and airs and graces—you'd never

take him as having ever been a conimon or garden policeman, would you?—well, anyway, it was tiresome of Lewis to turn you inside out and keep you on a hot grid, and all that, when he'd got some priceless information up his sleeve that he wasn't giving away, only to every blessed newspaper in London. Making a complete fool of you when all the time the thing was coming out in the papers.

And the thing which had come out that very evening was the request, accompanied by a photograph of the man, that a certain Bruce Norwich, known to have been a great deal in the company of the murdered woman for several months before her death, would acquaint the police with his present whereabouts and explain his movements on the night of the crime.

Jimmy Creigh had every reason to feel irritated. For three solid hours after he had blurted out Bruce Norwich's name to Inspector Lewis, Dick and he had been persuaded into retailing an intimate history of their lives, particularly as regarded old days at Clavering. And the inspector hadn't dealt a bit gently with them either. Jimmy had been badly frightened by his severe attitude. It seemed it was a rather serious thing to suggest that somebody might have tried to fasten a murder on you.

"And all the time," raged Jimmy, "that mincing-tongued 'Miss Nancy' of the police peerage had this priceless thing up his sleeve. Why couldn't he have told us, instead of making us tell him?"

"I don't know," Dick said wearily. He'd had all the discussion he wanted for one day.

At this point the telephone rang, and Jimmy answered it. When he came back he was struggling into his overcoat.

"It was Justina," he said. "She wants me."

"Justina?" Dick asked in some bewilderment.

Jimmy grinned. "Oh, well, if I must be formal, the Marchesa di Trevi has commanded my immediate attendance."

"What for?"

"How do I know? Or perhaps we can both guess," Jimmy replied. "She told

us she was engaged to that little beast, you remember. To-night's papers may have upset her. She sounded like it over the phone. So-long, old son. If you get lonely turn on the gramophone. There's a good Caruso record on the bottom shelf. That 'll make you feel nice and creepy."

"I say, Jimmy—" Dick called after him. "Do you call her Justina?"

"Not as yet," Jimmy flung back, "but you never know, and I'd like to be word-perfect if ever it so happened I was called upon to play the part."

He was not in the least flippant, however, when the most correct of elderly men-servants admitted him to the big house in Cavendish Square and showed him through a somewhat hushed atmosphere to the little maple paneled room where Justina di Trevi had received him on former occasions.

"Everybody is out," she exclaimed in stricken tones. "Even Angelo. They have no hearts, and have gone to the opera. Even Angelo says that nothing matters so long as it is not known that I ever was engaged to marry that horrible little brute. Fancy even my stepson having no feelings for me, and he more like my brother than anything else! Ah, Mr. Creigh, I somehow felt that *you* wouldn't fail me."

"No, I wouldn't," Jimmy replied solemnly. He took the little hand she offered him and wondered if he could manage a Continental form of salutation with the grace it demanded. But the hand was withdrawn before he could decide.

"Sit down here." The marchesa patted a divan which was comfortably big enough for two. "Do you know what Angelo says? There has been a policeman to talk with him. Not an ordinary policeman, you understand, but a very fine fellow. Of course they are all fine, but this one—he is grand, magnificent."

"Lewis, by any chance?" Jimmy Creigh inquired bitterly.

"Ah, that is the name. Inspector Lewis—Detective Inspector Lewis."

"Yes, and pretty soon it will be Governor General Detective Inspector Lewis. I know the fellow. You'd better tell the marchese to be careful of him. His other name is Slippery Sam."

"Oh!" The marchesa was horrified. "Angelo has talked quite a lot to him. Shouldn't he have done so?"

"I don't suppose he could help himself," Jimmy said with a sigh. "Other people have talked to him, too. But what did he and your stepson converse about? 'Converse' is a word that Slippery Sam would approve of."

"It was mostly about the theft of my dressing case, a year ago, as I have told you," the marchesa replied. "According to this detective person, whom I gather you do not like—"

"You have gathered correctly. But go on, please."

"According to him, Bruce—I should say Mr. Norwich, for I've nothing more to do with him—he was concerned with this Alma Stern and others in a gang of robbers. To me, the idea is incredible. The men of the gang, according to Angelo, traded upon the foolishness of rich and titled ladies, while the women, making themselves out to be something which they were not, deceived gentlemen in high positions. Can you conceive of anything like that, Mr. Creigh?"

"It has been done," Jimmy admitted. "I have heard of it, although it's never come my way before. But you were saying—"

"That Angelo says if it hadn't been for him holding out about money matters, that Mr. Norwich would have made a fool of me. And it may be true. I have written him a letter, and I want you to do something for me, Mr. Creigh. I feel I can trust you. It's a very horrid letter. I want it to get to Mr. Norwich at once."

She produced the missive in question, a fat envelope addressed bluntly and briefly:

BRUCE NORWICH
ÆGEAN CLUB

"But where," asked Jimmy Creigh, "is the Ægean club?"

"Oh, I'm so sorry. I thought you'd be sure to know. The address is 62 Charpen Street."

"And where is that?"

"My dear man, you live in London!"

"Yes, but not in all of it. I suppose there's a street directory in the house."

The marchesa rang for the butler, but he could give no information as to the location of Charpen Street, and there was no directory in the house.

"Do the police know that you address your letters to Norwich at this Ægean Club?" Jimmy asked.

The marchesa was horrified by the suggestion.

"Certainly not. Nobody knows, not even Angelo; and the police are not aware that I was ever acquainted with Mr. Norwich."

It seemed to Jimmy quite clear that she had cut her acquaintance most decidedly. Yet here was this letter. Being but human, he could not help wondering at the nature of its contents. The little lady was wily and might be up to anything. Still, Jimmy thought, it would be useful to know what sort of club a fellow like Bruce Norwich belonged to.

Charpen Street? He asked permission to use the telephone, and rang up his own club for the desired information. In due course the hall porter told him that Charpen Street lay back of Holborn and ran into Red Lion Square.

"That's a funny neighborhood for a club," Jimmy soliloquized as he set forth, after having promised the marchesa that he would return and report to her upon the success of his errand.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW ALLY OR WHAT?

JIMMY CREIGH was in a hurry, and hailed a cab, but he did not direct the driver to take him to 62 Charpen Street. He told himself that he was much too clever to do anything like that. He left the cab in Holborn and then began to explore the neighborhood.

It was a warm summer's evening, and the streets were filled with people taking the air, but there was not much air to be taken with impunity in Charpen Street, which he finally discovered to be a narrow, dirty alley ending in a *cul-de-sac*.

"Now, I should call it the Augean Club, not the Ægean," muttered Jimmy.

Where and what was No. 62? Far down the crooked alleyway he found it—a newsdealer's place of business which seemed to have chosen for itself an uncommonly modest and retired position. Jimmy was glad that he had not troubled to get into evening clothes that night. Charpen Street would have wondered at his magnificence, and as it was he felt himself conspicuous.

There was a gas street lamp nearly opposite the newsdealer's, and it occurred to Jimmy that here was a good place to halt a moment and light a cigarette. A woman brushed by him and turned to give him a brief, suspicious stare. In his surprise he all but dropped the match. Her face was familiar to him and to all playgoers. She was Rosslyn Bates, a well-known variety actress.

"If I'm not careful," thought Jimmy, "I'll be taken for a 'tec.'"

When Miss Bates went into the news shop, otherwise the Ægean Club, the whole thing was reasonably clear to Jimmy Creigh. This was one of those places which sooner or later—unfortunately, generally it is later—attract police attention. The proprietor dispensed other wares than penny dreadfuls and sporting editions, and also had set up as a rival to the general post office. For a consideration, one who had reasons for not wishing his private address to be made public could receive letters here at his "club," so to speak.

Jimmy crossed the narrow street and inspected the shop window. It contained a motley collection of yellowed and fly-blown literature of the lighter order, specimens of cheap stationery, postcards, lead pencils, bottles of ink, and the like. A notice pasted on the window read: "Orders for Printing Taken Here."

Jimmy was trying to think of some reasonable excuse for entering—for he had not the slightest intention, in these circumstances, of delivering the Marchesa di Trevi's letter—when Rosslyn Bates emerged and again flung him that inquiring stare. Perhaps she thought she knew him. Anyway, Jimmy took it as such, and raised his hat.

The woman hesitated, smiled vaguely, and offered him her hand.

"I don't remember your name, but your face is quite familiar," she said.

"My name is Creigh," he told her. "I had the pleasure of meeting you once at a supper party at my brother's. Reggie Creigh—he's the real 'lad of the village' in our family."

"Oh, of course—of course," Miss Bates murmured. Then she asked: "What are you doing here, Mr. Creigh?"

He answered glibly: "Somebody told me I could get a little 'coke' at this place, but I'm wondering if they'll deliver the goods without an introduction."

Rosslyn Bates hesitated; then she exclaimed: "Don't tell me it's for yourself!"

"Oh, no—no! Not at all. It's for my dog. He's getting old, and I've got to pull out one of his teeth. The brute might bite me if I operated on him in cold blood."

"You beautiful liar!"

"I know I'm a liar, but this is the first time any one has ever called me beautiful," said Jimmy. "Look here, Miss Bates—you don't know me at all, and I don't know you. There's no occasion for us to trust each other, but I'm going to ask a favor of you."

"Dear me, you do sound exciting!" the woman exclaimed. "What can it be, Mr. Creigh?"

"Are you in a hurry—going anywhere?"

"Not until considerably later. I'm in that Moonlight Cabaret show at the Duchess Club. I don't go on until eleven thirty."

Jimmy consulted his watch.

"Then you can spare me an hour?" he hazarded.

"What's the game?"

"I'm not sure. But come along. Where can we talk quietly?"

Miss Bates shrugged her shoulders.

"There's no such thing where I'm concerned. I'm too well known. What I mean is, if you don't want to be conspicuous. However, I am at your disposal."

In a couple of minutes they were back in Holborn. An old inn, now a public-house with eating-rooms attached, suggested itself as a likely spot for that quiet talk Jimmy wanted. He asked Rosslyn Bates if she

would come in and have something, and they found a corner table in the oak tavern room, which at this hour boasted few customers. Miss Bates said she would be very glad for a few sandwiches and a small bottle of sparkling wine. Jimmy gave the order which included ginger beer for himself.

"Now what is it?" she asked.

"Well, you wanted to know what I was doing in sweet scented Charpen Street, and now I'm going to ask you the same question."

"Frankly, it's none of your business," the woman retorted with her broad, engaging smile.

He looked at her closely. She might be getting a bit *passée*, but she was a genius in her way, and she did not have the appearance of being a drug fiend.

"Sorry," said Jimmy.

"My dear man, I went to get some cocaine, if you must know."

"I wonder if you're a beautiful liar?" Jimmy Creigh rejoined. "Well, I'll tell you what I really went for. Do you read the newspapers, Miss Bates? I mean the murders?"

"Yes, I do," she said tersely.

"Well, I was strolling around Charpen Street this evening to see if by any chance I might happen to run into a man named Norwich—a fellow who was once at school with me."

"Good heavens!" Rosslyn Bates exclaimed. "Bruce Norwich—that indescribable little pest!"

"I think you've managed to describe him quite accurately. Did you see that he's wanted by the police?"

"I saw it in the papers this evening. That's why I—" she checked herself abruptly. "Look here, Mr. Creigh, as you say, we don't know each other, but I used to know your brother fairly well and Reggie was one of the best. I'll trust you if you'll trust me."

"It's a bargain," Jimmy agreed, wondering if he were being wise or stupid.

"Thank you. Well, I knew Alma Stern. I knew her years ago. She was older than she looked, poor thing. We were kiddies together, both trained as circus acrobats, but I got out of it and went on the halls,

and somehow we drifted apart. She was a good little kid in those days, and now I blame myself for not having kept more in touch with her."

To Jimmy's consternation, Miss Bates's mouth began to quiver and she hastily fumbled for her handkerchief.

"Don't cry—don't please! Somebody'll think I'm ill treating you," he implored.

"No—it's all right." She took a few gulps of wine. "Mr. Creigh, Alma Stern was my sister. When I ran into her here in London a few months ago, she told me she was the widow of an Italian nobleman who hadn't left her any too well off. You know what the papers say?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Well, she told me all about it. How she'd got mixed up with a set of rogues and one thing led to another, and finally to her impersonation of the Marchesa di Trevi. It was all done to trap that millionaire banker, Praga. They were going to blackmail him. Alma told me she was getting frightened, losing her nerve, and I begged her to come and live with me and I would take care of her. She half-promised, and then she said, 'If I did that, and my husband ever found me again, he'd kill me. I'm desperately afraid of him.'"

"Was she married to Norwich?" Jimmy asked quickly.

Miss Bates shook her head. "No, I'm sure she wasn't married to Bruce Norwich. I saw them together a great deal—they used to meet at my flat—and he was always begging and imploring her to marry him. The funny part of it was, she was in love with him. I can't understand it, but for some women he has a certain amount of fascination."

"Yes," said Jimmy, "it would seem so."

He was thinking of Justina di Trevi and the undelivered letter.

CHAPTER XV.

JIMMY CREIGH IS INDIGNANT.

ROSSLYN BATES was silent for a moment. Then she said, "It was I who first told the police that Bruce Norwich might know something about my poor

sister's death. I told them all I knew, and that's why they are looking for him."

"H-m," said Jimmy, "but what led you to that rotten little dope hole in Charpen Street? How did you know you might get news of Norwich there?"

Miss Bates leaned toward him, her voice shaking.

"I had tea with my poor sister the afternoon before she was murdered. She was very upset about something, and cried a great deal. She said she wanted to get out of the dangerous position she was in, that Count Praga was not the sort of man who would allow himself to be blackmailed easily and they might all find themselves in prison. But she was caught in a net, she said. And then she added, 'Rosie, if anything should happen to me and you want to get into touch with Bruce, inquire at 62 Charpen Street. That's where he has his letters sent.'"

"Didn't you tell the police that?"

"Yes. But they're keeping away purposely. That is to say, the man who runs the news-shop, a horrid creature by the name of Blount, doesn't know it's being watched. He traffics a little in cocaine—filthy, adulterated stuff, I'm told—and for the moment he's being let alone in the hope that Norwich will find it safe enough to inquire for letters. So far, he hasn't done so, I feel sure. I am working for the police, and I go two or three times a week ostensibly for cocaine. Now perhaps you'll tell me how you happened to get that address?"

"Well," said Jimmy, "I can only admit that it was given to me by a lady—somebody who once had a fancy for Norwich. I just strolled around on the off chance of running into him. Same as you. But there's nothing in this private detective business if the police already know. I say—you aren't spoofing me, by any chance?"

Roslyn Bates's eyes glittered.

"I told you that Alma Stern was my sister," she said. "Do you imagine I would wish to shield a man who murdered her?"

"No, I don't suppose you would. I wonder how my friend, Ardell, comes into it?" he added.

"Ardell?" Her interest quickened. "He was at the house that night, wasn't he? But

it was quite plain he wasn't concerned at all. Isn't that so? He'd only just met my sister, hadn't he?"

Jimmy could have bitten out his tongue for its rashness.

"Quite so. Only, of course, he's interested. You see, he was at school with Norwich, too."

Roslyn Bates seemed fairly well satisfied with this meager explanation of Dick's position, but it had been a near shave for Jimmy. He now vaguely realized the motive of Detective-Inspector Lewis's star-chamber proceedings. There must be some object in keeping Dick out of the public eye. For instance, an arrest would have meant publicity, even the arrest of a Jimmy Creigh.

He saw Miss Bates into the cab which would take her to her cabaret show and then went back to Cavendish Square. By this time, the little Marchesa di Trevi was in a fever of anxiety. In a few moments, she told him reproachfully, her stepson and other relatives-in-law would be coming home from the opera and that would prevent anything in the nature of confidential conversation.

"Well, and did you deliver my letter?" she demanded breathlessly.

He handed it back to her.

"Take my advice and burn it," he said.

As she started to protest he told her hurriedly exactly what the Ægean Club was and that the police had the place under surveillance.

"Furthermore, you're a very foolish little woman even to think of trying to get into communication with that fellow again."

The marchesa began to cry.

"And if I were your stepson, I'd lock you up," Jimmy continued, unmoved by the sight of her distress. "Here, give me that envelope; we'll have it on the coals at once."

The marchesa let out a faint shriek.

"It's—it's full of money!" she exclaimed.

Jimmy stared at her, open-mouthed with amazement. He felt himself to be the most outraged person on earth. To think that she had tried to make such a cat's-paw of him!

Her pretty little face mantled with an emotion which might have been shame, but was more likely indignation. In an annoyed way, she tore open the envelope and extracted from it some folded banknotes. These she thrust into a drawer of her desk. The envelope with the rest of its contents she tore to bits and put on the fire, as Jimmy had suggested.

"Now are you satisfied?" she asked.

"Not in the least," he replied stiffly. "I'll say good night, marchesa—and also good-by."

He turned away, but she ran after him and caught hold of his arm.

"Oh, Mr. Creigh—do you wish to break my heart? You don't understand."

"I understand considerably more than I want to," said Jimmy. "You tried to get me—*me!*—to deliver a letter filled with money to a notorious crook who is being hunted for murder. That money—had he received it—might have helped him to get away."

"No—no! You don't understand," she wailed.

But Jimmy was in no mood to hear any more. His dignity had been deeply wounded, and something else besides. As he left the house he told himself furiously that never, so long as he lived—if it were a hundred years—would he trust a woman again. Hereafter the seclusion of the Crusty Bachelors' Society for him.

Evelyn Harland had developed what her mother described as nerves, and her father called the fidgets. Never before had she been unpleasantly self-willed, but the same could not be said of her now.

"What she ought to do is to forget Dick Ardell," said Mrs. Harland. "And the sooner the better. I shall take her abroad, I think."

Evelyn, informed of this idea, said nothing, but that night she prayed a little more fervently than usual, and the next morning, when the maid came in with her early cup of tea, she learned that her mother was laid up in bed with one of the severe attacks of gout to which she was subject. Evelyn had not petitioned for her mother to be stricken with gout, and it was rather a warning to

her, since it proved that one may desire something very much and get it, yet at the same time be grieved.

Mrs. Harland, in the throes of her painful complaint, was by no means a pleasant companion. As a matter of fact, she infinitely preferred her own society—which nobody grudged her—and that morning, after a short session at the telephone, Evelyn intruded upon her with a request.

"Aunt Annie has just been on the telephone," Evelyn said, putting it somewhat cryptically, "and she particularly wants me to come up to town for a few days. Lois and Margery are going to that big Arts' Ball. Uncle Stephen has got tickets and promised to take them, and Jimmy Creigh is going, too. Would you think it very selfish of me, mother, if I accepted her invitation?"

"Did you tell Aunt Annie about me?"

"Yes, and she says if you wish her to she'll come down and nurse you—"

"Good heavens! What put such an idea into her head! You know perfectly well I can't stand anybody around me but Tompkins when I'm like this."

"Yes, mother. I told Aunt Annie so. I told her you didn't even want me—"

"Well, go—go by all means, my darling. Have a good time, if you can. I wish you could persuade your father to go with you. All I want is to be let alone."

"Poor mother! Are you quite sure—?"

"My darling child, by this time don't you *know* that it's the only thing I do want?"

And Evelyn had got what she wanted—permission to leave this haunted countryside for London. She was not very truthful with herself, however. It was humiliating to confess, even to her inner consciousness, that she wanted to be in town because Dick Ardell was there.

CHAPTER XVI.

MIXING GAY WITH GRAVE.

JIMMY CREIGH was a frequent visitor at the house of the Loveday family in Wilton Place. Mrs. Loveday was a cheerful person, quite unlike her sister, Mrs.

Harland, and Lois and Margery were Evelyn's cousins, of course. The three girls were all about of an age and Evelyn always had a jolly time when she came up to visit the Stephen Lovedays. Lois and Margery were to have been two of her bridesmaids and this was the first time she had seen them since the engagement was broken.

The Loveday girls were very "modern," and some of the things they did rather shocked Evelyn, although she was often secretly thrilled by their daring. Among other characteristics they possessed an entire lack of reticence.

That afternoon at tea, following upon Evelyn's arrival, Jimmy Creigh looked in for a moment, as he said, and remained a couple of hours. Evelyn's broken engagement was discussed freely before her by her cousins, much to Jimmy's embarrassment, and he himself was asked all sorts of questions the answers to which might help Lois and Margery to understand why Evelyn and Dick Ardell were not going to be married. Evelyn herself had failed to give them any satisfaction.

She sat a little apart, her eyes deeply serious, as Jimmy miserably dodged the queries hurled at him.

"Why don't you ask Evelyn?" he exclaimed finally.

"We have," said Lois, the red-haired sister who was thinking of going on the stage. "And all Evelyn says is that practically Dick jilted her."

"Oh, that's not true—by jove, it isn't!" Jimmy retorted. "I was there when she fired back his ring at him."

"Then you *do* know what happened, Jimmy!" Lois and Margery chorused.

"He doesn't know what happened afterward," Evelyn put in.

"Well, what happened *then*?" asked Margery, the sister who was going in for poetry.

"I don't feel privileged to tell you," Jimmy replied. "And neither of you can have very much feeling for Evelyn to discuss her like this."

"Oh, Eve doesn't mind," Lois said airily. "She's going to the ball with us to-morrow night. *Her* heart isn't broken. I hope you haven't forgotten that we're going as a

troupe of masked Pierrots, Jimmy, and also that you promised to bring some men, and none of us are to know who the others are."

"Aren't we? Well, a good many of us seem to know who we are," said Jimmy mockingly.

Lois grinned. "You wait until to-morrow night, Jimmy Creigh. We've got two other girls. I won't tell you their names, and we're all going to wear red wigs—"

"That's one thing you won't need," Jimmy put in.

"You shut up. Have you been to Karlson's yet about your costume?"

"No, I haven't," said Jimmy.

Margery exclaimed with disgust.

"Isn't that just like him?"

"I haven't had time," Jimmy said defensively. "You've no idea what a lot of bother I've been having lately."

"Oh, yes, we know how busy you are," scoffed Lois. "It's lucky I interviewed Karlson myself. He has a lovely Pierrot set, a dozen costumes exactly alike for the men and girls—you know, made alike. But the men's wigs are short-haired, bobbed, and the girl's have pigtails."

"Shan't we look pretty!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"I think we shall be very effective," Lois remarked. "The costumes are of orange silk, which matches the wigs, and the ruffs, caps, buttons and masks are black. And we girls are all about of a height. I hope you'll try to have your men the same."

"Thanks. I'll put that down in my notebook. Anything else?"

"Yes, you're to call for the men's costumes and distribute them separately, and not tell any of your guests who the others are—"

"My guests, eh? Not much they aren't. Any silly ass I can induce to come will jolly well pay for his own ticket and refreshment—and mine, too, if he likes."

"Arrange that the best way you can," said Margery. "We all know how stingy you are. Only, for Heaven's sake, Jimmy, don't spoil this rag. We've already got one man ourselves. We won't tell you who he is—"

"How clever of you. To rake up one between the three of you!"

"He's so stupid!" moaned Lois. "Jimmy, don't you see, the whole fun of it is that we won't know who each other are—is? Of course we depend upon you to bring nice men—"

"Thanks, I'll put that down, too. Where does this gang of golliwogs meet?"

"Oh, we have a box. No. 10 in the loggia. Didn't I tell you that daddy—"

"I know who your one man is," Jimmy interrupted triumphantly. "It's your father."

"Isn't he mean? Isn't he hateful?" the sisters inquired plaintively of each other.

A few more instructions were given to him. He was to tell each of his guests not to speak in a natural voice, and the masks were to be kept on all the evening. It was to end just as much of a mystery as it began.

"Do you clearly understand?" Lois demanded.

"It's going to be a big mystery," scoffed Jimmy Creigh. "Already half of us know who the other half are, and the girls you have enticed know who you are, and the fellows I hope to lasso will know who did it to them, and, anyway, it will be beastly wearing a mask all the evening—"

"Jimmy Creigh, I loathe and hate you!" Lois cried in exasperation. "There will be twelve of us altogether—twelve. You've only got to get four men besides yourself. There's a chance for a wonderful mix-up, even if *some* of us do know a few that will be in it. And the masks are of wired lace, as light as possible. I never before thought you were a spoil sport. You're not a bit like your old self, Jimmy. What on earth has come over you lately?"

Jimmy rose, evading Evelyn's eye. She knew what had come over him, and over her, too. Poor old Evelyn!

"It'll be all right," he said, as though in reply to Lois's criticism.

Evelyn smiled at him and it was a smile that hurt—"jabbed him," as he said to himself when he thought it over.

"I'm sure it will, Jimmy," Evelyn replied.

They both meant the cloud that was hanging over Dick, but the Loveday sisters naturally took his solemn declaration for a

promise that he guaranteed the success of their mysterious Pierrots.

"Good old Jimmy—of course it will! Don't forget—ten o'clock to-morrow night, box No. 10 on the loggia floor. Give each man you ask the box number."

Jimmy left them and his frame of mind was none too easy. This party had been planned weeks ago, and in the stress of circumstances he had forgotten all about it. His code forbade him to let down Lois and Margery, but it promised to be a very near thing. Time was so short, and he hadn't asked a single soul as yet. Dick's trouble had put the whole thing out of his head until this afternoon, when he happened to recall it and went flying around to Wilton Place, hoping devoutly that by some lucky chance there had been a hitch in the girl's plans. But he might have known better. Lois and Margery were not the sort of girls who plan failures.

Jimmy ticked off on his fingers all the things he had to do, but the most important of them all was to find four men, besides himself, ready and willing to be mysterious Pierrots. Much as he loathed the idea, he said to himself that if only he could get them he would promise to pay for their

tickets and treat them—moderately—to champagne at supper. Of course Mr. Love-day's box was an attraction.

Jimmy Creigh belonged to five clubs and he ranged them all that evening. Two of them were quite frivolous clubs which specialized in dinners and dancing, but he caught nothing at those two. Everybody he knew who could go and had planned to do so, was already promised to a partner or a party. He thought desperately of asking somebody he didn't know, but on the whole that was too risky. Not in these days.

At the staidest of his clubs he found one man, a dull dog of an under-secretary everybody dodged as the world's prize bore, who professed a willingness to be a mysterious Pierrot. Jimmy had seized upon him as a last hope. After all, the Hon. Mr. Watson Clinks was eminently "nice"—Lois couldn't object to him on that score—and he said he could dance. It was quite certain none of their gay crowd would ever guess who he was.

As Jimmy was concluding negotiations with Mr. Watson Clinks, the hall porter appeared to tell him that he was wanted on the telephone.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

U U U U

PERHAPS!

MARY JANE, I knew and loved you—
 You wore a gingham gown:
 Beneath your pink sunbonnet's brim
 Your April eyes looked down.
 Of all the arts that break men's hearts,
 Nothing at all you knew,
 And when we parted—on a day—
 I first—and last—kissed you!

The latest thing in Paris hats,
 The costliest silks you wear;
 And diamonds glitter on your hands—
 Like fireflies in your hair!
 You chose of old 'twixt love and gold,
 But could you choose again,
 I think you'd choose the country lad
 You flouted then!

R. E. Alexander.



The Yellow Flame

By ALBERT DORRINGTON

A WHITE queen had never reigned on the island of Vahiti, with its contented armies of plantation workers, recruited mostly from the Solomons and Ellice groups. Yet, Paula Wyngate might have worn a crown of pearls as an emblem of her popularity with the dark and white people who flourish among the fifty trade islands of the little-known Vahiti Archipelago. Socially she ruled within the wind-swept beach consulates, where French, American and British traders foregathered at certain periods of the year to dance and admire each others' wives, after the custom of men long exiled from civilization.

Her husband, George Vandelour Wyngate, represented an affluent Dutch firm whose headquarters were in Macassar. The foreign consuls with the ugly wives helped Wyngate. They revealed to him the secret hoards of crafty headsmen, the uncounted barrels of shark oil, the new coffee lands, the ungathered stores of vanilla, camphor and sandalwood. Every one threw business

in Wyngate's direction because it pleased his wife and kept her in the archipelago, where her society was as badly needed as music at a dance.

The Wyngates lived in a pretty bungalow, sheltered on the ocean side by belts of pandanus and coco palms. In the rear of the bungalow stood a commodious trade house, where George, in his white jeans, met the little schooner captains and canoe-men from the outlying islands.

Paula Wyngate's mail had arrived from Songolo, where her sister Odette was living with the wife of Jimmy Blake, commissioner of customs for the Chinese government.

Swinging in a silk-tasseled hammock on the lagoon side of the bungalow, Paula picked out her sister's letter from a pile of others. Odette was engaged to young Frank Dillon, chief officer of the City of Peking, running between San Francisco, Singapore and Batavia. Young Dillon was a good sailor, but his scanty pay would

hardly provide Odette with print dresses, and would hardly allow her to compete socially with the wife of a prosperous headman. Yet, Paula liked Dillon better than any man of her acquaintance; but as the uncrowned queen of Vahiti she had to consider Odette's prestige. She opened the letter with a sudden intuition of trouble. Pretty sisters living from home often developed a flair in the writing of scare correspondence, she told herself.

MY DEAR PAULA:

I have done it, and it is hard to say at this distance whether you will congratulate or disown me. The plain truth is I have decided to marry Chiang tu Lee, who has been visiting the Blakes a good deal lately. He is twenty-three and an M. A. of Oxford. I am writing Frank and he will get my letter at San Francisco about the end of the month.

In these latitudes, my dear Paula, women are quickly, and I am going to be a good loser in the race if I wait for Frank. Of course I like him immensely, everybody likes dear old Frank; but to put it coldly, sister mine, I cannot see myself cutting any ice socially as the wife of Dillon. I cannot even attempt a description of Chiang—only a Kipling or a Conrad would have the audacity. Please don't scold me when you write. The weather in Songolo is hot, a hundred and two under the veranda! Pray for your little Odette and give love to George.

Paula Wyngate crushed the letter in her strong white hand. Her soft cheeks grew suddenly slack and drawn. She sat up in the hammock as though the dazzling tropic light had blinded her.

Odette was going to marry a Chinaman! She tore the letter in fifty pieces and flung the bits where the southeast trade wind scattered them over the face of the lagoon.

The trade name of Chiang tu Lee was too well known in the archipelago to have escaped her. It was the name that stood at the head of a dozen big Chinese banking institutions; it was the name that owned the new flotilla of steamers plying between Shanghai and Rangoon, half the rice mills in Cambodia and Lombok. Old man Lee, the father of Chiang, had amassed a colossal fortune out of opium and silk, and had died only a year before, leaving Chiang as his sole heir and trustee.

But this fact brought small solace to Paula Wyngate. Odette had been too long

with the Blakes. She had lost touch with the outside world. Like scores of other well-meaning young ladies, she had permitted the islands to drug and disturb her sense of social propriety. Marry a Chinaman! Odette had gone mad!

The mere contemplation of such an event caused Paula's head to spin. It would mean the end of her and George. No more dances and bridge parties at the beach consulates; no more highbrow teas with the visiting commodores and captains from the various naval units. If Odette insisted on carrying out her project, nothing but flight would be left for her and George—a midnight stampede to the first westbound steamer or tramp.

Songolo is fifteen hundred miles north-northeast of Vahiti, and steamers called for passengers and cargo every fortnight or thereabouts. Paula felt like crying as she leaned against the veranda rail. She could not tell her husband what Odette had written. It would be like beating an inoffensive collie. She must go to Songolo at once. A steamer was due in about two days.

Passing from the bungalow, she entered the trade house, where George was watching his staff of native boys unpacking some cases of cotton trade and hardware. He looked up quickly as she entered.

"Hello, dear! Mail day and a worried look!" he greeted genially. "Anything wrong?"

"Odette is contracting yellow fever or some other malady, by the tone of her latest. I suppose I'll have to run up and attend to her system."

"Run up to Songolo!" A look of dismay crossed George. "That's going to take a month!" he protested, a momentary vision of himself living alone in the bungalow presenting itself.

"My dear hubby, don't be so selfish. I don't want to go north this weather. Odette has been fooling away her life at the Blakes' since last November. She's got to come home—here," Paula stated firmly.

George sighed as he sat beside her on an upturned biscuit case. "I wanted the kid to come here long ago. Seems to me as if the Blakes want to keep her for good. I'll get the consul to wireless a berth for you

on the Tivonia, dear. Remember me to old Blake. Terrible pity he never had any children of his own!"

II.

PAULA arrived at Songolo one hot morning about a week after leaving Vahiti. She had sent no message of her coming to Odette or the Blakes, deeming it advisable to appear on the scene without warning. After her luggage had been safely landed, and instructions given for it to be sent after her, she walked slowly in the direction of Blake's house.

The place was familiar enough; it seemed only a few months since she had brought her sister to the care of the stout, motherly woman who vied with her husband in her admiration for the dashing, high-spirited Odette. The house stood at the end of a long magnolia-skirted avenue, where the white sandstone path gleamed like a silver stream in the tropic sun glare. The heat seemed tempered by the swinging vines of rubylite petals and oleanders that swarmed in an unforgettable pageant before her. But the tropic splendor of her surroundings had little fascination for the moment. Her active mind was obsessed by the thought of young Mr. Chiang, and wondering, after all, if she had not come too late.

A native maid met her on the veranda—a girl from the Line Islands, named Naura. Her dark eyes widened in surprise when Paula stated that she had just arrived from Vahiti.

"But Missa Blake nor *madame* not here this week," she informed her visitor breathlessly. "They go on a steamer to Macassar to see the big rajah, Lotang Bu."

"Where is my sister Odette?" Paula inquired sweetly, yet coldly apprehensive of the girl's answer.

Naura cast rapid glances about the house and lawns, and then, unable to control her excitement, ran through a banyan grove calling: "Odette, Odette! Come, please, quick! Oh, come, Missey Odette!"

Paula watched her with a faint smile, yet subtly resenting the fact that the Blakes had left her sister, unchaperoned probably,

in a house where boys like Chiang came to play tennis, no doubt.

Glancing down the white road, she saw an automobile slide swiftly toward the place. It carried only one person, a Chinese youth in the early twenties. He was dressed in immaculate white Shantung silk clothes, with tennis shoes and eyeglasses. He pulled up at the veranda and got out. At sight of Paula he hesitated, glancing about him nervously and was about to re-enter the car.

"I beg your pardon," Paula began easily. "May I suggest that you are looking for Odette?"

He pivoted slowly, and she had time to note the delicate molding of his ivory-white hands, the clear olive skin that many an Italian beauty might have envied.

His glancing eyes met hers shyly as he bowed and remained uncovered in the broiling sun.

"Yes, I called for Odette," he confessed. "She promised to run out with me to Mount Lavender. The road is a good one for these parts," he added with a soft smile, the one he used, no doubt, when speaking to Odette, Paula imagined.

She nodded at his words, and wondered why artists did not put more Chinese boys and girls into their pictures. She had never seen anything so piquant as this young Celestial. The blood-red orchid he wore in his coat might have come from a pagoda or temple garden. She could not guess how he would look on Broadway or Piccadilly, but he fitted Songolo like a bit of pearl set in a fan.

"It is very good of you to take an interest in my sister," she said at last, and waited.

The quick look of surprise she had expected failed to appear. He merely smiled, and she confessed that his teeth were as white and even as her own.

"Odette told me that her sister is the most beautiful woman in the islands," he stated slowly. "When you spoke I knew you were Mrs. Wyngate."

The inflection of his voice reminded her of a famous contralto's middle-register. It was the kind of voice that could read Keats or Shelley without making people wish that

poets had never been born. It sometimes took Paula Wyngate years to like a person. She liked little Chiang at sight, but she had no intention of allowing him to marry Odette.

"Odette, Odette! Where are you, Missey Odette?" Naura called from the banyan grove. "Here is your lovely sisitah come from Vahiti!"

"These natives are passionately human," he expounded, his soft eyes traversing Paula's beautiful features.

"Odette is coming!" Paula exclaimed, stepping into the path to greet her sister.

"Then permit me not to interrupt your meeting," Chiang vouchsafed, getting into the car.

Before Paula could stay him the machine had slid down the road.

"I suppose my letter brought you, dear?" Odette began, her arms encircling Paula affectionately.

"It would have brought me from the South Pole," Paula confessed cheerfully. "I couldn't give a shot like that a miss in balk."

Odette was not as tall as her sister, but the red gold of her hair would have awakened the most hardened critic to a sense of its beauty. Her skin had the peach velvet tone that was the envy of all the island beauties, who often gathered at Mrs. Commissioner Blake's receptions. Odette was the product of an English university. But overeducation had not warped the peculiar brilliance of manner typified in the wit and wisdom of her married sister.

"If my letter hurt your feelings, Paula, I'm sorry."

"My feelings, dear, are never in question when your happiness is at stake. I am assuming that it was Mr. Chiang who called here a few moments ago. Let me tell you frankly that I like him. He is a gentleman of the new school of Orientals that is fast ousting the fusty old mandarin type."

"Yes, that was Chi, dear. I promised to go with him to Mount Lavender. He's dreadfully self-conscious and thought, no doubt, that we ought to be left alone."

"And your mind is quite fixed on marrying him?"

"It isn't my mind: it's destiny, dear.

I like Frank Dillon, too, but somehow Frank is a man any woman could marry—any woman without a destiny, I mean."

Silence fell between them as Naura brought tea and fruit to the veranda. Paula felt instinctively that the tropics were burning her sister's young blood. She had known women afflicted with orientalism until it made them silly. They raved about Asian creeds and certain forms of Buddhism until they became a nuisance to their friends.

Paula talked of the pleasures of her trip to Songolo, but like a seasoned skirmisher beat back again to the Chiang trail. The business had got to be handled briskly and with finality.

"And speaking of Mr. Chiang, dear, I should like awfully to congratulate you. He is, I feel sure, a gentleman in the best sense, a young man of astonishingly wide culture and taste."

"Some of the whites one meets here," Odette interrupted enthusiastically, "have the manners of coolies. Of course Chi has got to thank Oxford for his English manner."

"His manner does not belong to any university," Paula corrected sweetly; "it is like the sugar in a banana—it belongs to the tree. Mr. Chiang is a high born Celestial; he will never be anything else."

"What do you mean, Paula?"

"Just that, dear. If you lived with him fifty years you'd find yourself talking always to a Chinaman. He would never say 'The top av the mornin' to ye,' as poor Frank says it."

"A bit of blarney isn't everything, Paula," Odette countered. "And look at Frank! He isn't a bit artistic. At the present moment Chi is studying the early life of Leonardo da Vinci, and other early Italian masters. He knows more about rare prints than most dealers. He has translated Schiller into Cantonese! Really, Frank wouldn't understand these things!"

Paula began to feel that her task was no light one. At any moment these two young representatives of the East and West might, without word or sign, plunge into matrimony and defy the world.

In the afternoon Paula visited the principal shopping quarter of the town and com-

pleted a few purchases to while away the hours. The following day, while Odette was arranging with Mrs. Blake's housekeeper, something in the way of a small dinner party in honor of Paula's visit, Mrs. Wyngate slipped out alone and walked in the direction of the quay, near the offices and godowns owned by Chiang tu Lee.

It was a visit of curiosity, and as she walked past the humming rice mills and silk warehouses, she saw how the father of young Chiang had founded a gigantic and thriving industry. Large and small vessels, junks and freighters flew the house flag of Lee & Co., a double dragon on a background of yellow. And all this wealth and commerce was invested in the frail anatomy of one small Celestial with a gold *pince-nez*!

Passing the main building which housed the clerical staff, she was suddenly overtaken by the swift-running car which had brought Chiang to the Blakes' house the day before. It was driven by a tall Batavian in white and gold livery, which also bore the double dragon on a circle of yellow.

Halting the car, he saluted her respectfully. "The Hon. Mr. Chiang tu Lee presents his compliments to Mrs. Wyngate, and begs her to honor his establishment with her presence."

Paula pondered the invitation for a breath-giving space, and quickly made up her mind. The white and gold livery held open the door of the car allowing her to enter. A hundred yards along the quay front the car halted at the official residence of young Mr. Chiang. Paula had passed the building ten minutes before and it was evident that she had been observed.

The entrance was a study in French decoration and color that was at once soothing and refreshing after the blinding white sandstone roads. Ushered into a conservatorylike foyer, by more of the dragon seal livery, her eyes encountered an exquisite setting of rare orchids and magnolias, with young Mr. Chiang seated in a cane chair beneath.

His greeting was restrained, but held an unmistakable sincerity that was not lost on Paula.

"I hope you like Songolo, Mrs. Wyngate.

You will not find it so exciting as Paris, say, but unlike the great European capital it has natural gifts of palms and pearls, silk and fruit of the gods. What more, eh?" he concluded with his boyish smile.

She sat on an ottoman, where a dozen crimson-crested parakeets chattered and swarmed in the palms overhead. There was a delicious fragrance in everything around her, a sense of sybarite cleanliness and order that she had never experienced before.

For a little while they talked easily and without restraint, but in his musical, wayward sentences she began to divine the keynote of his existence:

Odette!

Paula lay back on the ottoman, half beguiled, a little entranced by the soft distillation of this Eastern magic. But the strong white woman in her was not to be denied. She was the ambassadress of her race. She stood for her caste and the prestige of her little island kingdom. She would be definite with this splendid little Chinaman, definite beyond misunderstanding.

"Mr. Chiang," she began calmly, "my sister tells me that you have made her an offer of marriage, which, I gather, she has practically accepted."

Chiang smiled as one in full possession of the sweetest thing in life. "We are going to be very happy, Mrs. Wyngate," he said simply.

"Your happiness would depend a good deal on Odette. She is white, Mr. Chiang!"

He lit a cigarette slowly and then met her glance across the table. "What of that?" he asked gravely. "I am not afflicted with those theories. I stand for humanity. My ideals and beliefs begin and end there. In the abstract there is a difference of what you call race."

"If the difference between East and West was an abstraction, Mr. Chiang, I should have nothing more to say. In this instance Miss West happens to be my sister, and I fear that her marriage with Mr. East is going to spoil her life and mine among the only people we know. Against your good self I have nothing to say. There are white people in these islands unfit to associate with you, and I find it difficult to make my point quite clear."

He sat very still, stiller than anything she had ever seen. Not a muscle or lash of his dark eyes moved. His face had grown rigid.

"Won't you answer, Mr. Chiang?" she almost pleaded.

He rose from his seat painfully and slowly. It was some time before he spoke, and when he did his voice had grown very harsh, like an instrument that had received ill usage.

"If you had asked for my life," he said with difficulty, "I could have given it in your service."

"It means Odette's life," Paula answered wistfully. She paused and met his searching eyes steadily. "And mine, too!"

He had come quite close to her now as one whose breast was bared again for the knife. She knew that she had struck him. Every fiber in his frail body had felt it. But the soul of the East ran like sobbing flames in his young blood.

"Your life, too, Mrs. Wyngate! Am I so horrible?" He half whispered.

"I think you are capable of the noblest sacrifice!"

"If—if you asked it," he stammered, "how could I refuse? I cannot bring this tragedy into *your* life!" He paused and his breath came like one who had cast himself from a great height. He turned his face from the tropic light after the manner of a child sick with pain.

Paula began to experience her own agony of mind, something of the fierce anguish that was searching his boyish heart. She stood up and placed her hand gently on his shoulder. "I wish I could have kept this out of your life until you were old enough to laugh it away. I, too, know what pain is like!"

He turned to her swiftly, his dark eyes flinching in the cruel white light. "Why should *you* suffer one breath of pain, because I am foolish enough to dream of a love that cannot be?"

Paula felt herself being caught in the quicksands of his despair. Instinct warned her that she must retreat or surrender. Very slowly she walked to the foyrer entrance, the warm perfumes of a hundred islands beating upon her baffled senses. She could

not pursue her object further. It was like torturing a child.

He was standing beside her in the hallway, his face a mask of suppressed emotions. "It is very foolish of me, Mrs. Wyngate, to resist your appeal. But—it was so sudden. I could not bring myself to a full realization—" he added brokenly.

"It will come easier after a while," she answered with returning courage. "Odette will understand if it is made clear. There is a way to make her see the difference in your—"

"Nationality," he nodded thoughtfully.

Paula considered the word a moment. It did not seem enough. She would have liked Chiang to prove something more, something that would reveal to Odette the real difference between East and West. He seemed to read the riddle in her mind; a crucified smile lingered on his drawn lips.

"For your sake, Mrs. Wyngate, everything shall be made clear to Odette. There shall be no doubt in her mind concerning the difference between West and East." He paused as though struggling with his madly racing thoughts, while the clamor of the port and the shouting of coolies outside, broke in upon their perfumed isolation. The touch of Paula's hand against his sleeve seemed to wake him to the realities of life.

"Some day, early this week," he half whispered, "bring Odette into the Yamen, where I frequently officiate in a judicial capacity. I think I know what we want."

In the sunlit foyer she turned slowly and held out her hand. He kissed it after the manner of a young courtier.

"Good-by!" he intoned with studied ease. Her eyes searched him swiftly, but she saw no shadow of emotion on his inscrutable face.

III.

PAULA breathed nothing to Odette concerning her chance interview with Chiang. A couple of days slipped by allowing them an opportunity of visiting various places of interest in Songolo. Chiang did not again appear at the house, neither did Odette refer to his absence. Paula was exercised in mind anent his invitation to enter the Yamen, a place used as a courthouse, where Chinese

criminals were tried by the official representatives of the Chinese government. Odette informed her that Chiang frequently occupied the judge's chair, as befitted the son of the illustrious banker and island millionaire.

"Only the natives go to the Yamen," Odette was cheerful to add when Paula suggested a visit. "The Blakes never go."

Paula laughed lightly. "I'm dying to see your little Chiang in the rôle of a judge. Let's have a peep at this Chinese show?"

Odette demurred, but finally consented to accompany her sister to the pagoda-shaped building in the native quarter of the town. It was known in Songolo that the captain of the notorious junk, Kish Loon, was on trial for the murder of a comprador and crew of a Songolo tramp steamer. The captain of the junk, Feng Ho, by name, had proved a curse to small ship owners and schooner craft. He rarely spared his victims once his gang of howling, chattering cut-throats spilled over their rails.

For a long time he had eluded the Chinese water police and gunboats. But Fate, in the guise of a British torpedo destroyer, had shot his smelly junk to pieces, and later brought him to Songolo to be handed over to the authorities. Within an hour after his landing he had managed to escape, but was caught some days afterward, in the hut of a coolie woman who had given him shelter. She also had been arrested.

About the gates of the Yamen was gathered the scum and raffle of the port. The lynx eyes of a Chinese official singled out the two white ladies on the outskirts of the rabble. Without ado he beat his way forward and with many salaams conducted them inside to a seat near the judge's chair.

The place was packed and reeked of samshu, vanilla and the sour-skinned natives of the slums. A droning silence filled the Yamen. The judge had not yet arrived. Opposite them was a heavily barred door through which the felons and murderers were sometimes driven like geese. In the center of the Yamen, and surrounded by a curiously wrought metal screen, stood an iron Buddha, ugly, malevolent and leering in the direction of the judge's seat. Above the idol's flat brow was suspended from a

metal bracket in the low ceiling an iron glove, the shape and size of a human hand. Paula noticed that the palm of the iron glove was absent.

A sudden stir among the native officials was the signal of the judge's entry. He was dressed in the richly embroidered jacket of a mandarin. The coveted stars and buttons of the third order were visible on his breast. He looked across the Yamen at the sweltering, loose-jawed mob, and then his glancing eyes found Paula and Odette on his right.

The Eastern garb had changed the appearance of Chiang. He was no longer the debonair university student; something of the iron Buddha was reflected in his pose and lineaments. The fragrant delicacy of his movements was gone. He had become part of the Asiatic horde in that malodorous atmosphere of crime and punishment.

Odette gasped in surprise. Her lips moved, but made no sound. Paula's face showed no sign of mental perturbation or excitement. An Oriental in flowing raiment rose and notified the small group of officials gathered around the judge's seat that the proceedings would be conducted in English, and that the sentences would be made known to the prisoners by Mongolian and Cantonese interpreters.

The junkman, Feng Ho, was hustled through the gate and into a cage that was used as a dock for murderers and desperadoes. After him came a coolie woman carrying a baby; she was forced into the cage beside Feng Ho. The pirate was naked to his ragged loin-cloth. From his wrists and ankles trailed heavy prison fetters. He was old and toothless; yet, despite his years, he grinned truculently in the face of the judge and officials.

The proceedings were swift and without formalities. The affidavit of the destroyer's commander was taken and handed to the judge as irrefutable evidence of the fellow's guilt. There was no defense. Evidence was forthcoming which showed that the coolie woman with the baby had harbored and abetted him upon previous occasions when ships belonging to the port had been looted and burned. Her latest offense lay in the fact that she had given him

shelter after his escape from the destroyer's crew. The facts were clear and beyond argument.

Sentence of decapitation was passed on the pirate, accompanied by an order that the execution should take place immediately within the grounds of the Yamen. He was seized by his guards and thrust with savage force from the court.

Odette yawned; so swift had been the proceedings that she hardly divined the terrible significance of the judge's order.

The youthful Chiang now fixed his attention on the coolie woman with the baby. Her torn sarong had left her almost bare to the waist. The babe in her arms whimpered fretfully, its flat, brown face and Mongolian eyes expressing an animal sense of misery its mother could not ease.

Chiang appeared to study some papers which a yellow-braided official had placed beside him. He looked at the woman with the curious mask-like indifference which Paula had seen creep into his face before.

"Lalu Gan Deth, you are Feng Ho's accomplice!" he stated in English. "You have helped him in the perpetration of many crimes. I shall deal severely with you according to the law of your country."

A fat Mongolian interpreter standing beside the cage, murmured to the judge that the prisoner was saying that Feng Ho was a near relative, that he had occupied her house on all occasions.

Chiang waived the argument, while a court official demanded instant silence on the part of the fat interpreter. An expectant hush fell upon the Yamen.

Chiang examined his manicured finger nails intently, while Odette leaned nearer her sister. "The dear boy will let her go; he can't help it. He's just pretending he wants to be severe. I know every phase of the silly kid's mind. Listen!"

Chiang's voice carried far into the Yamen; its nasal intonations bespoke the true Celestial. To the expectant Paula it sounded like the fluting of a wolf cub.

"Lalu Gan Deth, your left hand shall be destroyed as befits the associate of murderers and pirates! The penalty will be inflicted in the ordinary way, by means of fire and the iron glove!"

He turned to an official on his right. "Let the sentence be administered without delay," he commanded.

The woman was hauled from the cage and pushed unceremoniously toward the iron Buddha. The crowd in the Yamen rose to its feet, for this form of punishment was the most spectacular and thrilling in the whole Mongolian criminal code.

Paula sat still as death, the loud beating of her heart threatening to stifle her. Odette cowered in her seat as though an unseen hand was gripping her throat. The cold brutality of Chiang's sentence rent the veil of reserve that covered her conventional silence.

The officials had dragged the shrinking Lalu Gan Deth to the screen of the iron Buddha, allowing her to retain the baby in her arms. Her left hand was quickly forced into the iron glove suspended from the bracket above the idol's brow. Then some one touched the leering mouth of Buddha with a lighted stick. A thin jet of yellow flame shot upward toward the iron glove and reached the exposed palm of the coolie woman's hand. A soft cry penetrated the Yamen.

Odette struggled to her feet, anger and abhorrence flashing in her mutinous young eyes. She faced Chiang tu Lee, and her voice grew steady as their glances met. "Mr. Chiang," she said in an audible voice, "I beg you to stop this inhuman torture! It can satisfy no one but yourself even in this house of crime!"

Not for an instant did their glances waver, each looking deep into the soul of the other. Then his soft, dark eyes seemed to become charged with an insatiable cruelty inherited through countless ages. He turned sharply to the ushers standing near.

"Escort this woman from the Yamen!" he said coldly. "And do not allow her to return!"

Odette reeled from his menacing eyes as the ushers led her to the door. Turning suddenly she looked back, her lips parted in scorn and anger that swept her like a mill race.

"You—you Chinaman!" she flung out. "Oh, you Chinaman!"

Paula passed out with her hurriedly in

time to escape the loud cries that broke from Lalu Gan Deth, standing at the iron face of Buddha.

IV.

LATE that evening, an officer of the Yamen, passing the secretarial apartments occupied by Chiang tu Lee, heard unmistakable sounds of grief emanating from within. Pausing curiously, he peeped inside the room and saw Chiang lying on an ottoman, his face buried in his hands. The sound of his sobbing seemed to fill the apartment. With the discretion of his kind the official withdrew. The private sorrows of the illustrious young judge must not be interrupted.

Two days after the trial of Feng Ho, the Blakes came home. They were genuinely disappointed to learn that Odette was returning to Vahiti with Paula. In his capacity as commissioner of customs, Blake was a traveling gazette of information regarding local affairs. The appointments and resignations of government officials were usually the subject of his criticisms. Speaking to Paula, on the morning of her departure, he said:

"The Chinese Legation is furious over an affair that happened in the Yamen, the other day. The judge, who happens to be a friend of ours, has been asked to resign. They say he sent a coolie woman with a baby to a form of torture known as the iron glove!"

Paula was silent. Neither she nor Odette had mentioned their visit to the Yamen.

"I may tell you, Mrs. Wyngate," Blake went on, "that the silly little chap will never live it down in these islands. He was such a decent sort, and between ourselves, a great admirer of Odette. As proof that something had interfered with his judgment,

he sent the coolie woman five thousand dollars, enough to keep her in luxury for the rest of her days. She's out of prison, of course, and seems none the worse for her punishment. I'm really worried about Chiang; such a decent little chap!"

Paula and Odette arrived safely at Vahiti. Odette was not so badly burned as the coolie woman with the baby. She married Frank Dillon when he became captain of the City of Peking, an event brought about by the retirement of his aged superior. It is recorded in the first years of his marriage, that Dillon saved three hundred lives at sea, and never mentions the fact. It is assumed, therefore, that the wayward Odette is in safe keeping.

Two years later, Paula received a letter bearing a Chinese postmark. It was from Chiang. She read it with a strangely beating heart:

DEAR MRS. WYNGATE:

True happiness comes only through repression of the senses. I loved Odette with a purity of mind that resembled a fiery flame. My spirit told me that she was mine. It was never possible for you to turn us from our marriage purpose. But to renounce the sweetest pleasure in life was a task almost too great for me. Yet the echoes of your crying heart reached and penetrated me. My chance came through that—woman in the Yamen. I seized it. It was then I made flame eat flame—the fire that scorched the woman's hand burned my image from Odette's heart.

In my present sanctuary of transcendent purity I have found true happiness, perfect content. May the wings of peace descend upon you and your people.

THE SHRINE OF THE SEVEN STARS.

Paula sighed softly as she burned the letter over the yellow flame of the veranda lamp.

"I wonder if he could have loved Odette as he loves this philosophy of his?" she murmured.

U U U U

"THE MISSING MONDAYS"

By HOMER EON FLINT

will be our next Novelette. It will be printed in two parts, the first of which will appear in our next issue, to confound all our readers by the mystery in connection with the second day of the week.



Good Looking and Rich

By EDGAR FRANKLIN

Author of "A Noise in Newboro," "Regular People," "Whatever She Wants," etc.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED IN PARTS I and II.

GOOD-LOOKING young John Harley is in love with Helen Stevens, but on his small pay does not dare risk marriage, so their engagement is kept a secret. One Braisted bothers him so about an investment that to get rid of the bore, John intimates that he has inherited a fortune from his Uncle William in Australia. The news spreads, and coming to the ears of John's Aunt Faith, causes her to become so chipper that Dr. Fosdyck warns Jack he must not dare intimate that he is even one million short of the three she believes he has acquired, so Jack learns she has willed the money destined for him elsewhere. But worse than this, she thinks that his covert reference to a sweetheart means Mildred Ames, who just then happens in, and prompted by Aunt Faith's happy remarks, marches straight into Jack's unwilling arms. Trying to get out of his awkward fix, John accepts the proffered aid of Althea Wicks, daughter of a millionaire, and presently finds himself engaged to her as well. Helen gets wind of this and hands him back his ring. Desperate, John tries first to offend Althea and then her father, but the latter arranges to send him to Europe on a business matter and announces that the marriage must take place at once.

CHAPTER IX,

THE STRAIGHTER COURSE.

THE yellow sheet fluttered to the floor. "This week!" choked Mr. Harley. Wolcott's more deliberate mind seemed still to be loitering over the earlier words of the message.

"He's begging your pardon!" he cried. "Thurlow Wicks is apologizing to you!"

"Huh?"

"Why, it's a boast of his that he never asked the pardon of any man living, Jack! Is—is it possible that *he's* infatuated with you, too?"

John Harley clutched at his friend's arm

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for December 30.

in a feverish way; there was something very wild and pathetic in his upturned gaze. His mouth worked piteously, too, and his general expression was that of a person almost daft.

"That's it!" he said. "There's something funny about that family, Harry! They all like me—and I'll have to go through with it!"

"Marry her, you mean?"

"I'll have to!"

"Rot!"

"No, it's not. I've got a hunch, Harry! It'll all happen before I know what's going on. She'll look at me and keep on looking—and pretty soon some minister'll be saying—"

Mr. Wolcott laid a firm hand on his shoulder.

"Stop that raving!" he commanded. "Nobody can force you to marry Althea!"

"They can't, eh?" Mr. Harley laughed wildly. "That's all you know about Althea!"

"Possibly, but I know a whole lot about common sense, Jack," his friend said soothingly. "You're a trifle shaken because things seem to have come unexpectedly to a head. As a matter of fact, you're no worse off than you were a few minutes ago. There's a way out of every pickle, you know. I hate like sixty to resort to the cheaper kind of trickery, but—well, for one thing, you might get down to real elemental stuff and just run!"

"Disappear?"

"For a while, of course. You could explain to Wicks that you'd been called to Australia."

"And suppose he and his daughter insisted that I take ten minutes off before starting and marry Althea? They'd do that, you know."

"But—"

"And if he didn't do that, I'd have to explain to Aunt Faith, anyway, and she'd insist that I marry Mildred and take *her* along. And I'm damned if I'll marry either of 'em!" shouted Mr. Harley. "I'm eternally damned if I'll—"

"Hush!" snapped Mr. Wolcott, and his frown was quite testy. "Let's drop the idea of your disappearing, then, if it doesn't

appeal to you. There are any quantity of other ways in which a man can avoid a wedding, for a time at least. Why not—see here! Why not contract a contagious disease? You might even go crazy for a time."

"That would take a minimum of effort just now!" Mr. Harley remarked grimly.

"Don't waste time being humorous, please!"

"Was I that? I didn't know," groaned John. "Well? I'm a demented smallpox case. What then?"

"Well, naturally, a man with a contagious disease would have to stay in seclusion for a considerable period. In that time—"

"In that time," Mr. Harley pursued drearily, "two—and possibly even three—fiancées would be calling every day to see how the patient was! Say, what do you suppose I'm going through all this for, anyway?" he demanded savagely. "It's to keep Aunt Faith from knowing that I lied in the first place, isn't it?"

"Of course, but—"

"Let's stop there. I think you've gone dry on good ideas," sighed John.

Mr. Wolcott himself sighed.

"You may be right," he conceded. "It might be as well to consider the immediate future and see if we can't build on what we discover there. Ah—just what are you going to say to Miss Wicks about the wedding preparations?"

"Not a darned word until she says something to me!"

"But if he's wired her, she's bound very shortly to say something, I fancy. Now let us suppose that she telephones you as soon as she gets the wire from her father. It might be—"

In John's room, prettily timed as if the thing had been rehearsed for days, the telephone jingled noisily. Mr. Wolcott opened his eyes; John himself started very violently.

"That's Althea!" he exclaimed. "Go say I'm not home!"

"No. One lie never helped another."

"Let her ring, then!"

"She'll probably come here hunting for you, if you don't answer."

"That's true, too!" whined the stricken man, as he arose and tottered to his own room. Mr. Wolcott strolled after him and, pausing in the doorway, watched.

"Yes?" John said, faintly.

"Mr. Harley?" purred Althea's familiar tone.

"Yes."

"Dearest!" purred the voice.

And there was a pause, wherein Mr. Harley dribbled down into his chair behind the desk and drooped over the instrument.

"John, dear! Are you there?" the voice inquired, with a little rising inflection.

"Oh, yes, I'm here," Mr. Harley admitted.

"Why, your voice sounds so weak and—and shaky!" said the young woman. "You're ill—I knew you were! I knew that I shouldn't have let you go like that, Jack!"

"Yes?"

"I'm coming down with the car for you, and I'm going to bring you home here and put you to bed and take care of you! That silly Wolcott man can't look after you, and I won't trust you to any paid nurse. You have him pack a bag for you and —"

"Well, wait!" Mr. Harley cried, and his voice had gained remarkably in volume and resonance these last seconds. "I'm all right, Althea; on my word of honor, I never felt better in my life. I've got a lot of work here that has to be done over*Sunday and—"

"Are you really all right?"

"I—I feel fine!" said John.

Over the wire came a light sigh of relief. The note of concern left the voice and it grew very soft again.

"Darling, did you get a wire from dad?"

"Ah—yes!"

"Don't you know that I've been waiting and waiting and waiting for you? I thought that you'd come instantly, dear. I waited until I couldn't stand it any longer," said Miss Wicks. "Think of it, Jack! This week!"

"Yes, I—I—I've been thinking of it!" mumbled Mr. Harley.

"Aren't you *glad*?" inquired Althea, with just a hint of dismay.

From his varying expressions, Mr. Wol-

cott in the doorway deduced that some sort of mental tornado was raging within his old friend. Wolcott stared hard. John had turned white by degrees and had then turned an angry red quite suddenly; from this tint he was working, again by degrees, to a rich and infuriated purple. His lips were opening and his shoulders were squaring; John Harley, in fine, was on the point of telling the whole truth in a few crisp words!

And as his mouth opened the inconvenient specter of Dr. Fosdyck materialized just across the desk.

"There'll be quite a rumpus, will there not, when you've told that girl you're actually not in love with her?" the specter inquired. "She will wire her father and he, unquestionably, will come back to Ebbridge on the first train. After that, whatever happens is likely to be somewhat noisy and spectacular; and whatever it may be, it will come to your Aunt Faith's ears and—"

"Ah—ah—glad!" John echoed suddenly, and with so much feeling that his voice trembled. "You bet I'm glad Althea!"

"Come and see me, sweetheart, and let's make our plans?" suggested Miss Wicks.

And here Wolcott grew puzzled again. Mr. Harley's personal tornado had apparently subsided, leaving him rather exhausted; but while every line of his face indicated the most acute distress, his voice was full and soft and sincere as a voice could have been.

"Darling," he said, "that's the one thing in the world I'd like to do and I can't do it to-day. This beastly work I brought home simply has to be cleared away or my whole end of the office will be upside down all week. I know that's pretty awful when things have taken the lovely turn they have, and I'll try to make up for it later; but to-day—"

"And I must wait until to-morrow to see you again?" Althea asked with the same astounding humility.

"It's harder on me than it is on you!" John actually contrived to laugh.

There was a little more of this vapid conversation before Miss Wicks finally rang off, but it did end at last, leaving Wolcott more puzzled than ever; for Mr. Harley,

rising, was steady again and rather pale and in his eye shone the light of determination.

"That's where I stop!" he announced fiercely. "I may not have much self-respect, but I'll blow my head off before I go any farther with this stuff!"

"Eh?"

"I didn't dare stir up Althea, but I'll see Wicks to-morrow if I have to hunt all over New England for him; and when I find him I'll tell him the truth in so many words and he'll understand. When he knows a woman's life probably depends on his taking it sanely, he'll have to understand!"

"You think he'll just overlook your making love to Althea?" Wolcott queried, musingly.

"He will before I've finished with him!"

John said doggedly, albeit he lost another shade of color. "Don't gape at me like that! I'll manage it diplomatically—but I'll manage it!"

"Well, I hope, Jack," Mr. Wolcott said, with a dubious smile. "I certainly hope—"

"Yes, so do I!" John said shortly. "I'm going to work now!"

To a man whose soul had been blasted, whose whole happy life has been rent to little, bleeding, agonized fragments, whose future has changed, all in a day, from brightest rose to deepest black, hard work may bring at least a little relief. All else apart, Miss Helen Stevens had inflicted these things upon John Harley. Helen, not without reason perhaps, had lost faith in him; Helen had informed him quite bluntly that he was lying to her; Helen had dismissed him forever—and as the minutes passed the conviction that his entire existence had been wrecked grew firmer, even, than at the moment of the crash.

So it was fortunate that his work was of a nature that demanded the hardest kind of concentration. Half an hour Mr. Harley struggled with the things that surged through his brain; after that he was Potter & Company's precise machine again, scribbling, muttering to himself, scratching down memoranda. Wolcott, summoning him at supper time, was waved away; Wolcott, later, tiptoed in with a little plate of sandwiches and a cup of coffee and John ate absently as he worked.

Otherwise, there was an odd lull. Aunt Faith, plainly respecting his devotion to duty, failed even to telephone; Althea, too, seemed to have accepted his neglect as unavoidable. Mildred, to be sure, called up a little after eight—but considered side by side with Althea, Mildred was a shamefully easy proposition. Although he blushed and ground his teeth over the task, Mr. Harley soothed the second fiancée of his odd collection with honeyed word and plausible explanation until she, too, understood that the really busy man cannot devote even Sunday nights to the one girl. Following this conversation, Mr. Harley shook his fists in the general direction of heaven and spoke horribly for two full minutes before resuming his work.

At midnight, fagged out, he staggered to bed.

Suburban trains between eight and nine are rather clubby affairs. Six days a week, the year around, the same people meet and idly gossip about the same things. When it chanced that one of the regular crowd has ostensibly inherited three millions over the week-end, the gossip is likely to be livelier and very definitely focused. On this particular Monday morning, Mr. Harley most inconspicuously boarded the seven-thirty instead of the usual eight-two.

He dreaded the moment of entering the Potter offices, though—the congratulatory shouts that would rise, the back-slapping and the endless excited questions. He braced himself as the door swung behind him; and some ten seconds later he relaxed, for he was at his desk and not one of his co-workers had offered more than the ordinary nod and word of greeting. They didn't know!

And Potter himself rarely came in before noon on Mondays and, even then, it was most unlikely that he would call the employees together and advise them of the Harley inheritance. With the mail light and imperative duties very few this morning, John could devote several hours to planning the impending Wicks interview.

It would need planning! Presently, John would call up the Wicks office and learn whether, by any chance, its master had returned; and, if he had not, where he might

be found. And, this much learned, John fancied that he would catch the next train for—wherever it might be. He had no thought of weakening now; this occasional slight nervous tremor was the direct result of the shock Helen had inflicted upon him and had no connection with the rather terrible Mr. Wicks. No, he would find Wicks and tell the truth and face him down, however terrible he might choose to be! And when the first storm had passed—

"Hello!" said John, to his tinkling telephone.

"Mr. Wicks's office; Mr. Wicks speaking. Shall I put him on?" intoned the Potter switchboard operator.

"Huh?" said Mr. Harley, and his throat tightened suddenly. "Does he want to speak to me, personally?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well—I'm not down yet!" gasped Mr. Harley.

There was no cowardice about this, of course, although John did flush queerly. It was simply that—er—he had not quite completed his plans for talking to Wicks, on the one hand, and that he was not free to leave the office on the other. There were letters to be dictated before one gave any heed to private business. John dictated them with a queerly breathless effect that caused his stenographer to stare more than once. He looked around for other matters that needed attention. There really seemed to be none. His phone rang again.

"Mr. Wicks," reported the operator. "He was just talking to our Mr. Severn and I guess Mr. Severn told him you were in the office now."

"All right!" John said thinly.

There was a little clicking.

"Hello!" thundered the voice of Thurlow Wicks.

"Oh—yes!"

"Jack?"

"Yes."

"I'm back!" Mr. Wicks announced superfluously.

"Yes!" John agreed brightly.

"Yep! Didn't have to stay up there, after all, thank goodness! Come around here, Jack!"

"To your office?"

"Yes. Right away. There's a lot I want to talk to you about, young fellow."

"Well—ah—later in the day, perhaps, when—"

"Later be hanged! Come now! You haven't anything to do there one half as important as what I want to see you about. Step lively, Jack. Got a lunch date with a railroad president, or I'd ask you to come then. Hustle. 'By!"

The telephone clicked again, indicating that Thurlow Wicks had said his say. Mr. Harley, swallowing, endeavored to bristle angrily. He issued commands, did he? And he expected to be obeyed. Well, since he had adopted *that* particular tone, let him issue his commands and be hanged to him!

Then, again, he was in a good humor this morning. He had laughed twice during that brief conversation, which was really astonishing. Perhaps it was fate. Perhaps some kind destiny had selected this very morning as the proper time for the interview and—John rose suddenly and reached for his hat. He was going straight through with this Wicks matter now.

There is something overwhelming about the Thurlow Wicks business establishment. The heavy furniture, the too thick rugs, the sinister dark tones of the walls, all reflect the master of the place; so, even, do the employees themselves, most of whom Mr. Wicks selects in person.

A soured and unsmiling boy receives one's card and studies it with deep suspicion. He rises grudgingly, looks the caller over again, and vanishes through a small, dark door. Presently appears an equally unsmiling young woman, with heavy black brows, who appraises the caller all over again and makes her own decisions—usually that Mr. Wicks is in conference, and—presumably—will remain there for the balance of his life.

With this technique John Harley was quite familiar, since he had visited the office frequently in the past for purely business reasons. His surprise was considerable, then, when the office boy smiled and hopped nimbly from his chair and even hurried to open the gate in the heavy railing.

"Mr. Harley?" he cried. "Come right in, Mr. Harley. Mr. Wicks is expecting you!"

Seven less fortunate mortals, ranged along the far wall in deep chairs, gazed enviously at him as he passed. This, as happens so frequently, was because they did not know. Gladly, even thankfully, would Mr. Harley have exchanged places with the gentleman at the foot of the line; he wanted more time to think, to plan intelligently the very difficult approach to a very difficult matter, to devise certain artful little remarks that would lead to—

Well, he had passed the two anterooms, had he not? And the beetle-browed young woman was dancing lightly, even gayly, ahead of him; and now she was opening the fateful door in the small jog at the left. The nightmare atmosphere he had known yesterday once more enshrouded Mr. Harley; he too moved on—and there was Thurlow Wicks himself, just rising from behind his desk.

"Well, Jack!" he cried heartily, and held out a great hand.

Mr. Harley shook it dizzily.

"How—de do?" said he.

"Chair!" barked the magnate, indicating one.

Into it Mr. Harley dropped quite mechanically.

"Here at last, are you?" said Mr. Wicks, and lumbered cheerfully into his own seat. "Hardly expected to see me again as soon as all this, eh? Just happened that two of the men I meant to go after turned up in Boston last evening, and we had everything cleared away before ten o'clock. Got out on the midnight train, fortunately, and now I'm—back to business."

He beamed. He even rubbed his hands, which was something John had never seen him do before. Mr. Harley's spirits stirred quite suddenly and began to rise. Why, he was no more than a complete fool to be sitting here and quaking internally like this! In all his life Thurlow Wicks probably had never been in a better or a more approachable humor than at this minute. Mr. Harley hitched to a more upright position and managed a normal smile.

"Glad to—er—be back?" he hazarded.

"Always! There's no town like New York for business, Jack. Have to get to one of the other cities now and then and see their methods to appreciate that. No place in the world like it for turning over the faithful little dollar. That's my whole life, you know."

"And a very—"

"Your life now, too, that you're coming into the family," Mr. Wicks said. "I'll have to—oh, that reminds me. Got your check book with you, Jack?"

John Harley's hand went mechanically to the bulge in his upper coat pocket.

"Why, yes," said he.

"Fine! Best earmark of a born financier, that!" Mr. Wicks chuckled richly. "Fountain pen right there in the rack. Sit down and make me out your check for sixty thousand dollars!"

CHAPTER X.

PROFIT AND LOSS.

IN the other offices there was no sound of screaming or of running feet. Neither were similar manifestations rising from the street, not so many stories below. And this was odd indeed, because to the best of Mr. Harley's belief, the entire building had bounced a foot or so into the air, and even now, after ten seconds, had not quite settled on its foundations again.

"What—what did you say?" he asked faintly.

"Sixty thousand, Jack!"

"But—but—"

Mr. Wicks ceased his smiling and leaned over the desk, shaking a finger at John.

"Listen to me, kid!" he said. "Here's your very first lesson in big business: when a man mentions a reasonably large sum of money, look at him stonily—*always*. Don't look as if you'd been hit with a club, Jack. You're doing that now."

"I—it's no wonder—"

"No, I understand that. You're not quite used to money yet, my boy. You'll get used to it very speedily, though, and meanwhile remember that first lesson. You and I are going to turn over some pretty big things before we're through."

"We are?" echoed Mr. Harley.

"Oh, unquestionably. I'm not boasting, Jack, but in the last thirty years I've learned some tricks about money making that I wouldn't communicate to a living man, outside my own family. You're essentially a member of my family now." His voice dropped impressively. It was as well that he happened to be looking over John's head rather than directly toward him, too; else might he have commented on the faint greenish wave of color that came into Harley's cheek. "John, you have about three millions now. In less than five years we'll have turned that into twenty millions."

He thumped his desk so emphatically that Mr. Harley jumped again. He looked straight at Mr. Harley, and it occurred to John that although his eyes had seemed kindly enough five minutes ago, they were glinting now with an awful hidden force which, once loosed in anger, might do almost anything to a man.

"I mean just that, Jack," Thurlow Wicks concluded very earnestly. "And I'll do it for *you* because you're the very soul of truth and honesty. If Althea had chosen to marry a scamp or a blockhead, I'd never have raised a finger to help him."

He nodded. John also nodded, but it was no such positive gesture. John's was just a weak little jerk of the head, accompanied by a weak little smile.

"The pen's, over there," Mr. Wicks stated again. "Let's get that check matter out of the way, and then we'll discuss the other things. Er—sixty thousand."

"Yes, but what—what's it for?" John cried desperately.

"Eh? Good Lord! I supposed you understood," Mr. Wicks said rather irritably. "I've been buying a little block of stock for you since I came back this morning."

"Oh!" said Mr. Harley.

"Metal stuff—funny little proposition—bit of information I happened to have, and I wasn't going to bother with it myself. It'll rise about forty points inside the week, John; may possibly do a shade better than that and in less time. I'll handle it for you; all you have to do is sit back and rake in the profits."

He grinned slightly. His eye wandered significantly toward the fountain pen. It was rather plain that when Mr. Wicks condescended to lend a hand in such matters he expected quick action on the part of the favored.

Mr. Harley found himself turning chilly. Now, to be sure, was the time to square his chest, look Wicks fearlessly in the eye, and admit that walking about the ceiling would have been very, very much easier than the drawing of a negotiable check for sixty thousand dollars, or even for one-tenth of that amount. Yes, it was the moment and—no! It wasn't the moment at all! When a man like Thurlow Wicks has just informed one that he is the very soul of truth, it is not well to confide to him that he has erred and that one really is one of the greatest liars alive!

Later in this interview John would work back to the subject leading up to it ever so deftly, ever so diplomatically. But just now a little more of the nicest mendacity was all that would—

"Well, dammit, sir!" Mr. Wicks cried suddenly and hotly. "What's the matter? You're not willing to trust to my judgment?"

"It—it's not that at all, sir!" John said quickly. "I was just a—a bit embarrassed. You see, I'm not drawing sixty-thousand-dollar checks this morning, Mr. Wicks."

"I understood—"

"Yes, I know. Everybody seems to have understood that, and it's a mistake. The—ah—whole estate is not in my hands as yet, you know. It may not be for several weeks. Then, of course—"

The wealthy gentleman scowled, from John Harley to the fountain pen, and from the pen to a little rubber-banded bundle of securities lying before him. Putting it mildly, he was annoyed—but, rather happily, this phase passed in a few seconds; and he opened a drawer, tossed in the bundle, and shrugged his shoulders.

"All right; we'll let it stand at that," he muttered. "They were bought for you, but I'll hold 'em. Um—let's see. Half a dozen things I wanted to talk to you about. What were they? I suppose you and Ally

spent most of the night making plans for the wedding?"

"Well—not quite all of it," John confessed.

"Just as well. The thing needn't be rushed through, after all. You're not sailing Saturday."

"Oh!" said Mr. Harley, with some genuine relief.

"No, not till a week from Saturday, I think," pursued Thurlow Wicks, rather marring the effect. "That will give us more time all around. How about Wednesday next week for the wedding?"

"Why, Wednesday's a good day," John murmured.

"Wednesday," said the other, and made a memorandum on a scratch-pad. "We'll take to-morrow and the next day to go over the business I want you to attend to on the other side. Thrown up your job with Potter, of course?"

"No," gasped Mr. Harley.

"Hey? Why not?"

"Well, I—I've had that job a long time, and I—really 'd like to hang on to it a while longer," John said, and his throat grew dry. "Until everything is settled, I mean—maybe a year or two after that. Then, it would inconvenience the firm a good deal if I left suddenly, because I've organized my whole department—"

"Twaddle!" Mr. Wicks cried cheerily. "No man's indispensable anywhere in business, Jack. You don't need the pittance they're paying you for salary."

"No—no, of course not," Mr. Harley said hastily.

"Well, why hang on to it, then?" Wicks demanded. "What is it—matter of sentiment?"

"That's it, exactly! You see, I've been with Potter ever since I left college and—and, yes, I do feel a certain sentiment about it!"

Mr. Wicks's smile was almost disgusted.

"I give it up!" he muttered. "Have to humor you for a while, I suppose, till you begin to feel yourself. I'll ask Potter to give you a two months' leave of absence for your trip abroad. That won't unduly lacerate your tender feelings?"

"Why—no," John said thinly. "Only

don't ask him for a few days, Mr. Wicks. He has a lot to fuss about this—er—week. Let it go until next week and—it might be better if I talked to him myself."

Thurlow Wicks sat back in his chair, ramming his hands into his trouser pockets, and considering his ostensible son-in-law-elect with a steady and rather contemptuous stare. Briefly, a thrill went through Mr. Harley. The man suspected something!

"Jack!" snapped the man. "What's the matter with you, anyway? You look, act and talk a damned sight more like a scared rabbit than you do like a man who has inherited a tremendous fortune and is about to marry a beautiful girl—if I say so myself—who'll have another big fortune of her own in the course of time. Why the devil don't you brace up and throw one leg over the other and laugh once in a while and utter an intelligent sentence?"

There was nothing rhetorical about these questions; they were direct, and they demanded an answer. Mr. Harley breathed deeply. This might not be the most opportune moment to lead up to his confession, but it seemed to be the only one. For ten solid minutes he had been sinking deeper and deeper. Abruptly he sat up.

"I suppose it's the suddenness of the whole thing," he said.

"I presume it is, but—"

"You know, it's hard to realize that it has happened," John went on quickly. "Sometimes, this morning particularly, I've been wondering whether it's all really so."

"What?"

"And I've been wondering just what would happen if it wasn't so, after all."

This, according to John's rather clouded reasoning, was deft. Wicks, you see, would deliver himself of a few kindly platitudes on what would happen, and when they grew sufficiently kindly John would break the news that none of the good fortune was real; and immediately after that, when Wicks had cooled a trifle, he would bring his chair nearer to the desk, and in an easy, convincing, conversational style, would explain everything.

"What d'ye mean by that?" Wicks demanded.

"Well—ah—how would it affect you, for example?" John hazarded.

He held his breath, waiting for the kindly platitudes. He was a little startled at the evil light which flickered into Wicks's too expressive eye. He was more than a little startled by the hard, ruthless smile that flickered about Wicks's lips; men who engineer wholesale massacres and butcher off royal families must smile very much like that.

"Well, John, this being a hypothetical case, I can speak quite freely," Mr. Wicks replied meditatively. "If, let us assume, an error of some sort had caused you to believe yourself rich when you were really nothing of the kind, it would be—oh, regrettable from every standpoint, of course. You'd consider the engagement broken, for I'll have no infernal pauper for a son-in-law. I may even say that, being a bit touchy myself about such things, we might not be friends for a while. Nothing much more serious than that, at any rate. *But—*" said Mr. Wicks, and paused blood-curdlingly.

"Yes?" said John.

"If you or any other man ever practiced a deception of this kind on me deliberately, if it ever should appear that for purposes of gain or any other reasons, you had been lying about the whole thing, I—why, confound it, sir, I believe I'd hound you down into the very mouth of hell!" Mr. Wicks stated, and looked as if he meant it.

"Yes!" John agreed.

"Because, while I might forgive the other aspects in the course of time, Jack, my daughter is the most precious thing in the world to me, and the very thought that any man had dared—" Here, for a moment, emotion quite overcame Mr. Wicks; he controlled himself with a visible effort; he even laughed, although it was not a mirthful sound. "Bosh! This is all rather ridiculous, of course."

"Oh, of course!" John admitted hastily, although from a great distance.

"That sort of thing's common enough, but it's not in *your* make-up, boy! What were we talking about?"

"I think it was about the way I haven't risen to new conditions," Mr. Harley said with a wan smile.

"Maybe you're below par, anyway—sick—something like that?" Mr. Wicks suggested, looking sharply at him.

"Maybe."

"That fool Potter's been driving you too hard! He's given to that sort of thing, I believe. He—yes, Miss Parker?"

"Mr. Duncan is here."

Wicks scowled annoyedly.

"So soon?" he muttered. "What time do they have lunch where he comes from? Well—I'll see him in about three minutes." And as the soundless secretary moved out again, he rose and extended a hand to John Harley. "Too darned bad, just when we were getting down to family matters, Jack," he said, "but this is my railroad man and I need him in the business and I'll have to take him out and feed him. You'll be at the house to-night, of course?"

"I'm not sure."

"If I know Althea, you'd better be sure," the millionaire grinned most amiably. "Come for dinner."

"If—"

"Dinner!" Mr. Wicks concluded flatly. "Seven o'clock. Now get out of here."

He tempered the gruff command with a significant, affectionate pat upon the shoulder for which, all things considered, many young men would have given ten years of life. Mr. Harley, not being among the many, would quite cheerfully have contributed fifteen such years on the spot, had there never been any occasion for the pat.

The dark young woman, apparently telepathically summoned, had opened the door and was waiting for him to pass through. A slightly bent, distinctly cold and bewildered person, Mr. Harley passed—and now the office boy was opening the gate for him—and now he was stumbling into the elevator—and on out into the sunshine.

Well, just as he had so greatly desired, he had come face to face with Thurlow Wicks this fine Monday morning!

He had had every possible opportunity to stand up like a little man and tell the truth. And tacitly, if not so very brazenly, he had gone right on with his lying, he had done everything necessary to confirm Mr. Wicks's belief in the genuineness of his inheritance.

And why—*why?* What under the sun

was the matter with him? Had his whole moral structure broken down or had he turned absolute coward or had this terrible blow of Helen's definitely shattered his nerve—or what? Well, at least it was not cowardice in the ordinary sense; had there been no Aunt Faith to suffer from the gossip and excitement of a revelation, he would have spoken his piece quite prettily and, perchance, would even now have been on the path to Hades's main entrance, as promised by Thurlow Wicks.

However, the main consideration was that he had not spoken and—now what?

Mr. Harley slowed his pace, permitting the down town New York crowd to jostle him as it listed while he pondered wretchedly. For one thing he would have to lie low for a few days, until he or Wolcott found the true answer. He—yes, very likely he'd have to dine at the Wicks' home to-night, but apart from that he'd shun Mildred and Althea and Aunt Faith and all the rest of them. He'd spend as little time as possible in Ebbridge and as much down here by himself.

Mr. Harley looked about with stricken eyes; by himself! That was the saddest point of the whole affair. Six months or more, every spare minute had been passed with Helen Stevens. And never, never again would he—oh, that was impossible! A great love doesn't end like that for any reason in the world. Such a love as Helen's and his must survive even murder! She had spoken in hot anger yesterday, but, her limited information considered, it had been anger perfectly justified. Long before this, she had repented!

Mr. Harley stopped short at the thought. Why hadn't that ray of intelligence reached him before? She was far too proud to make advances after that interview, but he—why, he'd grovel in the dust before her for just one word of forgiveness! Mr. Harley turned suddenly into the drug store beside him and raced for the telephone booths at the rear.

She might even answer the telephone!

She did not. The voice coming over the wire was Cousin Thyra's—plump, comfortable Cousin Thyra, who lived for her children and her home.

"This is—Jack!" Mr. Harley stated rather emotionally. "Is Nellie there?"

"Jack Harley?" cried the voice.

"Of course! Is—"

"No, Nellie isn't here now. She's down town getting some things for me, Jack. Jack! What have you been doing? Not quarreling?"

"Why?"

"I knew it!" Cousin Thyra said with conviction. "Was it her fault or yours?"

"Mine!" Mr. Harley answered promptly.

"Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" said Cousin Thyra, whose whole mind was an open book. "She came home here yesterday and went to her room and cried—I think I won't tell you about it, after all."

"She cried!" breathed John. "She does care, then!"

"About you? You know perfectly well she's mad about you!" the lady said indignantly. "And if you've been mean to her, John Harley—"

"If I have I'll get down on my knees and stay there until she forgives me!" John cried. "Thyra, she'll be home this evening?"

"Not until ten or so. She's helping at the strawberry festival at the church."

"I'll be up a few minutes after ten, then. Thyra, will you just arrange things so that we're absolutely alone?"

Over the wire floated a gentle and understanding laugh.

"Oh, I suppose so, John," said Helen's cousin. "Do you want her to know you're coming?"

"I do not, and I don't want her to know I've called up, either!" John cried, and his voice held almost a cheerful note.

On the street again he even smiled. After all, when a girl like Helen cares enough to cry about one, it is not such a bad old world! Mr. Harley's spirits rose, slowly but very steadily. Something insisted on telling him that before midnight all would be well between himself and Helen; and after that glorious condition had been restored, he'd have his head to devote to the puzzle itself.

Meanwhile he could lose himself in the day's work, reasonably secure from interruption. He heaved a sigh of relief. He

had always appreciated that job with Potter & Co., but he appreciated it more than ever to-day. The income from it was not quite princely, but without it he would have been in something of a quandary just now. The proposition of keeping up appearances of reasonable wealth before Aunt Faith would mean spending every penny of his salary for a while and about as much more as he dared draw in advance—but what a splendid thing that it was there to be spent!

Mr. Harley, then, was smiling as he entered the Potter offices, tossed his hat to its hook, and with a sigh that was almost contented, stretched his legs beneath the desk and—abruptly sensed the peculiar something in the air.

One minute back, the usual rather noisy bustle had been evident; the two typewriters out here had been clattering away, Morrison, the head accountant, had been calling a string of figures to his assistant, the office boy had been thumping away with a numbering stamp. Now the quiet was positively funereal. Mr. Harley looked up suddenly.

Mouth open, the office boy was staring at him fixedly. Miss Brown, the rather mousy typist, was gazing drearily at him. Miss Holman, the office vampire, had fluffed up her bobbed hair and was directing at him a smile of such warmth and brilliance that the intervening air itself seemed to gleam and smoke! Staid old Mr. Morrison was regarding him just as interestedly as the others—yes, and now Morrison was climbing down from his stool and shuffling across to John. He laid a light, awed hand on Mr. Harley's shoulder and blinked about the office in a general way.

"We just heard, Jack!" said he.

"Heard what?"

"Just as if you didn't know what!" the bookkeeper laughed sadly, for he had spent the best part of sixty years hoping that some one would leave him a fortune. "Well, John, I guess I speak for the rest of the office when I tell you that we were all mighty glad to hear about your luck and that we all congratulate you!"

"'Ray!" vociferated the office boy, and waved the numbering stamp.

"Speech! Speech!" cried Miss Holman.

"You bet we have to have a speech!" Mr. Morrison said rather noisily. "Come on, John!"

"Say, I—I wish you wouldn't—" Mr. Harley began wretchedly.

His wild eyes swept the place in search of an avenue of escape. There were some few things of which the battered Mr. Harley was still capable, but a speech to the office force was not among them. His eyes stopped at the opening door of Potter's own office, with Mr. Potter himself standing there.

That way, at least, lay sanctuary for a little. He would talk to Potter about this, that and the other thing for as long a space as the conversation could be prolonged. Mr. Harley covered the distance between them with quite a rush.

"I'd—I'd like to speak to you!" he said hurriedly.

"I've been expecting you to come and speak to me for some time," smiled the head of the firm and so far unbent as to send a knowing wink in Morrison's direction.

The door clicked after them. Mr. Potter waved Mr. Harley to the chair of state, which was the deep one beside his desk. Usually an austere and dignified person with his employees, he tilted back now and regarded John with a complacent grin.

"Good morning, millionaire," he said dryly. "Did I rescue you?"

"Yes!"

"You'll get a lot of similar demonstrations before you die, I imagine," said Mr. Potter. "May as well get used to 'em now, Jack. Well! You rushed away from the club in such a hurry Saturday, after dropping your bombshell, that I had no chance to congratulate you properly. Let me do that now!"

Warmly indeed did he shake Mr. Harley's hand, and Mr. Harley sat up with some force and assurance. This time at least he would tell the truth.

And—

Potter was an infinitely opinionated, obstinate, outspoken soul, who gave tremendous weight to his own idea of the right of any proposition. Having heard the confession, it was well within the probabilities that he might feel called upon, all things

notwithstanding, to go to Aunt Faith with the whole story! "Surgeon's kindness"—that was a favorite expression of Mr. Potter's and a favorite principle as well. And, assuming that he could be steered away from unfortunate Aunt Faith, there were many other people to whom he was certain to relate the whole thing. Unquestionably it would take a very little time in reaching the ears of Thurlow Wicks.

"Er—ah—yes, thanks!" puffed Mr. Harley, who had no wish at all to add to his troubles by a trip to the mouth of Hades.

"Cigar?" said Mr. Potter.

"No, thanks," said Mr. Harley.

The head of the firm tilted farther back and regarded his young friend with the same whimsical grin.

"Made a lot of plans, Jack?"

"Not one!"

"Really?" mused Mr. Potter. "About time to begin, isn't it? Most young fellows would have had the next fifty years' amusement plotted out by this time. You—er—don't mean to keep on working here?"

"Why, of course!" said the somewhat startled John.

"How long?"

"For—for years, I hope."

"Well—that's curious!" Mr. Potter said reflectively. "Would it not be better perhaps to get out and look over the rest of the world for a while?"

"I detest travel!" Mr. Harley explained quite glibly.

"That's because you've never done much of it, Jack. You and Millie Ames have hit it off, I understand."

"U-m—yes!"

"Jack," said Mr. Potter, and laid the kindest hand upon his knee, "listen to the advice of a wise old man—and then take it. You marry that pretty little kid just as soon as the law 'll allow and clear out for a long vacation. See America first. Then take a steamer on the Pacific Coast and inspect the Orient. After that, work around to Europe and see whether you find it satisfactory."

"Well—later on, in the course of a year or two—yes, possibly. But just now—"

"It doesn't appeal?"

"No, sir!"

Mr. Potter leaned still farther back and stared at the ceiling.

"You're in a rut," said he. "If you had no job, you'd do all these things, my boy."

"Yes—probably," John conceded unguardedly.

"Certainly!" said the head of the firm, and brought his chair down with a bang. "Well, that's easily settled. You have no job! You're fired!"

Following this he threw back his head and laughed unroariously, much as if having no job was the very funniest condition possible.

CHAPTER XI.

SURGEON'S KINDNESS.

THESE last few minutes had been rather peaceful for John Harley. That is to say, the impression of sanctuary in this calm inner office had been growing and his nervous tension had relaxed considerably. Here, it had seemed to John, nothing of a racking nature could well happen—and in spite of all that something very definite and very disturbing had contrived to happen within five minutes!

Mr. Potter's mirth continued the while John stared at him and was aware of the same old familiar chilly thrill he had acquired day before yesterday.

"I guess *that* settles it!" announced Mr. Potter in a final burst of gaiety.

"I—I don't want—"

"Of course you don't. You're in a rut, Jack; you never *would* want to quit of your own accord. That's why I'm giving you an honorable discharge."

"But I don't want a discharge!" Mr. Harley declared wildly. "I want to keep right on here. I—I'm satisfactory, am I not?"

"Best man in the place, Jack. Too good for such a job; that's why I'm hurling you out of it!"

"But—"

Viewing his genuine perturbation, Potter ceased his laughing and became again the quiet friend.

"Shock, I know," said he. "Surgeon's kindness, my boy. You'll understand that

before you're a week or two older. I saw your aunt yesterday. We talked the whole thing over in detail. She not only agreed with me in this matter; she suggested it herself!"

"Well, I know," John said swiftly, "but—well, here! This—er—estate's not settled yet, Mr. Potter. I'd like to stay here until—well, until the whole thing's in my hands, you understand."

The head of the firm leaned back and thought hard for some seconds, eventually directing at John a firm little smile.

"Even so, I'm sure you're best out of here," he said flatly. "You see, Jack, after the first week or so, the initial joy over your inheritance is bound to subside; you'll be less willing than ever to quit here, and it will be just so much harder. You know, you *are* too much inclined to get into a groove and stay there. It's not going to take many months to clear up the estate?"

"A—a few!"

"You've saved plenty to run along on in that time? Even if you have not, you'll be able to draw on the estate, of course?"

"Well, this—this estate's in—ah—a very odd—"

"And if you're not, I'll be tickled to death to lend you whatever you need within reason," said Mr. Potter, who got an idea and then stuck firmly to it. "Have a couple of thousand now if you need it. But I do want to see you get out and spread your wings, and find yourself."

"That—I appreciate that—" Mr. Harley staggered on.

"Another aspect to the thing, too," pursued the head of the firm. "Jobs aren't any too plentiful these days, and a man who doesn't actually need his ought to step aside for the fellow who does. I'd meant to send Phelps on the road, you know, and push you up into his place and let Dixon have yours. This rather simplifies things, because Dixon can step into your shoes now—and he needs the increase of salary. Three kids and a house in Jersey he's trying to pay for. He'll be glad!"

"Yes, I—I suppose he will be glad!" John's numbed tongue said bitterly.

Without apparent provocation, Mr. Potter burst into another gale of merriment.

"Upon my soul, you're the funniest chap I ever saw!" he cried. "You're rich. Unless you choose, you need never raise a hand from now until your dying day—and still you're sitting there and glooming over a ninety-dollar job as if your very bread and butter depended on it. Oh, cheer up, John! Don't be absurd. Be sure that your only trouble is a brain very badly habituated to one line of thought. You'll wake up shortly and realize that this is all only surgeon's kindness, as I said a moment ago. Now get out of here, young fellow, and rub your eyes and see if you're not able to discern a few of the wonderful things that are waiting for you to seize them!"

He rose with an emphatic jerk. The ghastly interview was over.

"I suppose I may finish the week here?" John choked.

"No, sir! You may not!" guffawed Mr. Potter.

"Well—well, the day, then?"

"Um—possibly," chuckled the head of the firm, and his eyes twinkled prodigious merriment as he bestowed on John's shoulder another of those ironic little pats. "Yes, as a very special concession, I think you may stay around here until four or so—and after that, for three years at least, I never want to lay eyes on you in this office except as a guest."

"Three years?"

Mr. Potter kept on with his maddening patting, but grew more grave.

"Some day you'll get tired of jogging around; come back then and buy out the old firm, if you want it. I'll be no younger then, you know. That's what I meant. Run along now."

In the large outer office they had been awaiting quite eagerly John's reappearance and his speech. A wave of giggling passed over them as John closed the door of Mr. Potter's room—and as they noted John's expression the wave subsided rather suddenly. The new millionaire, apparently, had been having trouble with the head of the firm; without a glance or a word to any of them he had returned to his desk and he was scowling blackly. Could they have penetrated beneath the scowl and read Mr. Harley's true thoughts just then, it is pos-

sible that several of them would have fled the office in terror.

He was fired! Thanks to Aunt Faith and to Potter's conception of the right thing to do, he was without a job—as concerned that ten thousand dollars which must be accumulated before the Stevens-Harley nuptials, he was back at the starting point. From this, by the way, it will be seen that in John's own mind the reconciliation with Helen was already an accomplished fact.

It was his high privilege now to get out and hunt another job at a time when, as Potter had stated, such things were none too plentiful. And having found the position it would be his further task to explain in detail to Aunt Faith just why he had continued working and—oh, to the devil with the whole mess! Mr. Harley glared at his late friends and associates; not less than three of them coughed self-consciously at the same second and abruptly returned to their duties. Mr. Harley glared at his desk and found himself yearning for the society of Harry Wolcott, a sane, unruffled man and a capable thinker; and yearning so, he did brighten a little bit. Monday was Harry's easy day in the tutoring line; very probably he had devoted most of it to a capable analysis of the John Harley matter—which being so, it almost preassumed that he had found the correct answer. John glanced at his watch and was a trifle astonished to find that the hour of two approached. He groaned and set about leaving things in proper shape for the impending Dixon.

Most grateful calm came to Mr. Harley, however, on the four twenty, the swift train which takes the real business aristocracy back to Ebbridge daily. He had spared himself and the rest of them the agony of any formal farewell; he had reached for his hat, had emitted one "G'by" and fled. Now he seemed rather better able to think in a straight line.

For one thing the worst was certainly over. There was nothing left to happen! Having touched bottom, one's incessant effort must be upward, and this effort Mr. Harley would inaugurate by omitting the Wicks dinner ordeal and shutting himself up with Harry Wolcott for the entire even-

ing, until about quarter to ten. From end to end, they'd talk the thing out and plan—and if the thing wasn't all talked out by the time he must leave for Helen's, they'd resume the conversation when he returned and, if need be, keep it up all night!

There was something almost pathetic about the way in which John's faith in Mr. Wolcott grew and grew. Tired eyes closed, he could picture good old Harry impatiently awaiting his return, all ready to outline the perfect solution of the tangle. When he stepped from the four-twenty, he even smiled brightly in anticipation of that great emancipating moment.

Cars of the more expensive variety line up beside Ebbridge station for this train. Right here at the end stood a familiar dark red speed roadster—and Mr. Harley shied suddenly like a frightened horse, for this was Althea, come to meet her father—and ceased his shying and came to a sudden stop, because Althea herself stood before him, all a-glitter!

"Jack!" she breathed. "I knew you'd come on that train! I just felt it!"

"Well, I—I came!" Mr. Harley answered lamely.

A slim arm linked affectionately through his own, for the edification of all who might care to watch. Miss Wicks gazed adoringly up at him.

"I don't think your father's on this train," Mr. Harley mumbled. "I didn't see him."

"And I didn't come to meet him; I came to meet you and take you for a little ride before dinner. You're dining with us, you know. Dad phoned."

"Well, as to that," John gulped. "I think I'll have to beg off, Althea. You see, I have some things to go over with Wolcott to-night that can't be postponed."

"Work?"

"Er—yes, work!"

"Well, as to *that*," said Miss Wicks, as she halted him beside the red car, "you're not going to do it! I shan't allow you to work all day and all night, young man. Do you want to drive?"

"I—no. I think, if you'll just run me up to the inn, Althea—"

"You'll go right to work? Well, you'll

do nothing of the sort!" the girl announced, as the car started. "Now come close to me and tell me everything you've been doing since you deserted me yesterday."

She directed upon him a devastating smile, of the sort for which any sane young man should have been willing to sell his immortal soul. It left John chilly as ever. He had no wish to ride the streets of Ebb-ridge with Althea Wicks this afternoon or any other time; Helen herself might well be somewhere about and, even were Helen safely at home, any number of people might see them and report to Mildred or to Aunt Faith.

In spite of which he managed to talk satisfactorily enough for a while. They were heading out of town, it appeared, and no protest of his could stop them at Ebb-ridge Inn. He looked around—and executed a very violent start.

There, slowing down her own little gray car as she approached from the opposite direction, staring at them with lips parted and face flushed was Mildred Ames! Yes, and she was hailing them, too, for John caught a faint:

"Just coming down to meet you, Jack, and—"

With a frosty little laugh. Miss Wicks stepped on her accelerator and the big red car shot ahead.

"That's the first hint for the little hus-sy!" Althea commented.

"Yes, but I—I think—" John stam-mered.

"That you'd better go back and try to smooth it over, perhaps?"

"Just that, because—"

"You're not going!" Althea laughed triumphantly, as they reached the forty-mile mark on the speedometer. "And I wish you wouldn't stare back like that, either."

"I wanted to see what she was doing?"

"Well?" Miss Wicks said, with abundant good cheer. "What was she doing? She can't catch us, if that's what you're afraid of. Nothing in town can catch me in this thing."

"I'm not afraid of her catching us," Mr. Harley sighed, miserably. "She—er—just turned off."

And she had turned off in the direction of Aunt Faith's, too. Babbling infant that she was, ever ready to blurt out her troubles to the sympathetic ear, Mildred seemed on her way to Miss Harley's—and there was no stopping her now. And there'd be just that many more lies to think up, when it came to the point of explaining to his aunt and to Mildred.

"Now you won't talk to me," commented Althea, slowing and looking up at him. "Dearest, I didn't mean to be horrible, but you don't love her and she can't have you! Can she, dear?"

"She—no!" said Mr. Harley.

The glowing eyes glowed more warmly. It was clear that Althea expected him to make love to her at about this point. John resumed his ordinary conversation quite hurriedly.

The car whirred along. They were out of town, now, and bowling along dirt road, having taken the wide circle past the old mill. They'd come in again at the far side of Ebb-ridge, which really was not so bad, since it would put Mr. Harley into Wolcott's consoling presence a very little after six. Mr. Harley resigned himself to the ride, even slumping down in his seat—and almost at once Mr. Harley sat up again, for coming around a long curve Althea had put on her brakes suddenly. Althea, indeed, stopped with a considerable jar.

"Well, just what," queried Althea, "is the reason for that?"

The victim of his own mendacity caught his breath. Not fifty feet ahead, turned squarely across the road and completely blocking any passage, stood Mildred's gray car, with Mildred herself staring in this direction with perfect calm.

"I say!" Miss Wicks called. "You don't mind moving?"

"I mind it very much!" replied the clear tone of Miss Ames. "I wish to speak to my fiancé, Mr. Harley!"

"Well, you go to some lengths to make sure of it, I must say," Althea laughed unpleasantly. "How in the world did you ever get up here in that time?"

"I took a short cut and beat you to it!" Miss Ames explained. "I wish to speak to Mr. Harley!"

Within that unfortunate gentleman, the very soul seemed to be shriveling and cringing. Some humiliations a man can endure, but to be the bone at which two beautiful young women are quite openly tugging surpasses every other one!

"Althea, if—if you'll just sit here and let me speak to her—" Mr. Harley said hoarsely.

"Why, yes, speak to her by all means!" Althea laughed, audibly and frivolously. "Speak gently; she may be saving our lives—broken bridge ahead or something like that. If she's not, you might quote the highway law, Jack, dear."

Mr. Harley trudged swiftly ahead. Mildred, quite strong in her consciousness of right and justice, was awaiting him with heaving bosom.

"I thought I'd stop that ride!" she said, in an undertone, as he came to the side of the car. "I want you to get in here, Jack!"

"Millie, I can't do that! I—"

"Yes, you can! I won't have you riding around with other girls like that when you're engaged to me. And, especially, I won't have you riding with *her*. Why, that creature's vamped every man in Ebbridge! Joe Foster shot himself last year when she threw him over. Jack, you get in here with me!"

"I can't! I—"

"You don't love me!" Miss Ames's lips trembled suddenly.

"I—yes, I do!" came strangling from Mr. Harley's burning throat.

"No, you don't!" persisted Mildred. "If you did, you'd never—"

"Mildred, there's a lot that I can't explain here," Mr. Harley said, while little beads came to his forehead. "I can't offend her—just now."

"Has she—any *hold* on you?" gasped Miss Ames, and turned almost the right color for fainting.

"Hold? Of—of course she has no hold. It's her—er—father—business—"

"I don't see why you have to go joy-riding with *her* to do business with her father."

"No, naturally; and that's what I can't explain here."

"Why can't you?" Miss Ames persisted.

"Be—be—because it would take too long. Isn't that enough—dear?"

"No, it's not!" Mildred retorted. "I don't think it's a bit nice of you to have that sort of business. And I don't see why you let her look at you as she was looking, down there in town, and I don't see why *you* have to look at *her* that way, either!"

"I wasn't looking at her that way, Millie. I—"

"Oh, yes you were!" Miss Ames corrected. "I saw you!" And here she regarded Miss Wicks with lips compressed and nostrils dilated. "I don't blame you so much, Jack, but she—I think I'll go over and scratch out her horrible black eyes and teach her a lesson!"

Be it remembered that an elderly lady's life depended upon her blissful ignorance of distressing conditions. Be it said, too, that red-hot shame of an almost unendurable intensity gripped Mr. Harley as he did it—but with a suppressed gasp he leaned on the door of Mildred's car and looked up at her with a soulful gaze that held every quality essential to the situation.

"Dearest!" he breathed. "You can do me a lot of harm by being silly in just that way. You—you don't believe in me, Millie!"

"I do, Jack!" said Mildred, and her gentle eyes filled. "And I'd die rather than hurt you. Only I don't see why *she* has to drive you—"

"And that's just what I'm going to tell you as soon as ever we have an hour alone, and you'll see how foolishly you're acting now and we—we'll laugh about it together. Only for the present, if you'll just have a lot of faith in me and let me finish this confounded ride, I promise you that it shall never happen again!"

"Surely, Jack?" Miss Ames pressed his hand.

"Very surely indeed!" John said, with genuine force.

One more long, hostile stare Miss Ames permitted herself in the direction of Althea, who was leaning on her wheel just then and looking bored and amused.

"I'll trust you, Jack!" said Mildred, and started her engine.

"And don't mention this to Aunt Faith, by the way. We can't afford to fret her."

"If ever you do anything like this again, I'll tell Aunt Faith!" Miss Ames responded warningly. "I—I can't even kiss you good-by with that black thing staring at us." She backed the car with a petulant jerk and prepared to leave. "You're coming to see me to-night?"

"I am if I possibly can. If I don't get around until to-morrow night, don't worry, dear. Business—"

Miss Ames merely tossed her head at the word. An instant she looked at Mr. Harley all the things, kindly and otherwise, that she felt. Then she sped away.

John returned, quivering, to the red car, the painfully clean and decent part of him seared and writhing. Had there been a convenient pistol, he fancied that he would have placed it firmly against his right temple and pulled the trigger with much vigor and enthusiasm. There being none, he climbed in beside Miss Wicks again, head down.

"Gracious!" said that young woman. "Quite broken your spirit, hasn't it?"

"I don't like that sort of thing!" Mr. Harley grunted.

"Then you ought to be more careful and not let designing little cats like that think they've trapped you, precious," Althea said, and patted his cheek. "Don't worry about that shallow little moron another minute; she's beginning to understand the dreadful catastrophe that is about to come into her young life; I saw that in her eye. What did she say, by the way?"

"Oh—she just wanted me to ride with her."

"And you refused. Well, that's a very good, well-behaved little boy," commended Miss Wicks. "We'll just lounge along behind and let her get well ahead. What were you telling me about when that fool thing happened, Jackie?"

"I give it up; I don't remember," John said dismally.

Some little time Miss Wicks rolled slowly on in silence. Mr. Harley beside her slumped down again, but it was no comfortable posture this time; it was merely the sickened droop of a young man whose

very vitals were smoldering in the fire of shame.

Once upon a time in Ebbridge there had been a youth named Bostwick, a being too beautiful to live, over whom several girls had grown quite irresponsible. The high enjoyment with which Bostwick had viewed this deplorable condition had placed him, in John's estimation, several strata below the ordinary earth worm. Well, he was no better than Bostwick, now! Here on a back road two girls had all but come to battle over the possession of him and—ugh!

He craved Wolcott, sober thinker and unflinching friend, the one steady and dependable spot in a crazy, reeling world. Why in Heaven's name couldn't she hurry him back to Wolcott, instead of lagging along like this? He sighed rather noisily. Once he got to good old Wolcott, they'd lock the door and go to it! They'd even have dinner sent up to the rooms, for the crowd and the noise in the inn dining room would be certain to slow down their discussion. Yes, they'd have a darned light dinner sent up, too, for much food clogs the brain and much precious time must be given to its assimilation and—

"Honey boy, whatever makes you sigh like that?" Miss Wicks asked.

"Was I sighing?" John muttered.

"Like a furnace! You're worrying about her, aren't you?"

"Mildred? Er—no!"

"Ah, I thought you were. Jackie, I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll tell dad the whole story and let him deal with it in his own way!"

"Hey?" Mr. Harley sat up.

"Oh, he can handle it, dearest!" Althea assured John. "Dad's a regular cyclone when he gets wound up. He'll go to the little idiot's father and lay down the law—and that's really all there'll be to it, and then you and I can be just as contented and happy and—"

"Well, I won't let you do anything like that!" John cried violently. "That'll get to Aunt Faith, of course, and probably—no, I won't let you do anything like that!"

Bumping along at a snail's pace, Miss Althea considered him thoughtfully for a moment; her teeth showed then in a smile.

"Nevertheless, I think I'll tell him at dinner!" she said.

"No!"

"But I'll have to, Jack. What else will there be to talk about? *You* won't be there."

"Eh?"

"No, you have so much business to look after, dear—"

And the eyes were sparkling quite triumphantly.

John Harley felt himself shrinking and quivering again.

"Al—Althea," he mumbled, "if I—cut out business and come for dinner, you won't feel it necessary to tell your father about this—this beastly rot?"

"Of course not!" Miss Wicks smiled, promptly.

Mr. Harley shuddered.

"You'd better let me get home and dress, then," he said.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



OUR WESTERN GATEWAY

OH, the Bay of San Francisco, here is where the dream-ships ride;
Here you find fair, white-sailed fancies floating on the amber tide,
Purple visions, crimson fantasies, at anchor side by side.

Golden Gate and Angel Island, Tamalpais and Berkeley Hills—
See them from the yellow waters, 'neath a sky of daffodils,
Here is theme for song and story, rapture for a thousand thrills!

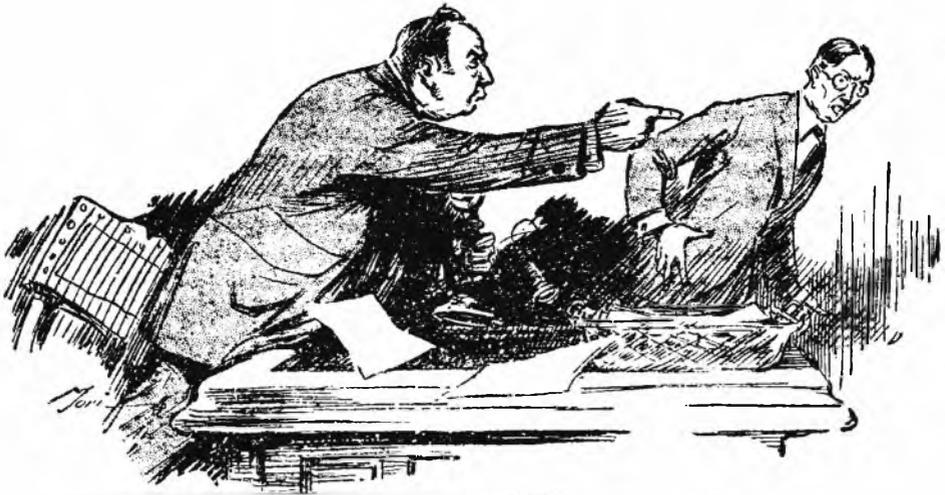
Turn to south and see the city silhouetted on the sky,
Lonely Alcatraz that watches gull and galleon floating by;
Note the amethystine Coast Range down the valley fade and die!

Draw still nearer to the marshes where the tules whisper tales
Of the Ceres-guarded valleys and the Bacchus-haunted vales
Set with crumbling shrines that mark the pious padre's tear-stained trails.

Oh, the Bay of San Francisco, with its poppy-broidered rim
And its grand old forest gardens in the distance, dark and dim—
Poets, listen! Is that music of the songs of seraphim,

Or the chords of old romances in each breeze and billow wrought,
Melodies of Eldorado in the air with magic fraught,
Flutter of the sails that hither brought the daring argonaut?

Clarence Urmy.



Soap and Sophistry

By ERIC HOWARD

AMOS JUDSON, president and general manager of Judson & Co., was worried. Another firm, the General Supply Company, had had the nerve, the audacity, the blankety blank foolhardiness, to attempt to compete with the one and only Amos Judson!

Amos was worried, but he was still Amos, which is another way of saying that he was still fighting. The monopoly he had built up was the product of a long and victorious conflict; now that his monopoly was threatened, he meant to renew the battle. He was worried only about the choice of weapons.

"See here, Chisholm," he said to his figurehead of a manager, who was also a suave yesser and a skillful passer of the buck, "I think I've got it! Listen! We've been resting on our laurels for the past few years, secure in our knowledge that Judson Superfine soap was absolutely the best product that could be made and sold at ten cents a cake. We've been alone in the field, the only makers of good soap whose business was of such volume that we could

sell a quality product at a low price. The last people in the world I thought we had to fear—not that I fear 'em!—was the General Supply. Good Lord, what do they know about good soap? Why don't they stick to their kitchens and laundries? Why do they suddenly jump into the fine soap trade? Why, I ask you?"

"Why, sir?" echoed Chisholm in his best echoing tone. He knew that Amos frequently used rhetorical questions, and he suspected that this was one of them.

It was.

"Why?" repeated old Judson, running a nervous hand through his gray hair. "Why? Because, by accident or design, they've stumbled onto a soap-making process that equals ours! Because they've the money to advertise it in a spectacular way! They've got something, right enough, and I'd like to know what it is! I used a bar of their Violette this morning, and for the first time in my life I knew that *somebody* else could make as good a soap as Judson's Superfine. We've got to find out how they do it!"

"Yes, sir," agreed Chisholm. "I quite agree with you."

Judson abruptly sat down and leaned forward, his bony index finger pointed directly at the manager. His voice fell from the rhetorical pitch to a confidential tone.

"Listen! Have we got a man we can trust? One that's absolutely loyal to the interests of Judson & Co.?"

"Plenty of them, I venture to say."

"I want one we're sure of—one that's been with us for some time—one that's keen and knows the business, and one that we can get into the General Supply Company without them knowing where he's from. That means he'll have to be inconspicuous. Who do you suggest?"

"Bennett?" said Chisholm tentatively. "Brooks? Sedgwick?"

"No, no, no! Bennett's too well known. Brooks's eyes are too close together—never did like him, although I guess he's a good enough man for his job. Sedgwick? H-m! He's pretty young—hasn't been with us long. Let me see, you recommended him, didn't you? Connection of yours?"

"Not exactly. Not yet. He's engaged to my wife's sister."

"Oh. Trustworthy? Sure of him?"

"Quite. He feels that he owes me a lot."

"H-m! Pretty young, though. And they might find out he knows you. Can't be too careful. Perfectly legitimate, of course, but we can't be too careful. Haven't a doubt but that they did the same to us. No—it's got to be somebody inconspicuous, simple-looking but keen and loyal. We ought to have a man of that stamp. Haven't we?"

"Why—er—let me see!" Chisholm's smooth brow wrinkled into an outward semblance of deep thought. Suddenly he burst out laughing. "We've got a man who fits part of the requirements perfectly," he said. "He's as inconspicuous as an oyster and as loyal as a one-man dog! And he knows the business from bottom to top. But I'm afraid he isn't very keen."

"Who?"

"Little old Denny." Mere mention of the man caused Chisholm to laugh.

"Dan Denny!" snapped Amos Judson. "The very man! Funny I didn't think of

him myself. But he's so inconspicuous nobody would think of him. And don't make any mistake about him being keen! He was keen enough in his mild way to steal the best secretary I ever had. Send him in, Chisholm—send him in!"

Thus it happened that "little old Denny," who was neither very old nor below the average size, but who had seemed so ever since he entered the employ of Judson & Co. as a young shipping clerk, was summoned to the shrine of soap.

In conveying the message of Amos Judson, Chisholm chose to be facetious.

"The old man wants you, Danny Denny," said he. "I think he's going to offer you a half partnership, because you're the champion human adding machine."

Little old Denny slid off his stool in the cashier's cage, nervously smoothed his colorless hair, adjusted his tie so the frayed edge would not show, and looked at Chisholm through his spectacles. They gave his eyes a mild, pale-blue appearance, even when, as now, he was seeing red. He blushed and, trembling, shuffled to the private office of Amos Judson.

"Did you want me, sir?" he asked furiously, as he saw Amos bent over his desk in thought. He was ready to spring out through the open door if the old man should bark one of his violent negatives.

"Sit down, Denny."

And little old Denny moved warily to the chair beside the flat-topped desk. He sat on its edge, his legs trembling like those of a sprinter as he toes the mark. He *was* as inconspicuous as an oyster; Chisholm had not libeled him there. His blue serge suit was the exact copy of a million other blue serge suits in the city of New York. His face, rather finely formed, was utterly commonplace. In his whole appearance, even under close scrutiny, there was only one conspicuous thing—and that was his inconspicuousness.

In a peremptory tone of command Amos Judson told Denny what he wanted. There was no flattery in his selection of Denny. He told him frankly that it was because "nobody ever notices you."

"I can fix up a letter of introduction and reference—all that sort of thing—from

the Wilson Company, in Chicago, and undoubtedly you'll get the job. You'll be right on the inside, and with your knowledge of the business details it will be no task at all for you to find out how they make their Violette, what it costs them, how much they're going to spend on advertising, and all that. I want you to start right away. You can take the rest of the week off, and meanwhile I'll wire Wilson to send me the letters you'll need. Then you can apply for the job Monday, and start to work right off. It oughtn't to take you more than a couple of months, and then there will be something good waiting for you here. That's all, I guess. How's Dorothy and the baby?"

Little old Denny, who hadn't said a word so far, gulped and nodded.

"They're all right, thanks. Yes, they're all right. But—"

"Good! Very well—this is Tuesday. Have a good time, and come in early Monday morning. I'll have the Wilson letters for you."

Little old Denny did not mistake the finality of his dismissal. Mechanically he rose and walked to the door. There, for a barely perceptible moment, he hesitated, groping to express a doubt that was growing within him. He half turned, saw that Judson was again buried in his correspondence, and then faltered out.

"Well, how's it feel to be a partner?" asked Chisholm as he returned to his desk.

But Denny was too preoccupied either to respond or to see red. For an hour thereafter he blinked unseeingly at the work before him. A thunderbolt had struck him—his placid, methodical mind was a chaos of confusion. Dorothy, the baby, the peremptory old man, the price of soap, the secret of Violette, something good waiting for him when he came back, four days' vacation, a grave doubt, a grave fear—persons and things, tangible and intangible, sped confusingly through his mind.

Somehow he got through the morning, although he did not get through his work. At noon he drifted inconspicuously out to lunch, from sheer force of habit. As was his custom, he went to one of those convenient buffet lunch rooms which are rather

plentiful in lower Manhattan, and where the amount of one's check depends entirely upon one's self.

He took his place on a stool before a counter and ordered his meal. From the menu before him he knew that it would cost thirty-five cents, which was what he usually spent for lunch. Beside him sat a round-faced, heavy man in a black and white check suit. Absentmindedly, Denny observed the meal the other man ordered, and in his arithmetical habit calculated its cost at eighty cents. In his confused state of mind this meant nothing at all to Denny, but when he left the lunch room he saw the other man passing the checker just ahead of him.

"Thirty-five cents," said he who had eaten an eighty-cent lunch.

Denny, next in line, blinked and stammered as the check girl waited for him to state what his own meal had cost.

"Eighty cents," he got out at last, and then, realizing the mistake he had made, went on, afraid to correct it.

He paid for the round-faced man's meal, and heard the forty-five cents for which he had received no value clink into the cashier's drawer. A sudden rage possessed him, and he looked downright belligerent as he made his way to the street, giving the round-faced man, who had stopped to light an expensive cigar, a glance of bitter contempt. How any one could be mean enough to take advantage of an honor system such as the restaurant used Denny could not understand. He could have excused it, had the man been in need. But he wasn't; he fairly exuded prosperity, and except for dire need there was no excuse for dishonesty. He despised the men who would resort to it; he didn't envy them what they gained by it.

He stopped suddenly. His confusion of the morning left him. Doubt and fear were forgotten in a swift realization of what his employer had asked him to do. He hurried back to the office, his jaw tense, his chin out, leaning forward a trifle in his eagerness to follow the path his conscience bade him take.

Amos Judson frequently lunched in his office. When the little old Denny burst in

upon him he was in the act of lifting a graham cracker to his lips with his left hand while his right closed about a glass of milk. He dropped the cracker and released his hold on the glass at sight of Denny.

"I can't do what you asked me to do this morning," said Denny swiftly and defiantly.

Nothing angered Judson quite so much as defiance.

"Why can't you?" he growled. "Didn't I tell you there would be something good for you here when you came back? I suppose you want it more definite, eh? All right. Do it right—find out all you can about the General Supply's methods—and you'll have seventy-five per on the Judson pay roll."

In spite of himself, Denny gasped. Seventy-five dollars a week! In terms of Dorothy and the baby it would mean everything that they had denied themselves. From thirty-five to seventy-five dollars a week would be a jump from penury to affluence. The very thought of it made him dizzy.

"That's not it at all, sir," he said, less defiantly. "I wasn't thinking about the money. It's the—er—the principle of the thing. It don't seem honest to me. I'm not a spy, and I can't do a thing like that."

"Oh, that's it?" Amos Judson chuckled. "I see. Why, lookahere, it's perfectly legitimate! You don't think I'd ask you to do a dishonest thing, do you? You know me better than that, Denny, the years you've been here. This is just a matter of business. I haven't a doubt in the world but that the General Supply learned a lot from us, and it's only tit for tat that we should learn from them. It's competition. It's a trick of the trade, that's all. Everybody does it. Why, afterward, when I meet Hodgkins—he's president of General Supply, you know—I'll tell him all about it. And I'll bet he'll laugh and tell me how he had one of his men working for me."

Little old Denny groped for the sophistry that he was sure lurked behind his employer's words. He knew Amos Judson was an honest man; he ought to know he wouldn't ask him to do anything dishonest.

And, as Amos said, everybody did it. It was a trick of the trade. And yet he knew that there was a hidden falsity behind the apparent truth. If he hadn't observed the man in the lunch room doing something that was also a trick of the trade, something that he knew from office gossip a lot of men did, he might have been convinced. But he wasn't.

"Just because everybody does it is no excuse," he said platonically. "I don't think it's honest. It's like stealing, sir, and I can't do it."

"I know what you want!" old Judson laughed. "You want to hold me up for a better offer. Well, that's business, too. I'll go as high as eighty a week, but not a cent higher!"

Again Denny staggered before the mention of so large a sum. Eighty dollars a week! He was sorely tempted to grin and admit that he was holding out for money.

"No, sir—it isn't money at all. It's the principle, sir. It's dishonest, and I won't do it."

He did not intend to be rebellious, but he was.

The smile left Judson's face.

"You won't, eh? Then listen to me!" He rose and towered over Denny. "I've never been accused of dishonesty before, and I don't intend to be now! You're too lily white to be in the soap business, or any other business where competition rules. I advise you to resign in about ten minutes and draw your last check. If you don't, you're fired. Get out!"

Amos snatched up his desk phone and called Chisholm.

"Send young Sedgwick in. I guess he's the man I want for this job. I'm letting Denny go—see that he's paid in full and give him an extra week's wages. He'll need it all right."

He turned to glare at the object of his wrath, but little old Denny had already fled.

II.

DENNY had been for so long a fixture in the office of Judson & Co. that he had never considered what he should do if removed from his position. Now he felt like

a worn-out, discarded piece of furniture, fit only for the shop of a second-hand dealer. As he rode home in an empty subway train, early in the afternoon, his mathematical mind busied itself with the debit and credit columns of his resources. His savings had shrunk to a trifle over two hundred dollars since the birth of Dan, Jr. He had seen that Dorothy and the baby had the best of care, and only during the past two weeks had he been able to make his usual savings deposit. With nothing coming in and the usual expenses to meet, two hundred dollars could not possibly be stretched over more than two months.

He called himself an impulsive fool for having angered the old man, for having turned down seventy-five, eighty, dollars a week because of a "lily-white" scruple. He wondered what Dorothy would say to him when he told her. She had been Judson's private secretary; she knew him almost as well as she knew Denny; maybe she wouldn't understand why he had refused to do as Amos wanted him to. The fear that she wouldn't understand, that she would see it from Judson's viewpoint and think Denny silly, frightened him. He wondered if a man wasn't justified in practicing any trick of the trade, any dishonesty, if in doing so he could provide comforts and happiness for his own loved ones.

Dorothy was sewing when he entered the flat. She looked up in surprise when he came in.

"Are you sick, Dan?"

"No—I don't know. No—not sick, just fired." He smiled tentatively.

"Fired?" she echoed. "Don't be silly, Dan!"

It was preposterous, impossible.

"Yes," he nodded. "Fired, requested to resign, kicked out, canned. Listen, Dot."

He sat down beside her, took her hand in his, and told her what had happened. When he came to his final interview with Amos Judson, and his chin jutted out as he re-enacted his rebellion, Dorothy glanced at him out of the corner of her eyes and smiled. And when he came to the end of the story she leaned over and kissed him softly.

"Good!" she whispered. "I'm glad you did!"

His heart leaped. She understood how he felt about it. She was proud of him. It was altogether too wonderful that he should be married to such a girl.

Then they fell to talking of ways and means, other jobs to be had, economies they might practice without knowing it, until the baby awoke from his afternoon nap and ordered them to his crib with cries that demanded obedience.

As the days passed and hope sprang diurnal in the Denny household, Daniel, Sr., made the weary rounds of trade. But everywhere he found conditions as they were at the Judson office. Few men were being employed; many were dismissed. There seemed to be three men for every vacancy he heard of, and invariably it was one of the other two that was chosen. Denny had got into a rut; before the managers to whom he applied for work he acted as he did toward Chisholm. He had so little confidence in himself that they had none in him.

After a week of futile job-seeking he went home one afternoon, more worried and perplexed than ever, and found a gentleman named Gage waiting for him.

"I'm from the General Supply Company," said Gage. "I want to have a little talk with you. You've been with Judson for a good many years, haven't you?"

"Yes," Denny admitted, wonderingly. He had not applied to the General Supply Company for work, because he had vaguely felt that it would lead to unpleasant results. Either they would not want a man who had worked for their chief competitor, or they would want him for reasons other than his ability as an accountant. "Yes," he admitted again, "a good many years."

Dorothy, at a glance from Gage that seemed to request that they be left alone, went out of the living room.

"I understand you know the Judson business pretty well, Mr. Denny?" Gage observed.

"Well—well, I don't know. Yes, I suppose so. I've worked in most of the departments at one time and another. Yes, I know the business from top to bottom, as you might say."

"We can use you," Gage said. "We've got a place for you in our consulting depart-

ment. How'd you like a hundred dollars a week, eh?"

Denny blinked his astonishment.

"What would be my work?" he asked, striving to speak calmly.

"The easiest thing in the world!" Gage winked again. "We'd just want to consult you now and then about how Judson & Co. does one or two things. For instance, we'd like to know something about their Superfine Soap. You know we're going into the fine soap business, and we need all the inside dope we can get."

"And that's worth a hundred dollars a week, is it?" asked Denny. His voice became strangely decisive. "For how many weeks?"

"Why, for as long as we need you. That mostly depends on you, I guess. If you make good the boss is no piker. I'd say you could stretch out this consulting job over three months, and by that time there'd be something else you could fit into. Look at me! That's the way I got my start. I used to be with Dells-Naptha. Now I've got a life job! What do you say?"

Little old Denny got up. For a moment he did not speak. It seemed to Gage that he was gravely considering the offer. As a matter of fact, however, he was only struggling for self-control.

The struggle was unsuccessful. He turned suddenly on the winking, complacent Gage.

"Get out of here!" he shouted, half choking with rage. "Get out and never come back, you rotten little sneak!"

And Gage, his mouth open in surprise before the upraised fists of Denny, backed toward the door, felt for its knob and fled incontinently down the hall. Alone again, Denny sank into a chair and held his bursting head in his hands. His rage of a moment before, as uncontrollable as the tide, receded before the realization that again he had turned down an offer of royal wages for a scruple that may have done him honor, although it did not provide milk for Dan, Jr.

III.

IT was when only fifty dollars of the Denny savings remained that little Dan fell

sick. It was not serious, but it necessitated calling a physician and purchasing supplies they otherwise would not have needed. Added to the six weeks of unsuccessful search for employment, with his consequent feeling of worthlessness, the illness of the child was almost transmitted to the father.

Denny came home after a more hopeless day than usual and surprised Dorothy seated before a borrowed typewriter. A girl friend, a public stenographer with more work than she could do, had loaned her the machine and given her some work. Dorothy had intended to keep it from her husband, but now she had to admit that it seemed the only way to meet their unexpected expenses.

"Now don't be silly about it, Dan. It's no hardship for me to type a few hours while the baby's asleep and there's no reason why I shouldn't do it now that we need the money. And to-morrow—or the next day at the latest—when you get that wonderful new job, we'll neither of us have to worry again. The baby's sleeping beautifully now, and the doctor says he'll be healthy and hungry to-morrow."

But little old Denny did choose to be silly about it. He didn't argue the matter with Dorothy, and he smiled hopefully when she spoke of the job she was sure he would get in a day or two. But he knew all too well that jobs were scarce and that he had called on every firm that could be remotely expected to hire him.

He lay awake most of the night, thinking of what a fool he had been, yet not sorry that he had acted as he had. He thought of Dorothy working and keeping house and caring for the baby. He thought of Amos Judson, bitterly, angrily; and yet there was more anger in his thoughts of the General Supply Company and Mr. Gage.

As the hours passed, and he tried to get down to what he would have called brass tacks, the possibility of finding work seemed more and more remote. Insidiously the thought recurred to him that he was a fool and that he'd better go to the General Supply people and become one of their consulting department. He'd be in good company there, among successful, prosperous men like Gage. He remembered that he had insulted Gage, that he had ordered him

from the house. But he felt that Gage wouldn't hold that against him if he proved a willing tool. One hundred dollars a week! He could at least say for the General Supply that they paid a higher price for dishonesty than Judson.

Why not take their offer? It would only serve Judson right for the way he had treated him. It would be a legitimate trick of the trade, a good business stroke. And if Judson heard about it later on he couldn't say anything because he had tried to play the same game himself.

Well, he would do it, Denny decided. Then he turned over and tried to sleep. But sleep did not come. He wasn't sure of his decision. While one side of him told him he was an indecisive fool, another insisted that he couldn't do a thing like that.

He got up early, exhausted from the long struggle. But he had at least come to one conclusion, and he meant to go through with it. He decided to call on Amos Judson, tell him just what his circumstances were and if necessary beg him for reinstatement in the office. He would ask that favor, the chance to do the same work he had done before at the same low wages, for the sake of Dorothy and the baby. He would give old Judson a chance to do the decent thing, and then—well, if Amos Judson again ordered him out of the office he would go to the General Supply Company and become a well-paid consultant.

He wondered whether he should tell Judson of the rival company's offer. He decided not to, for that would be a kind of blackmail. No, he wouldn't resort to such a trick. He would simply ask the old man for a chance to do the work he had done satisfactorily for years. He would tell him what he was up against, but that was as far as he would go. After that he felt he would be justified in selling out to the General Supply. But he had to give Amos another chance.

Little old Denny started out bravely enough, but long before he reached the Judson building he was tempted to turn back. He dreaded meeting old Amos, and if he should see Chisholm he thought he would die of embarrassment. But he held himself to the task, for he couldn't go to the other

company until he had given his old employer a chance.

The girl at the outer desk knew him and he passed her with a mumbled good morning. He avoided every one else, and walked directly to Judson's private office. At the door he paused, and summoned all his will to help him through the coming ordeal. He turned the knob and entered.

Amos Judson, looking unaccountably old, was at his desk writing. He did not look up until Denny coughed. Then his mouth opened in surprise and he seemed about to speak. Denny stepped forward, close to the desk, and began first.

"Mr. Judson, please give me a few minutes," he pleaded. "I won't take more than that. I've come to ask for my old job back. That's all I want, a chance to do the work I can do at living wages. I've got to have something to do. I haven't much money left. The baby's been sick and Dorothy is worried. Why, last night I found her typing—some work she took just for the sake of a few dollars. And work is mighty scarce. I can't get anything; I've been everywhere, I guess, and always turned down. I'm worth more to you than I am to anybody else, because I know the business. I don't think you ever found anything wrong with my work, and if you'd only forget that—that disagreement—we had I thought maybe you'd take me back. It's more for Dorothy and little Dan than me."

It wasn't exactly what he meant to say, but the words tumbled out that way. Amos looked at him steadily, but did not speak, and it seemed to Denny that there was a malicious sparkle in the old man's eyes.

"Huh!" he grunted at last. "Back again, are you? So you think you're worth more to me than to anybody else, eh? Huh!"

Denny did not speak, but a flush rose to his cheeks and his jaw tensed. It would serve Judson right if he went to the General Supply. It would—

"Sit down!" Amos bellowed, and from force of habit Denny obeyed.

"Now listen to me!" his former employer went on. "I'm not going to take you back at your old wages. I'm not going to give

you your old job back. You can plead all you like, but I won't do it!" He paused, and Denny half rose, wrath clouding his vision.

"No, I won't do it," the old man repeated, in a suddenly different tone, his bony forefinger pointed at Denny. "Because from now on you're going to have Chisholm's job! You're manager of Judson & Co.! And your salary will be the same as his—no, it will be ten dollars better than his! I was just writing you a note of apology when you came in—I was too darned proud to dictate it, and now that you're here I won't give you the satisfaction of reading it!"

With a savage gesture Amos tossed the paper into his waste basket.

"But—but—why, what about Chisholm?" stammered Denny, wondering if Judson was indulging a new cruelty. "Why should I—"

"Chisholm," Judson laughed grimly,

"sold out to the General Supply. So did Sedgwick, the man I sent to work there. You didn't, even when they offered you a hundred a week! Sure I know about it! Their president, Hodgkins, told me. He said you were the first man he could remember that they couldn't buy. No, you wouldn't take their hundred, but you came back here to beg me for the thirty-five you were getting. Well, Dan Denny, you've taught me something—something I had forgotten from the old copy books. But I won't forget it again. From now on my business is going to be just like my soap—pure! I'm ordering the advertisement department to tell the public just what goes into Superfine, and we'll dare every other soap to do the same! In a month we'll have the General Supply's Violette washing dishes, where it belongs! Won't we?"

"We sure will! I'll say so!" said little old Denny, and he was not merely "yessing" the boss.

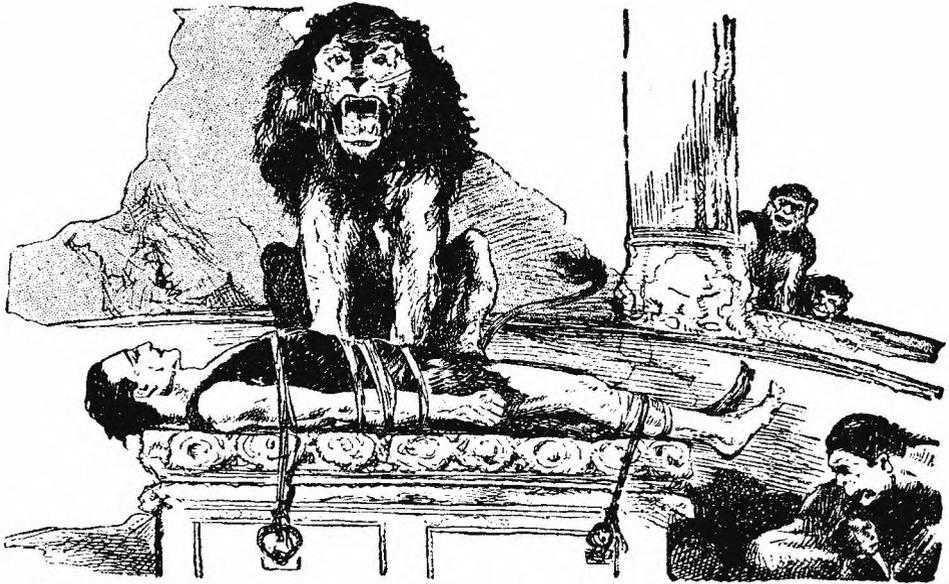


A N T I P O D E S

THE peacock, spreading wide his tail,
 Struts with a great pomposity
 Along the garden terrace rail,
 Nor dreams he's a monstrosity.
 His snake-like head, his beady eye
 He twists with great rapidity,
 Then uttering a piercing cry,
 He halts, in sheer stupidity!

Now, in the garden beds below,
 With much regard to shape and spacing,
 Are neatly planted row by row
 Calm flowers, perfect in their placing,
 Much larger than the common kind
 And very smug in their completeness.
 Quite beautiful. But you will find
 Without a tiny breath of sweetness!

Dorothy Caruso.



Tarzan and the Golden Lion*

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Author of the *Tarzan Tales*, the *Martian Stories*, "The Girl from Hollywood," etc.

CHAPTER XVI (continued).

THE DIAMOND HOARD.

SEVERAL of those about him could ill conceal the shocked surprise they felt at his sacrilegious attitude toward their High Priestess. However little they thought of Oah, the fact remained that she had been elevated to the highest place among them, and those that believed that La was dead, as Cadj had taken great pains to lead them all to believe, gave in the full to Oah the reverence to which her high office entitled her.

"Have a care, Cadj," warned one of the older priests. "There is a limit beyond which not even you may pass."

"You dare threaten me?" cried Cadj, the maniacal fury of fanaticism gleaming in his

eye. "You dare threaten me, Cadj, the High Priest of the Flaming God?" And as he spoke he leaped toward the offending man, the sacrificial knife raised menacingly above his head, and just at that moment a little gray monkey came chattering and screaming through an embrasure in the wall overlooking the court of the temple.

"The bolgani! The bolgani!" he shrieked. "They come! They come!"

Cadj stopped and wheeled toward Manu, the hand that held the knife dropping at his side. "You saw them, Manu?" he asked. "You are speaking the truth? If this is another of your tricks you will not live to play another joke upon Cadj."

"I speak the truth," chattered the little monkey. "I saw them with my own eyes."

"How many of them are there?" asked

This story began in the Argosy-Allatory Weekly for December 9.

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Cadj. "And how near to Opar have they come?"

"There are as many as the leaves upon the trees," replied Manu, "and they are already close to the temple wall—the bolgani and the gomangani, they come as the grasses that grow in the ravines."

Cadj turned and raised his face toward the sun, and throwing back his head gave voice to a long-drawn scream that ended in a piercing shriek. Three times he voiced the hideous cry, and then with a command to the others in the court to follow him he started at a brisk trot toward the palace proper. As Cadj directed his steps toward the ancient avenue upon which the palace of Opar faced there issued from every corridor and doorway groups of knurled and hairy men of Opar, armed with their heavy bludgeons and their knives. Screaming and chattering in the trees above them were a score or more of little gray monkeys.

"Not here," they cried, "not here!" and pointed toward the south side of the city.

Like an undisciplined mob the horde of priests and warriors reentered the palace at Cadj's heels, and retraced their steps toward the opposite side of the edifice. Here they scrambled to the summit of the lofty wall which guards the palace, just as Tarzan's forces came to a halt outside.

"Rocks! Rocks!" screamed Cadj, and in answer to his commands the women in the courtyard below commenced to gather the loose fragments of stone that had crumbled from the walls and from the palace, and to toss them up to the warriors above.

"Go away!" screamed Cadj to the army outside his gates. "Go away! I am Cadj, High Priest of the Flaming God, and this is his temple. Defile not the temple of the Flaming God or you shall know his wrath."

Tarzan stepped forward a little ahead of the others, and raised his hand for silence.

"La, your High Priestess and your Queen is here," he cried to the Oparians upon the wall. "Cadj is a traitor and an impostor. Open your gates and receive your Queen. Give up the traitors to justice, and no harm will befall you: but refuse La entry to her city and we shall take by force and with bloodshed that which belongs to La rightfully."

As he ceased speaking La stepped to his side that all her people might see her, and immediately there were scattering cries for La and a voice or two raised against Cadj. Evidently realizing that it would not take much to turn the scale against him, Cadj shrieked to his men to attack, and simultaneously launched a stone at Tarzan. Only the wondrous agility that he possessed saved the Ape-man, and the missile passed by, and striking a gomangani over the heart, felled him. Instantly a shower of missiles fell upon them, and then Tarzan called to his followers to charge.

Roaring and growling, the bolgani and the gomangani leaped forward to the attack. Cat-like they ran up the rough wall in the face of the menacing bludgeons above. Tarzan, who had chosen Cadj as his objective, was among the first to reach the summit. A hairy, crooked warrior struck at him with a bludgeon, and hanging to the summit of the wall with one hand, Tarzan caught the weapon in the other and wrested it from his assailant. At the same time he saw Cadj turn and disappear from the summit of the wall into the courtyard beyond.

Then Tarzan drew himself to the top where he was immediately engaged by two other warriors of Opar. With the weapon he had wrested from their fellow he knocked them to right and left, so great an advantage his great height and strength gave him over them, and then, remembering only that Cadj who was the ringleader of the revolt against La must not be permitted to escape, Tarzan leaped to the pavement below just as the High Priest disappeared through an archway at the opposite end of the courtyard.

Some priests and priestesses sought to impede his progress. Seizing one of the former by the ankles he swung the body in circles about him, clearing his own pathway as he ran for the opposite end of the courtyard, and there he halted and wheeled, and putting all the strength of his great muscles into the effort, he swung the body of the priest once more and hurled it back into the faces of his pursuers.

Without waiting to note the effect of his act he turned again and continued in pur-

suit of Cadj. The fellow kept always just ahead of him, because Cadj knew his way through the labyrinthian mazes of the palace and temple and courtyards better than Tarzan. That the trail was leading toward the inner courts of the temple Tarzan was convinced. There Cadj would find easy ingress to the pits beneath the palace and a hiding place from which it would be difficult to dislodge him, so numerous and winding were the dark subterranean tunnels. And so Tarzan put forth every effort to reach the sacrificial court in time to prevent Cadj from gaining the comparative safety of the underground passages. And as he finally leaped through the doorway into the court, a noose, cunningly laid, closed about one of his ankles and he was hurled heavily to the ground. Almost instantly a number of the crooked little men of Opar leaped upon him, where he lay, half-stunned by the fall, and before he had fully regained his faculties they had trussed him securely.

Only about half conscious, he felt them raise him from the ground and carry him, and presently he was deposited upon a cold stone surface. Then it was that full consciousness returned to him, and he realized that he lay outstretched once more upon the sacrificial altar of the inner court of the Temple of the Flaming God and above him stood Cadj the High Priest, his cruel face contorted in a grimace of hate.

"At last!" gloated the creature of hate. "This time, Tarzan of the Apes, you shall know the fury not of the Flaming God, but of Cadj, the man; nor shall there be any wait nor any interference."

He swung the sacrificial knife high above his head. Beyond the point of the knife Tarzan of the Apes saw the summit of the courtyard wall, and just surmounting it the head and shoulders of a mighty, black-maned lion.

"Jad-bal-ja!" he cried. "Kill! Kill!"

Cadj hesitated, his knife poised on high. He saw the direction of the Ape-man's eyes and followed them, and in that instant the golden lion leaped to the pavement, and with two mighty bounds was upon the High Priest of Opar. The knife clattered to the floor and the great jaws closed upon the horrid face.

The lesser priests who had seized Tarzan and who had remained to witness his death at the hands of Cadj, had fled screaming from the court the instant that the golden lion had leaped upon their master, and now Tarzan and Jad-bal-ja and the corpse of Cadj were the sole occupants of the sacrificial courtyard of the temple.

"Come, Jad-bal-ja," commanded Tarzan; "let no one harm Tarzan of the Apes."

An hour later the victorious forces of La were overrunning the ancient palace and temples of Opar. The priests and warriors who had not been killed had quickly surrendered and acknowledged La as their Queen and High Priestess, and now at La's command the city was being searched for Tarzan and Cadj. It was thus that La herself, leading a searching party, entered the sacrificial courtyard.

The sight that met her eyes brought her to a sudden halt, for there, bound upon the altar lay Tarzan of the Apes, and standing above him, his snarling face and gleaming eyes glaring directly at her, was Jad-bal-ja.

"Tarzan!" shrieked La, taking a step toward the altar. "Cadj has had his way at last. God of my fathers have pity on me—Tarzan is dead!"

"No," cried the Ape-man, "far from dead. Come and release me. I am only bound, but had it not been for Jad-bal-ja I had been dead beneath your sacrificial knife."

"Thank God!" cried La, and started to approach the altar, but paused before the menacing attitude of the growling lion.

"Down," cried Tarzan, "let her approach."

Jad-bal-ja lay down beside his master and stretched his whiskered skin across the Ape-man's breast.

La came then, and picking up the sacrificial knife, cut the bonds that held the lord of the jungle captive, and then she saw beyond the altar the corpse of Cadj.

"Your worst enemy is dead," said Tarzan, "and for his death you may thank Jad-bal-ja, as I thank him for my life. You should rule now in peace and happiness and in friendship with the people of the Valley of the Palace of Diamonds."

That night Tarzan and the bolgani and the head-men of the gomangani, and the priests and priestesses of Opar, sat in the great banquet hall of the Palace of Opar, as the guests of La, the Queen, and ate from the golden platters of the ancient Alantians—platters that had been fashioned on a continent that exists to-day only in the legends of antiquity. And the following morning Tarzan and Jad-bal-ja set forth upon their return journey to the land of the Waziri and home.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TORTURE OF FIRE.

FLORA HAWKES and her four confederates, pursued by Luvini and his two hundred warriors, stumbled through the darkness of the jungle night. They had no objective, for, guided entirely as they had been by the blacks, they knew not where they were and were completely lost. The sole idea dominating the mind of each was to put as much distance between themselves and the camp of the ivory raiders as possible, for no matter what the outcome of the battle there might have been, their fate would be the same should the victorious party capture them. They had stumbled on for perhaps half an hour when, during a momentary rest, they heard plainly behind them the sound of pursuit, and again they plunged on in their aimless flight of terror.

Presently, to their surprise, they discerned the glow of a light ahead. What could it be? Had they made a complete circle, and was this again the camp they had been fleeing? They pushed on to reconnoitre, until at last they saw before them the outlines of a camp surrounded by a thorn *boma*, in the center of which was burning a small campfire. About the fire were congregated a half-a-hundred black warriors, and as the fugitives crept closer they saw among the blacks a figure standing out clearly in the light of the camp fire—a white woman—and behind them rose louder and louder the sound of pursuit.

From the gestures and gesticulations of the blacks around the campfire it was evi-

dent that they were discussing the sounds of the battle they had recently heard in the direction of the raiders' camp, for they often pointed in that direction, and now the woman raised her hand for silence and they all listened, and it was evident that they, too, heard the coming of the warriors who were pursuing Flora Hawkes and her confederates.

"There is a white woman there," said Flora to the others. "We do not know who she is, but she is our only hope, for those who are pursuing us will overtake us quickly. Perhaps this woman will protect us. Come, I am going to find out," and without waiting for them, she walked boldly toward the *boma*.

They had come but a short distance when the keen eyes of the Waziri discovered them, and instantly the *boma* wall was ringed with bristling spears.

"Stop!" cried one of the warriors. "We are the Waziri of Tarzan of the Apes. Who are you?"

"I am an Englishwoman," called Flora in reply. "I and my companions are lost in the jungle. We have been betrayed by our *safari*—our head-man is pursuing us now with warriors. There are but five of us and we ask your protection."

"Let them come," said Jane to the Waziri.

As Flora Hawkes and the four men entered the *boma* beneath the scrutiny of Jane Clayton and the Waziri, another pair of eyes watched them from the foliage of the great tree that overhung the camp upon the opposite side—gray eyes to which a strange light came as they recognized the girl and her companions.

As the newcomers approached Lady Greystoke the latter gave an exclamation of surprise. "Flora!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. "Flora Hawkes, what in the world are you doing here?"

The girl, startled too, came to a full stop. "Lady Greystoke!" she ejaculated.

"I do not understand," continued Lady Greystoke. "I did not know that you were in Africa?"

For a moment the glib Flora was overcome by consternation, but presently her native wit came to her assistance. "I am

here with Mr. Bluber and his friends," she said, "who came to make scientific researches, and brought me along because I had been to Africa with you and Lord Greystoke, and knew something of the manners and customs of the country, and now our boys have turned against us and unless you can help us we are lost."

"What are they, West Coast boys?" asked Lady Greystoke.

"Yes," replied Flora.

"I think my Waziri can handle them. How many of them are there?"

"About two hundred," said Kraski.

Lady Greystoke shook her head. "The odds are pretty heavy," she commented, and then she called to Usula, who was in charge. "There are two hundred West Coast boys coming after these people," she said; "we shall have to fight to defend them."

"We are Waziri," replied Usula, simply, and a moment later the van of Luvini's forces broke into view at the outer rim of the campfire's reach.

At sight of the glistening warriors ready to receive them, the West Coast boys halted. Luvini, taking in the inferior numbers of the enemy at a glance, stepped forward a few paces ahead of his men and commenced to shout taunts and insults, demanding the return of the whites to him. He accompanied his words with fantastic and grotesque steps, at the same time waving his rifle and shaking his fist. Presently his followers took up the refrain until the whole band of two hundred was shrieking and yelling and threatening, the while they leaped up and down as they worked themselves into a frenzy of excitement that would impart to them the courage necessary for the initiating of a charge.

The Waziri, behind the *boma* wall, schooled and disciplined by Tarzan of the Apes, had long since discarded the fantastic overture to battle so dear to the hearts of other warlike tribes, and instead, stood stolid and grim awaiting the coming of the foe.

"They have a number of rifles," commented Lady Greystoke. "That looks rather bad for us."

"There are not over half-a-dozen who

can hit anything with their rifles," said Kraski.

"You men are all armed. Take your places among my Waziri. Warn your men to go away and leave us alone. Do not fire until they attack, but at the first overt act, commence firing, and keep it up—there is nothing that so discourages a West Coast black as the rifle fire of white men. Flora and I will remain at the back of the camp, near that large tree." She spoke authoritatively, as one who is accustomed to command and knows whereof she speaks.

The men obeyed her; even Bluber, though he trembled pitiably as he moved forward to take his place in the front ranks among the Waziri.

Their movements, in the light of the campfire, were all plainly discernible to Luvini, and also to that other who watched from the foliage of the tree beneath which Jane Clayton and Flora Hawkes took refuge. Luvini had not come to fight. He had come to capture Flora Hawkes. He turned to his men.

"There are only fifty of them," he said. "We can kill them easily, but we did not come to make war. We came to get the white girl back again. Stay here and make a great show against those sons of jackals. Keep them always looking at you. Advance a little and then fall back again, and while you are thus keeping their attention attracted in this direction I will take fifty men and go to the rear of their camp and get the white girl, and when I have her I will send word to you and immediately you can return to the village, where, behind the palisade, we shall be safe against attack."

Now this plan well suited the West Coast blacks, who had no stomach for the battle looming so imminent, and so they danced and yelled and menaced more vociferously than before, for they felt they were doing it all with perfect impunity, since presently they should retire, after a bloodless victory, to the safety of their palisade.

As Luvini, making a detour, crept through the concealment of the dense jungles to the rear of the camp while the din of the West Coast blacks arose to almost deafening proportions, there dropped suddenly to the ground before the two white

women from the tree above them, the figure of a white giant, naked except for loin cloth and leopard skin—his god-like contour picked out by the light of the beast fire.

"John!" exclaimed Lady Greystoke. "Thank God it is you."

"S-s-sh!" cautioned the white giant, placing a forefinger to his lips, and then suddenly he wheeled upon Flora Hawkes. "It is you I want," he cried, and, seizing the girl, he threw her lightly across his shoulders, and before Lady Greystoke could interfere—before she half realized what had occurred—he had lightly leaped the protecting *boma* in the rear of the camp and disappeared into the jungle beyond.

For a moment Jane Clayton stood reeling as one stunned from an unexpected blow, and then, with a stifled moan, she sank sobbing to the ground, her face buried in her arms.

It was thus that Luvini and his warriors found her as they crept stealthily over the *boma* and into the camp in the rear of the defenders upon the opposite side of the beast fire. They had come for a white woman and they had found one, and roughly they dragged her to her feet, and smothering her cries with rough and filthy palms, they bore her out into the jungle toward the palisaded village of the ivory raiders.

Ten minutes later the white men and the Waziri saw the West Coast blacks retire slowly into the jungle, still yelling and threatening, as though bent on the total annihilation of their enemies—the battle was over without a shot fired or a spear hurled.

"Blime," said Throck, "what was all the bloomin' fuss about anyway?"

"Hi thought they was goin' to heat hus hup, an' the blighters never done nothin' but yell, an' 'ere we are 'n that's that."

The jew swelled out his chest. "It takes more as a bunch of niggers to bluff Adolph Bluber," he said pompously.

Kraski looked after the departing blacks, and then, scratching his head, turned back toward the camp fire. "I can't understand it," he said, and then, suddenly. "Where are Flora and Lady Greystoke?"

It was then that they discovered that the two women were missing.

The Waziri were frantic. They called the name of their mistress aloud, but there was no reply. "Come," cried Usula, "we, the Waziri, shall fight, after all," and running to the *boma*, he leaped it, and followed by his fifty blacks, set out in pursuit of the West Coast boys.

It was but a moment or two before they overtook them, and that which ensued resembled more a rout than a battle. Fleeing in terror toward their palisade with the Waziri at their heels, the West Coast blacks threw away their rifles that they might run the faster, but Luvini and his party had had sufficient start so that they were able to reach the village and gain the safety of the palisade before pursued and pursuers reached it. Once inside the gate the defenders made a stand, for they realized that if the Waziri entered they should all be massacred, and so they fought as a cornered rat will fight, with the result that they managed to hold off the attackers until they could close and bar the gate. Built as it had been as a defense against far greater numbers the village was easy to defend, for there were less than fifty Waziri now, and nearly two hundred fighting men within the village to defend it against them.

Realizing the futility of blind attack, Usula withdrew his forces a short distance from the palisade, and there they squatted, their fierce, scowling faces glaring at the gateway while Usula pondered schemes for outwitting the enemy, which he realized he could not overcome by force alone.

"It is only Lady Greystoke that we want," he said to his companions. "Vengeance can wait until another day."

"But we do not even know that she is within the village," reminded one of his men.

"Where else could she be, then?" asked Usula. "It is true that you may be right—she may not be within the village, but that I intend to find out. I have a plan. See; the wind is from the opposite side of the village. Ten of you will accompany me, the others will advance again before the gate and make much noise, and pretend that you are about to attack. After a while the gate will open and they will come out. That I promise you. I will try to be here

before that happens, but if I am not, divide into two parties and stand upon either side of the gateway and let the West Coast blacks escape; we do not care for them. Watch only for Lady Greystoke, and when you see her take her away from those who guard her. Do you understand?" His companions nodded. "Then come," he said, and selecting ten men, disappeared into the jungle.

Luvini had carried Jane Clayton to a hut not far from the gateway to the village. Here he had bound her securely and tied her to a stake, still believing that she was Flora Hawkes, and then he had left her to hurry back toward the gate that he might take command of his forces in defense of the village.

So rapidly had the events of the past hour transpired that Jane Clayton was still half dazed from the series of shocks that she had been called upon to endure. Dwarfing to nothingness the menace of her present position was the remembrance that her Tarzan had deserted her in her hour of need, and carried off into the jungle another woman. Not even the remembrance of what Usula had told her concerning the accident that Tarzan had sustained, and which had supposedly again affected his memory, could reconcile her to the brutality of his desertion, and now she lay, face down, in the filth of the Arab hut, sobbing as she had not for many years.

As she lay there, torn by grief, Usula and his ten crept stealthily and silently around the outside of the palisade to the rear of the village. Here they found great quantities of dead brush left from the clearing which the Arabs had made when constructing their village. This they brought and piled along the palisade, close against it, until nearly three-quarters of the palisade upon that side of the village was banked high with it. Finding that it was difficult to prosecute their work in silence, Usula dispatched one of his men to the main body upon the opposite side of the village, with instructions that they were to keep up a continuous din of shouting to drown the sound of the operations of their fellows. The plan worked to perfection, yet even though it permitted Usula and his com-

panions to labor with redoubled efforts, it was more than an hour before the brush pile was disposed to his satisfaction.

Luvini, from an aperture in the palisade, watched the main body of the Waziri who were now revealed by the rising of the moon, and finally he came to the conclusion that they did not intend to attack that night, and therefore he might relax his watchfulness and utilize the time in another and more agreeable manner. Instructing the bulk of his warriors to remain near the gate and ever upon the alert, with orders that he be summoned the moment that the Waziri showed any change in attitude, Luvini repaired to the hut in which he had left Lady Greystoke.

The black was a huge fellow, with low, receding forehead and prognathous jaw—a type of the lowest form of African negro. As he entered the hut with a lighted torch which he stuck in the floor, his bloodshot eyes gazed greedily at the still form of the woman lying prone before him. He licked his thick lips, and coming closer, reached out and touched her. Jane Clayton looked up, and recoiling in revulsion, shrunk away. At sight of the woman's face the black looked his surprise.

"Who are you?" he demanded in the pidgin English of the coast.

"I am Lady Greystoke, wife of Tarzan of the Apes," replied Jane Clayton. "If you are wise you will release me at once."

Surprise and terror showed in the eyes of Luvini, and another emotion as well, but which would dominate the muddy brain it was difficult, then, to tell. For a long time he sat gazing at her, and slowly the greedy, gloating expression upon his face dominated and expunged the fear that had at first been written there, and in the change Jane Clayton read her doom.

With fumbling fingers Luvini untied the knots of the bonds that held Jane Clayton's wrists and ankles. She felt his hot breath upon her, and saw his bloodshot eyes and the red tongue that momentarily licked the thick lips. The instant that she felt the last thong with which she was tied fall away she leaped to her feet and sprang for the entrance to the hut, but a great hand reached forth and seized her, and as Luvini dragged

her back toward him, she wheeled like a mad tigress and struck repeatedly at his grinning, ugly face. By brute force, ruthless and indomitable, he beat down her weak resistance and slowly and surely dragged her closer to him. Oblivious to aught else, deaf to the cries of the Waziri before the gate, and to the sudden new commotion that arose in the village, the two struggled on, the woman, from the first, foredoomed to defeat.

Against the rear palisade Usula had already put burning torches to his brush pile at half a dozen different places. The flame, fanned by a gentle jungle breeze, had leaped almost immediately into a roaring conflagration, before which the dry wood of the palisade crumbled in a shower of ruddy sparks which the wind carried to the thatched roofs of the huts beyond, until in an incredibly short period of time the village was a roaring inferno of flame. And even as Usula had predicted, the gate swung open and the West Coast blacks swarmed forth in terror toward the jungle. Upon either side of the gateway the Waziri stood, looking for their mistress, but though they waited and watched in silence until no more came from the gateway of the village, and until the interior of the palisade was a seething hell of fire, they saw nothing of her.

Long after they were convinced that no human being could remain alive in the village, they still waited and hoped; but at last Usula gave up the useless vigil.

"She was never there," he said, "and now we must pursue the blacks and capture some of them, from whom we may learn the whereabouts of Lady Greystoke."

It was daylight before they came upon a small band of stragglers, who were in camp a few miles toward the west. These they quickly surrounded, winning their immediate surrender by promises of immunity in the event that they would answer truthfully the questions that Usula should propound.

"Where is Luvini?" demanded Usula, who had learned the name of the leader of the West Coast boys from the Europeans the evening before.

"We do not know; we have not seen him since we left the village," replied one of the

blacks. "We were some of the slaves of the Arabs, and when we escaped the palisade last night we ran away from the others, for we thought that we should be safer alone than with Luvini, who is even crueller than the Arabs."

"Did you see the white woman that he brought to the camp last night?" demanded Usula.

"He brought but one white woman," replied the other.

"What did he do with her? Where is she now?" asked Usula.

"I do not know. When he brought her he bound her hand and foot and put her in the hut which he occupied near the village gate. We have not seen her since."

Usula turned and looked at his companions. A great fear was in his eyes, a fear that was reflected in the countenances of the others.

"Come," he said, "we shall return to the village. And you will go with us," he added, addressing the West Coast blacks; "and if you have lied to us—" He made a significant movement with his forefinger across his throat.

"We have not lied to you," replied the others.

Quickly they retraced their steps toward the ruins of the Arab village, nothing of which was left save a few piles of smouldering embers.

"Where was the hut in which the white woman was confined?" demanded Usula.

"Here," said one of the blacks, and walked quickly a few paces beyond what had been the village gateway. Suddenly he halted and pointed at something which lay upon the ground.

"There," he said, "is the white woman you seek."

Usula and the others pressed forward. Rage and grief contended for mastery of them as they beheld, lying before them, the charred remnants of a human body.

"It is she," said Usula, turning away to hide his grief as the tears rolled down his ebon cheeks. The other Waziri were equally affected, for they all had loved the mate of the big *Bwana*.

"Perhaps it is not she," suggested one of them. "Perhaps it is another."

"We can tell quickly," cried a third. "If her rings are among the ashes it is indeed she," and he knelt and searched for the rings which Lady Greystoke habitually wore.

Usula shook his head despairingly. "It is she," he said, "there is the very stake to which she was fastened"—he pointed to the blackened stub of a stake close beside the body—"and as for the rings; even if they are not there it will mean nothing, for Luvini would have taken them away from her as soon as he captured her. There was time for every one else to leave the village except she, who was bound and could not leave—no, it cannot be another."

The Waziri scooped a shallow grave and reverently deposited the ashes there, marking the spot with a little cairn of stones.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SPOOR OF REVENGE.

AS Tarzan of the Apes, adapting his speed to that of Jad-bal-ja, made his comparatively slow way toward home, he reviewed with varying emotions the experiences of the past week. While he had been unsuccessful in raiding the treasure vaults of Opar, the sack of diamonds which he carried compensated several-fold for this miscarriage of his plans. His only concern now was for the safety of his Waziri, and, perhaps, a troublesome desire to seek out the whites who had drugged him and mete out to them the punishment they deserved. In view, however, of his greater desire to return home, he decided to make no effort at apprehending them for the time being at least.

Hunting together, feeding together, and sleeping together, the man and the great lion followed the savage jungle trails toward home. Yesterday they shared the meat of Bara, the deer, to-day they feasted upon the carcass of Horta, the boar, and between them there was little chance that either would go hungry.

They had come within a day's march of the bungalow when Tarzan discovered the spoor of a considerable body of warriors. As some men devour the latest stock mar-

ket quotations as though their very existence depended upon an accurate knowledge of them, so Tarzan of the Apes devoured every scrap of information that the jungle held for him, for, in truth, an accurate knowledge of all that this information could impart to him had been, during his lifetime, a *sine qua non* to his existence.

So now he carefully examined the spoor that lay before him, several days old though it was, and partially obliterated by the passage of beasts since it had been made, but yet legible enough to the keen eyes and nostrils of the Ape-man. His partial indifference suddenly gave way to keen interest, for among the footprints of the great warriors he saw now and again the smaller one of a white woman—a loved footprint that he knew as well as you know your mother's face.

"The Waziri returned and told her that I was missing," he soliloquized, "and now she has set out with them to search for me." He turned to the lion. "Well, Jad-bal-ja, once again we turn away from home—but no, where she is is home."

The direction that the trail led rather mystified Tarzan of the Apes, as it was not along the direct route toward Opar, but in a rather more southerly direction. On the sixth day his keen ears caught the sound of approaching men, and presently there was wafted to his nostrils the spoor of blacks. Sending Jad-bal-ja into a thicket to hide, Tarzan took to the trees and moved rapidly in the direction of the approaching negroes. As the distance between them lessened, the scent became stronger, until, even before he saw them, Tarzan knew that they were Waziri, but the one effluvium that would have filled his soul with happiness was lacking.

It was a surprised Usula who, at the head of the sad and dejected Waziri, came at the turning of the trail suddenly face to face with his master.

"Tarzan of the Apes!" cried Usula. "Is it indeed you?"

"It is none other," replied the Ape-man; "but where is Lady Greystoke?"

"Ah, master, how can we tell you!" cried Usula.

"You do not mean—" cried Tarzan.

"It cannot be. Nothing could happen to her while she was guarded by my Waziri."

The warriors hung their heads in shame and sorrow. "We offer our lives for hers," said Usula, simply. He threw down his spear and shield, and stretching his arms wide apart, bared his great breast to Tarzan. "Strike, *Bwana*," he said.

The Ape-man turned away with bowed head. Presently he looked at Usula again.

"Tell me how it happened," he said, "and forget your foolish speech as I have forgotten the suggestion which prompted it."

Briefly Usula narrated the events which had led up to the death of Jane, and when he was done, Tarzan of the Apes spoke but three words, voicing a question which was typical of him.

"Where is Luvini?" he asked.

"Ah, master, that we do not know," replied Usula.

"But I shall know," said Tarzan of the Apes. "Go upon your way, my children, back to your huts, and your women and your children, and when next you see Tarzan you will know that Luvini is dead."

They begged permission to accompany him, but he would not listen to them.

"You are needed at home at this time of year," he said. "Already have you been gone too long from the herds and fields. Return, then, and carry word to Korak; but tell him that it is my wish that he, too, remain at home—if I fail, then may he come and take up my unfinished work if he wishes to do so." As he ceased speaking he turned back in the direction from which he had come, and whistled once a single low, long-drawn note, and a moment later *Jad-bal-ja*, the golden lion, bounded into view along the jungle trail.

"The golden lion!" cried Usula. "When he escaped from Keewazi it was to search for his beloved *Bwana*."

Tarzan nodded. "He followed many marches to a strange country until he found me," he said, and then he bid the Waziri good-by and bent his steps once more away from home in search of Luvini and revenge.

John Peebles, wedged in the crotch of a large tree, greeted the coming dawn with

weary eyes. Near him was Dick Throck, similarly braced in another crotch, while Kraski, more intelligent and therefore possessing more inventive genius, had rigged a small platform of branches across two parallel boughs, upon which he lay in comparative comfort. Ten feet above him Bluber swung, half exhausted and wholly terrified, to one of the smaller branches, supported in something that approximated safety by a fork of the branch to which he clung.

"Gawd," groaned Peebles, "Hi'll let the bloody lions 'ave me before Hi'll spend another such night as this, an' 'ere we are and that's that!"

"And blime, too," said Throck, "Hi sleeps on the ground hafter this, lions or no lions."

"If the combined intelligence of the three of you was equal to that of a walrus," remarked Kraski, "we might have slept in comparative safety and comfort last night on the ground."

"Hey there, Bluber, *Mister* Kraski is spikin' to yer," called Peebles in fine sarcasm, accenting the *mister*.

"*Oi! Oi!* I don't care vot nobody says," moaned Bluber.

"'E wants us to build a 'ouse for 'im hevery night," continued Peebles, "while 'e stands abaht and tells us bloomin' well 'ow to do it, and 'im, bein' a fine gentleman, don't do no work."

"Why should I do any work with my hands when you two big beasts haven't got anything else to work with?" asked Kraski. "You would all have starved by this time if I hadn't found food for you. And you'll be lion meat in the end, or die of exhaustion if you don't listen to me—not that it would be much loss."

The others paid no attention to his last sally. As a matter of fact they had all been quarreling so much for such a long time that they really paid little attention to one another. With the exception of Peebles and Throck they all hated one another cordially, and only clung together because they were afraid to separate. Slowly Peebles lowered his bulk to the ground. Throck followed him, and then came Kraski, and then, finally, Bluber, who stood for a mo-

ment in silence, looking down at his disreputable clothing.

"*Mein Gott!*" he exclaimed at last. "Look at me! Dis suit, vot it cost me twenty guineas, look at it. Ruint. Ruint. It wouldn't bring vun penny in der pound."

"The hell with your clothes!" exclaimed Kraski. "Here we are, lost, half starved, constantly menaced by wild animals, and maybe, for all we know, by cannibals, with Flora missing in the jungle, and you can stand there and talk about your 'twenty guinea' suit. You make me tired, Bluber."

Kraski turned disgustedly away. "Come on," he said, "we might as well be moving."

"Which way?" asked Throck.

"Why, to the west, of course," replied Kraski. "The coast is there, and there is nothing else for us to do but try to reach it."

"We can't reach it by goin' east," roared Peebles, "an' 'ere we are 'n that's that."

"Who said we could?" demanded Kraski.

"Well, we were travelin' east all day yesterday," said Peebles. "I knew all the time that there was somethin' wrong, and I just got it figured out."

Throck looked at his partner in stupid surprise. "What do you mean?" he growled. "What makes you think we was travelin' east?"

"It's easy enough," replied Peebles, "and I can prove it to you. Because this party hère knows so much more than the rest of us we've been travelin' straight toward the interior ever since the niggers deserted us." He nodded toward the Russian, who stood with his hands on his hips, eying the other quizzically.

"If you think I'm taking you in the wrong direction, Peebles," said Kraski, "you just turn around and go the other way: but I'm going to keep on the way we've been going, which is the right way."

"It ain't the right way," retorted Peebles, "and I'll show yer. Listen here. When you travel west the sun is at your left side, isn't it—that is all durin' the middle of the day? Well, ever since we've been travelin' without the niggers the sun has been on our right. I thought all the time

there was somethin' wrong, but I could never figure it out until just now. We've been travelin' due east right along."

"Blime," cried Throck, "that we have, due east, and this blighter thinks as 'ow 'e knows it all."

"*Oi!*" groaned Bluber. "Und ve got to valk it all back again yet, once more?"

Kraski laughed and turned away to resume the march in the direction he had chosen. "You fellows go on your own way if you want to," he said, "and while you're traveling just ponder the fact that you're south of the equator, and that therefore the sun is always in the north, which, however, doesn't change its old-fashioned habit of setting in the west."

Bluber was the first to grasp the truth of Kraski's statement.

"Come along, boys," he said. "Carl was right." He turned and followed the Russian.

Peebles stood scratching his head, entirely baffled by the puzzling problem, which Throck also was pondering deeply. Presently the latter turned after Bluber and Kraski. "Come on, John," he said to Peebles. "Hi don't hunderstand it, but Hi guess they're right. They are headin' right toward where the sun set last night, and that sure must be west."

His theory tottering, Peebles followed Throck, though he remained unconvinced.

The four men, hungry and footsore, had dragged their weary way along the jungle trail toward the west for several hours in vain search for game. Unschooling in jungle craft, they blundered on. There might have been on every hand fierce carnivores or savage warriors, but so dull the perceptive faculties of civilized man the most blatant foe might have stalked them unperceived.

And so it was that shortly after noon, as they were crossing a small clearing, the zip of an arrow that barely missed Bluber's head brought them to a sudden, terrified halt. With a shrill scream of terror, the jew crumpled to the ground. Kraski threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

"There!" he cried. "Behind those bushes." And then another arrow, from another direction, pierced his forearm. Pee-

bles and Throck, beefy and cumbersome, got into action with less celerity than the Russian, but, like him, they showed no indication of fear.

"Down!" cried Kraski, suiting the action to the word. "Lie down and let them have it!"

Scarcely had the three men dropped among the long grass when a score of pygmy hunters came into the open and a volley of arrows whizzed above the prone men, while from a near-by tree two steel-gray eyes looked down upon the ambush.

Bluber lay upon his belly with his face buried in his arms, his useless rifle lying at his side; but Kraski, Peebles and Throck, fighting for their lives, pumped lead into the circling band of yelling pygmies.

Kraski and Peebles each dropped a native with his rifle, and then the foe withdrew into the concealing safety of the surrounding jungle. For a moment there was a cessation of hostilities. Utter silence reigned, and then a voice broke the quiet from the verdure of a near-by forest giant.

"Do not fire until I tell you," it said in English, "and I will save you."

Bluber raised his head. "Come quick! Come quick!" he cried. "Ve vill not shoot. Safe me, safe me, und I giff you five pounds."

From the tree from which the voice had issued there came a single low, long-drawn, whistled note, and then silence for a time.

The pygmies, momentarily surprised by the mysterious voice emanating from the foliage of a tree, ceased their activities, but presently, hearing nothing to arouse their fear, they emerged from the cover bushes and launched another volley of arrows toward the four men lying among the grasses in the clearing. Simultaneously the figure of a giant white leaped from the lower branches of a patriarch of the jungle, as a great black-maned lion sprang from the thicket below.

"*Oi!*" shrieked Bluber, and again buried his face in his arms.

For an instant the pygmies stood terrified, and then their leader cried, "It is Tarzan!" and turned and fled into the jungle.

"Yes, it is Tarzan—Tarzan of the

Apes!" cried Lord Greystoke. "It is Tarzan and the golden lion." But he spoke in the dialect of the pygmies, and the whites understood no word of what he said. Then he turned to them. "The gomangani have gone," he said; "get up."

The four men crawled to their feet. "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" demanded Tarzan of the Apes. "But I do not need to ask who you are. You are the men who drugged me and left me helpless in your camp, a prey to the first passing lion or savage native."

Bluber stumbled forward, rubbing his palms together and cringing and smiling. "*Oi! Oi!* Mr. Tarzan, ve did not know you. Neffer vould ve did vat ve done, had ve known it vas Tarzan of the Apes. Safe me! Ten pounds—twenty pounds—any't'ing. Name your own price. Safe me und it is yours."

Tarzan ignored the jew and turned toward the others. "I am looking for one of your men," he said—"a black named Luvini. He killed my wife. Where is he?"

"We know nothing of that," said Kraski. "Luvini betrayed us and deserted us. Your wife and another white woman were in our camp at the time. None of us knows what became of them. They were behind us when we took our post to defend the camp from our men and the slaves of the Arabs. Your Waziri were there. After the enemy had withdrawn we found that the two white women had disappeared. We do not know what became of them. We are looking for them now."

"My Waziri told me as much," said Tarzan, "but have you seen aught of Luvini since?"

"No, we have not," replied Kraski.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Tarzan.

"We came with Mr. Bluber on a scientific expedition," replied the Russian. "We have had a great deal of trouble. Our headmen, *askari* and porters have mutinied and deserted. We are absolutely alone and helpless."

"*Oi! Oi!*" cried Bluber. "Safe us! Safe us! But keep dot lion away. He makes me nerfous."

"He will not hurt you—unless I tell him to," said Tarzan.

"Den please don't tell him to!" cried Bluber.

"Where do you want to go?" asked Tarzan.

"We are trying to get back to the coast," replied Kraski, "and from there to London."

"Come with me," said Tarzan. "Possibly I can help you. You do not deserve it, but I cannot see white men perish here in the jungle."

They followed him toward the west, and that night they made camp beside a small jungle stream.

It was difficult for the four Londoners to accustom themselves to the presence of the great lion, and Bluber was constantly in a state of palpable terror.

As they squatted around the fire after the evening meal, which Tarzan had provided, Kraski suggested that they set to and build some sort of a shelter against the wild beasts.

"It will not be necessary," said Tarzan. "Jad-bal-ja will guard you. He will sleep here beside Tarzan of the Apes, and what one of us does not hear the other will."

Bluber sighed. "*Mein Gott!*" he cried. "I should giff ten pounds for vun night's sleep."

"You may have it to-night for less than that," replied Tarzan; "for nothing shall befall you while Jad-bal-ja and I are here."

"Vell, den, I t'ink I say good night," said the jew, and, moving a few paces away from the fire, he curled up and was soon asleep.

Throck and Peebles followed suit, and, shortly after, Kraski too.

As the Russian lay, half dozing, his eyes partially open, he saw the Ape-man rise from the squatting position he had maintained before the fire, and turn toward a near-by tree. As he did so something fell from beneath his loin cloth—a little sack made of hides—a little sack bulging with its contents. Kraski, thoroughly awakened now, watched it as the Ape-man moved off a short distance, accompanied by Jad-bal-ja, and lay down to sleep.

The great lion curled beside the prostrate man, and presently the Russian was assured that both slept. Immediately he commenced crawling stealthily and slowly toward the little package lying beside the fire. With each forward move that he made he paused and looked at the recumbent figures of the two ferocious beasts before him, but both slept on peacefully. At last the Russian could reach out and grasp the sack, and, drawing it toward him, he stuffed it quickly inside his shirt. Then he turned and crawled slowly and carefully back to his place beyond the fire. There, lying with his head upon one arm as though in profound slumber, he felt carefully of the sack with the fingers of his left hand.

"They feel like pebbles," he muttered to himself; "and doubtless that is what they are, for the barbaric ornamentation of this savage barbarian who is a peer of England. It does not seem possible that this wild beast has sat in the House of Lords."

Noiselessly Kraski undid the knot which held the mouth of the sack closed, and a moment later he let a portion of the contents trickle forth into his open palm.

"My God!" he cried. "Diamonds!"

Greedily he poured them all out and gloated over them—great scintillating stones of the first water—five pounds of pure, white diamonds, representing so fabulous a fortune that the very contemplation of it staggered the Russian.

"My God!" he repeated. "The wealth of Cræsus in my own hand."

Quickly he gathered up the stones and replaced them in the sack, always with one eye upon Tarzan and Jad-bal-ja; but neither stirred, and presently he had returned them all to the pouch and slipped the package inside his shirt.

"To-morrow," he muttered, "to-morrow. Would to God that I had the nerve to attempt it to-night!"

In the middle of the following morning Tarzan, with the four Londoners, approached a good-sized stockaded village, containing many huts. He was received not only graciously, but with the deference due an emperor.

The whites were awed by the attitude of

the black chief and his warriors as Tarzan was conducted into their presence.

After the usual ceremony had been gone through, Tarzan turned and waved his hand toward the four Europeans. "These are my friends," he said to the black chief, "and they wish to reach the coast in safety. Send with them, then, sufficient warriors to feed and guard them during the journey. It is I, Tarzan of the Apes, who requests this favor."

"Tarzan of the Apes, the great chief, Lord of the Jungle, has but to command," replied the black.

"Good!" exclaimed Tarzan. "Feed them well and treat them well. I have other business to attend to and may not remain."

"Their bellies shall be filled, and they shall reach the coast unscathed," replied the chief.

Without a word of farewell, without even a sign that he realized their existence, Tarzan of the Apes passed from the sight of the four Europeans, while at his heels paced Jad-bal-ja, the golden lion.

CHAPTER XIX.

A BARBED SHAFT KILLS.

KRASKI spent a sleepless night. He could not help but realize that sooner or later Tarzan would discover the loss of his pouch of diamonds, and that he would return and demand an accounting of the four Londoners he had befriended. And so it was that as the first streak of dawn lighted the eastern horizon the Russian arose from his pallet of dried grasses within the hut that had been assigned him and Bluber by the chief, and crept stealthily out into the village street.

"God!" he muttered to himself. "There is only one chance in a thousand that I can reach the coast alone, but this"—he pressed his hand over the bag of diamonds that lay within his shirt—"but this, this is worth every effort, even to the sacrifice of life—the fortune of a thousand kings! My God, what could I not do with it in London and Paris and New York!"

Stealthily he slunk from the village, and

presently the verdure of the jungle beyond closed about Carl Kraski, the Russian, as he disappeared forever from the lives of his companions.

Bluber was the first to discover the absence of Kraski, for, although there was no love between the two, they had been thrown together owing to the friendship of Peebles and Throck.

"Have you seen Carl this morning?" he asked Peebles as the three men gathered around the pot containing the unsavory stew that had been brought to them for their breakfast.

"No," said Peebles. "He must be asleep yet."

"He is not in the hut," replied Bluber. "He vus not dere ven I voke up."

"He can take care of himself," growled Throck, resuming his breakfast. "You'll likely find him with some of the ladies." And he grinned in appreciation of his little joke on Carl Kraski's well-known weakness.

They had finished their breakfast and were attempting to communicate with some of the warriors, in an effort to learn when the chief proposed that they should set forth for the coast, and still Kraski had not made an appearance. By this time Bluber was considerably concerned, not at all for Kraski's safety, but for his own, since, if something should happen to Kraski in this friendly village in the still watches of the night, a similar fate might overtake him; and when he made this suggestion to the others it gave them food for thought, too, so that there were three rather apprehensive men who sought an audience with the chief.

By means of signs and pidgin English, and distorted native dialect, a word or two of which each of the three understood, they managed to convey to the chief the information that Kraski had disappeared, and that they wanted to know what had become of him.

The chief was, of course, as much puzzled as they, and immediately instituted a thorough search of the village, with the result that it was soon found that Kraski was not within the palisade; and shortly afterward footprints were discovered lead-

ing through the village gateway into the jungle.

"*Mein Gott!*" exclaimed Bluber. "He vent out dere, und he vent alone, in der middle of der night. He must have been crazy."

"Gawd!" cried Throck. "What did he want to do that for?"

"You ain't missed nothin', have you?" asked Peebles of the other two. "'E might 'ave stolen somethin'."

"*Oi! Oi!* Vot have ve got to steal?" cried Bluber. "Our guns, our ammunition—dey are here beside us. He did not take them. Besides dose ve have nothing of value except my twenty guinea suit."

"But what did 'e do it for?" demanded Peebles.

"'E must 'ave been walkin' in his bloom-in' sleep," said Throck.

And that was as near to an explanation of Kraski's mysterious disappearance as the three could reach. An hour later they set out toward the coast under the protection of a company of the chief's warriors.

Kraski, his rifle slung over his shoulder, moved doggedly along the jungle trail, a heavy automatic pistol grasped in his right hand. His ears were constantly strained for the first intimation of pursuit as well as for whatever other dangers might lurk before or upon either side. Alone in the mysterious jungle he was experiencing a nightmare of terror, and with each mile that he traveled the value of the diamonds became less and less by comparison with the frightful ordeal that he realized he must pass through before he could hope to reach the coast.

Once Histah, the snake, swinging from a low-hung branch across the trail, barred his way, and the man dared not fire at him for fear of attracting the attention of possible pursuers to his position. He was forced, therefore, to make a detour through the tangled mass of underbrush which grew closely upon either side of the narrow trail. When he reached it again, beyond the snake, his clothing was more torn and tattered than before, and his flesh was scratched and cut and bleeding from the innumerable thorns past which he had been compelled to force his way. He was soaked

with perspiration and panting from exhaustion, and his clothing was filled with ants whose vicious attacks upon his flesh rendered him half mad with pain.

Once again in the clear, he tore his clothing from him and sought frantically to rid himself of the torturing pests. So thick were the myriad ants upon his clothing that he dared not attempt to reclaim it. Only the sack of diamonds, his ammunition and his weapons did he snatch from the ravening horde whose numbers were rapidly increasing, apparently by millions, as they sought again to lay hold upon him and devour him.

Shaking the bulk of the ants from the articles he had retrieved, Kraski dashed madly along the trail as naked as the day he was born, and when, a half hour later, stumbling and at last falling exhausted, he lay panting upon the damp jungle earth he realized the utter futility of his mad attempt to reach the coast alone, even more fully than he ever could have under any other circumstances, since there is nothing that so paralyzes the courage and self-confidence of a civilized man as to be deprived of his clothing.

However scant the protection that might have been afforded by the torn and tattered garments he had discarded, he could not have felt more helpless had he lost his weapons and ammunition instead, for, to such an extent are we the creatures of habit and environment. It was, therefore, a terrified Kraski, already foredoomed to failure, who crawled fearfully along the trail.

That night, hungry and cold, he slept in the crotch of a great tree while the hunting carnivores roared and coughed and growled through the blackness of the jungle about him. Shivering with terror, he started momentarily to fearful wakefulness, and when, from exhaustion, he would doze again, it was not to rest but to dream of horrors that a sudden roar would merge into reality. Thus the long hours of frightful night dragged out their tedious length, until it seemed that dawn would never come. But come it did, and once again he took up his stumbling way toward the west.

Reduced by fear and fatigue and pain to a state bordering upon half-consciousness, he blundered on, with each passing hour

becoming perceptibly weaker, for he had been without food or water since he had deserted his companions more than thirty hours before.

Noon was approaching. Kraski was moving but slowly now with frequent rests, and it was during one of these that there came to his numbed sensibilities an insistent suggestion of the voices of human beings not far distant. Quickly he shook himself and attempted to concentrate his waning faculties. He listened intently, and presently, with a renewal of strength, he arose to his feet.

There was no doubt about it. He heard voices but a short distance away, and they sounded not like the tones of the natives, but rather those of Europeans. Yet he was still careful, and so he crawled cautiously forward, until at a turning of the trail he saw before him a clearing dotted with trees which bordered the banks of a muddy stream. Near the edge of the river was a small hut thatched with grasses and surrounded by a rude palisade and further protected by an outer *boma* of thorn bushes.

It was from the direction of the hut that the voices were coming, and now he clearly discerned a woman's voice raised in protest and in anger, and replying to it the deep voice of a man.

Slowly the eyes of Carl Kraski went wide in incredulity, not unmixed with terror, for the tones of the voice of the man he heard were the tones of the dead Esteban Miranda, and the voice of the woman was that of the missing Flora Hawkes, whom he had long since given up as dead also. But Carl Kraski was no great believer in the supernatural. Disembodied spirits need no huts or palisades or *bomas* of thorns. The owners of those voices were as alive—as material—as he.

He started forward toward the hut, his hatred of Esteban and his jealousy almost forgotten in the relief he felt in the realization that he was again to have the companionship of creatures of his own kind. He had moved, however, but a few steps from the edge of the jungle when the woman's voice came again to his ear, and with it the sudden realization of his nakedness.

He paused in thought, looking about him, and presently he was busily engaged gathering the long, broad-leaved jungle grasses, from which he fabricated a rude but serviceable skirt, which he fastened about his waist with a twisted rope of the same material. Then, with a feeling of renewed confidence, he moved forward toward the hut. Fearing that they might not recognize him at first, and, taking him for an enemy, attack him, Kraski, before he reached the entrance to the palisade, called Esteban by name. Immediately the Spaniard came from the hut, followed by the girl. Had Kraski not heard his voice and recognized him by it, he would have thought him Tarzan of the Apes, so close was the remarkable resemblance.

For a moment the two stood looking at the strange apparition before them.

"Don't you know me?" asked Kraski. "I am Carl—Carl Kraski. You know me, Flora."

"Carl!" exclaimed the girl, and started to leap forward; but Esteban grasped her by the wrist and held her back.

"What are you doing here, Kraski?" asked the Spaniard in a surly tone.

"I am trying to make my way to the coast," replied the Russian. "I am nearly dead from starvation and exposure."

"The way to the coast is there," said the Spaniard, and pointed down the trail toward the west. "Keep moving, Kraski; it is not healthy for you here."

"You mean to say that you would send me on without food or water?" demanded the Russian.

"There is water," said Esteban, pointing at the river, "and the jungle is full of food for one with sufficient courage and intelligence to gather it."

"You cannot send him away!" cried the girl. "I did not think it possible that even you could be so cruel." Then, turning to the Russian, "Oh, Carl," she cried, "do not go! Save me! Save me from this beast!"

"Then stand aside!" cried Kraski, and as the girl wrenched herself free from the grasp of Miranda, the Russian leveled his automatic and fired point-blank!

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK



The Adventures of Peabody Smith

By **WILLIAM J. FLYNN**,
Former Chief, United States Secret Service,
and **GEORGE BARTON.**

XII.—THE SANDERSON SAPPHIRES.

THE Sanderson sapphires, the rarest of precious gems, had been stolen, and it was reported that Jimmie Tucker, reputed to be the thief, was coming over on the Albatross. Moreover, the authorities had information that the audacious Tucker had openly boasted that he would smuggle them through the customs line in spite of the entire United States government.

It was that boast which brought Viola Craig to see Peabody Smith. Viola was the companion of Mrs. Sarah Sanderson, the owner of the stones, who was naturally very

much flustered over their loss. She feared that some act of stupidity might enable Tucker to make his boast good, and it was for that reason that Viola was begging him to take the case.

Peabody shook his head and the crows' feet around his eyes seemed to multiply by the hundred. He was tired, and the thought of recovering other people's jewels did not appeal to him very strongly. He was about to refuse, but Viola Craig gave him such an appealing glance that he hesitated, and in that moment he was lost. Her auburn

The first story of this series appeared in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for October 28.

hair, her clear complexion, and the winsome, wistful eyes of gray attracted the detective powerfully.

She described the gems in detail. One was a cornflower blue tint. The depth of the color was remarkable. Cut in the form of a dome it showed six starlike rays. The play of colors varied according to the direction in which it was viewed. It came from Burma and had been acquired by the uncle of Sarah Sanderson, who was preparing to send it to her when it suddenly disappeared. The mate of this stone was said to be in the possession of the King of Ava. The other sapphire resembled the first one except that it was slightly smaller. This second gem had its counterpart in the museum of the Jardin des Plantes, in Paris.

"Miss Craig," said Peabody with his melancholy smile, "I'll undertake the case and do the best I can."

It was Monday and the Albatross was expected to arrive in New York on Wednesday afternoon. This gave the detective an opportunity of gathering up the odds and ends of the mystery, a task in which he was materially assisted by the Collector of Customs. His information was to the effect that the sapphires were then in the possession of Jimmie Tucker. The government official said that the boarding officer and all the inspectors had been given strict orders to look out for the sapphires, and he was sure they could not slip through such a perfect net.

He used the plural because he was confident that Jimmie Tucker, with all of his cleverness, would not attempt the trick single-handed. Indeed, he had been told that Tucker was on very friendly terms with a highly attractive Englishwoman named Olga Brayton. No, he knew nothing to the discredit of Miss Brayton, but she might be the inevitable "woman in the case," and for that reason was to be watched.

When Wednesday came Peabody Smith was all ready for action. The customs tug went down the river to meet incoming vessels as usual, and the boarding officer who was assigned to the Albatross was warned not to permit any one to leave the ship until it docked. The detective, unusually confident, elected to meet the boat at the pier.

He smiled broadly when he noted that Captain Hanson was on the bridge of the Albatross with the pilot. Peabody knew Hanson and had a high opinion of the broad-chested, long-whiskered seaman. A man to be trusted in any emergency, and one who could always be counted upon to cooperate with the constituted authorities.

There was the usual delay in docking, but finally the gangway was put in place and the detective was the first one to set feet on the solid deck of the great liner. Captain Hanson met him with outstretched hand.

"You know my mission, captain," exclaimed Peabody with the exchange of greetings.

"Aye, lad," was the hearty rejoinder, "and I suppose your first move will be to interview the lassie in the case."

The detective assented, and was escorted to a first-class cabin on the second deck. Olga Brayton was there, seated in a comfortable chair, and looking the picture of luxury and discontent. She had coal-black hair, regular features and dark brown eyes that seemed to look out on the world with distrust. She was fashionably dressed and carried herself with an air of authority. A beautiful woman, undeniably, and one fully competent to take care of herself.

The detective was presented, and she greeted him in a manner that was very ingratiating. But Peabody Smith was not in the mood to be dazzled by beauty, and he came to the point abruptly.

"You know why I am here, Miss Brayton—I want the Sanderson sapphires."

She laughed—a rippling laugh that sounded like running waters on the mountainside.

"I'm very sorry to have to disappoint you, but you are too late."

"Too late!" ejaculated the detective. "What do you mean by that?"

"What I say—the inspector of customs has been here and taken the sapphires."

Peabody turned to Captain Hanson, with surprise and incredulity in his gray eyes. The seaman heaved his broad shoulders in assent.

"What Miss Brayton tells you is correct. You know the customs people boarded us just after we passed quarantine. The board-

ing officer has interviewed her and received the jewels."

The detective was annoyed.

"There does not seem to be much use for me here. However, maybe Miss Brayton would like to make a statement."

She pouted.

"I can only repeat what I have already told the inspector. I know nothing about the gems except that a package was handed to me just after I had boarded the *Albatross* and I was asked to deliver it to an address in New York. I took such small interest in the matter that I have already forgotten that address. However, it was on the package and you can obtain it from the inspector. I'm sorry I had anything to do with it, but I can assure you that I am innocent of any intentional wrongdoing. And I think it a shame to keep me here when I am anxious to get home. My mother, who is quite ill, is waiting for me. If there is anything further you can find me at the *Hotel Aldine*."

Captain Hanson looked at the young woman sympathetically. Then he turned to Peabody Smith.

"There does not seem to be any need of detaining Miss Brayton."

The detective wrinkled his brows.

"So far as I am concerned she may go. We've got the sapphires. At least, the inspector has them, which amounts to the same thing."

A customs official who was passing was called and instructed to permit the young woman to pass the lines. As she pulled her fashionable coat around her she smiled archly at the two men.

"I'm in too big a hurry to bother with my baggage now. I'll come later and look after that. In the meantime if you need me call up the *Aldine*."

As soon as she left the detective went in search of Inspector Kauffman, the boarding officer. He could not be found anywhere. One of the men said he thought he had seen him going down the wharf, but he was not certain.

Peabody Smith was in a boorish humor. He was dissatisfied with the way things were going. He turned to Captain Hanson.

"Now, if you please, we'll take a look

at Jimmie Tucker—and I'll promise you that he will not get off as easily as the girl."

But Hanson scratched his gray hair in perplexity.

"There's no one on our passenger list by that name."

For the first time that day Peabody Smith gave a hearty laugh.

"Certainly not—Jimmie wouldn't travel under his own name. But tell me, didn't you notice any of the male passengers paying particular attention to Miss Brayton?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Hart—Mr. Frederick Hart—was her constant companion."

"Then," cried Peabody gayly, "lead me to Frederick Hart."

They presently found themselves in front of a stateroom marked "No. 16." The captain tapped on the door. There was no response, and he opened it and they walked in. The sight that confronted them caused Peabody Smith to stop short, with a gasp of dismay.

On the floor lay a man with his hands and feet tied. He was stripped of coat and vest and a large cotton handkerchief was bound around his mouth. He looked up with a startled glance as the two men entered the stateroom, and they noticed that his face was ghastly white.

In an instant Captain Hanson was down on his knees removing the bandage and cutting the rope that bound his hands and feet. The victim gave a sigh of relief, displaying a row of gold teeth. He had a gray, grisly mustache, and as he struggled to a sitting posture he passed a hairy hand over his face wearily.

"This is not the passenger who had this room," declared Captain Hanson, "although there is something strangely familiar about him."

"There should be," grunted Peabody Smith, a melancholy smile stealing over his sad countenance. "That is Inspector Kauffman, of the customs service."

"But—but," stammered the perplexed seaman, "what about the inspector who confiscated the sapphires from Miss Brayton?"

"A crook and an impostor, dressed in the uniform of the United States Customs Service."

Captain Hanson sank on a cushioned seat, and gazed at the detective with the air of one who has been hit with a club.

"We—we've been hoodwinked!" he exclaimed.

Peabody Smith indulged in a hearty laugh.

"You have stated it admirably," he said, "but I can't say that I'm called upon to shed any tears. I've already told you there has been too much divided authority in his case. If I had been given complete charge the results might have been different.

By this time Inspector Kauffman had managed to struggle to his feet and stood looking at the two men in helpless fashion. Captain Hanson contrived to secure a few fingers of brandy, and after he had swallowed this the color returned to the man's face.

"Now, Kauffman," cried Peabody Smith without a trace of sympathy in his voice, "you've been made to look like thirty cents. Tell us all about it."

The bewildered inspector moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue and began to speak in a slow, halting style.

"It—it happened so quickly that I hardly know how to tell the story. Anyhow, I came aboard with the fixed intention of finding Jimmie Tucker and recovering the Sanderson sapphires. First I distributed the blank forms of declaration so that the other men could get to work as soon as possible. Then I started to look for Tucker. I was coming along the corridor when some one in this room grabbed me by the arm and pulled me inside. Before I knew what was going on he had a handkerchief to my nose and I found myself on the floor. He must have tied me while I was unconscious. That handkerchief must have been soaked in chloroform."

Hanson picked up the bit of cotton and sniffed at it. It still retained the odor of chloroform. While he was doing this Kauffman squinted at the detective.

"What's the matter?" asked the veteran.

"My glasses," replied the inspector. "I can't see very well without them."

Captain Hanson gave a loud groan.

"That other fellow had them on when he got the gems from Miss Brayton. He

took them with your badge and uniform. That was the final touch."

Peabody Smith grinned.

"That was just like Jimmie Tucker. He's the most artistic crook in the business. Never overlooks the slightest detail. He must imagine we are the greatest bunch of boobs in America. What the government will think of you, Kauffman, is something beyond me."

Something like a mist came over the squinting eyes of the inspector. He spoke tremulously.

"It wasn't my fault. I was taken un-awares. Any man might be caught in a position like that. I never dreamed of such a thing. I'm a poor man with a family. I hope you gentlemen will say a word in my favor."

Captain Hanson was too much disgusted to reply. If Peabody Smith was affected by the appeal he did not show it in his manner. In the meantime the purser of the ship came to the door of the cabin and displayed a pair of thick-rimmed glasses.

"I found these in the room just vacated by Miss Brayton," he said to the captain.

Inspector Kauffman looked up with a start. He reached out an eager hand for the spectacles.

"They belong to me. They were taken from me by that scoundrel."

Peabody Smith treated himself to a grin—to what might properly be described as a malicious grin.

"Jimmie Tucker was very courteous to return your glasses. He knows that you will need them to go home. But he won't return your uniform."

"Why not?" asked Captain Hanson.

"For the simple reason that he is wearing it in order to get through the customs lines and to make his escape. He knows very well that he will pass unnoticed in that garb."

"By George!" exclaimed Hanson. "I never thought of that—he's probably made his get-away by this time."

"Not probably, but certainly," said the detective, "and it is quite clear that Jimmie is thinking just about twice as fast as we are to-day."

While they were talking Inspector Kauffman looked as if he would keel over from

exhaustion. Captain Hanson called one of the customs men and advised him to take the official to his home. After he had gone the seaman turned to Smith.

"I think you are a little too hard on that man. He has gone through a painful experience. And he's not a detective who is expected to be on the lookout for adventures of this kind."

Peabody shook his head reproachfully.

"If he's the bonehead you are trying to make him he has no place in the customs service. He ought to be fired on sight."

Before he left the Albatross the detective made a search of the room that had been occupied by Olga Brayton. It was in a state of disorder, with excelsior and wrapping paper piled on the floor. The detective poked about this stuff and presently came across a bit of pasteboard. He picked it up. It was the photograph of a rather attractive looking man. Peabody gave a whistle of delight.

"It's a picture of Jimmie Tucker," he said to Hanson, "and it may prove to be the clew for the solution of this mystery."

"What are you going to do?" asked the seaman.

"Well," replied the detective as he slipped the photograph into his pocket, "I'm going to enlist the aid of the New York police force. Before nightfall not less than ten thousand men will be hunting for the clever gentleman. In the midst of four or five million people he may be able to escape, but I doubt it."

He left the ship and the pier in a thoughtful state of mind. Instead of taking a cab he walked and his wanderings took him in the direction of Newspaper Row. He reviewed the case from the time he had been called in by Miss Craig up to that moment. The thought of that young woman seemed to sharpen his wits. He recalled her winsome, wistful gray eyes, and her anxiety to recover the Sanderson sapphires. And there and then he resolved that she should not be disappointed. She had implicit faith in him and he would not fail her.

In that moment a big idea came to him. He walked rapidly now and in a few minutes he was in the office of the managing editor of the *Morning Chronicle*.

"Clark," he said to his friend, "I have an idea for a feature for the *Chronicle*."

The tired looking man behind the flat-top desk smiled skeptically.

"Ideas are the scarcest things in the world. If you give me one I'll have all the flags hung out and order a salute fired from that cannon on the roof of the building."

Peabody Smith laughed in return and thrust the photograph of Jimmie Tucker into the hands of the newspaper man.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Never mind who it is. I want you to print it in the *Chronicle* in the morning and to offer a prize of fifty dollars for the first person who will give information relating to the present whereabouts of the original of the photograph. If the information is authentic I'll pay the fifty dollars."

Clark's eyes lit up with interest.

"That's a good stunt. I'll print it if you'll say that it won't get us into any trouble."

"Trouble? Why, man, it will demonstrate whether you have the big circulation you claim, and, in addition, it may be the means of bringing you a crackerjack news story."

"And you won't tell me what is back of it?"

"I can't yet—you'll have to take it on faith."

"Very well, Peabody, anything you say goes in this office. The picture of the great unknown will appear in the *Chronicle* tomorrow morning."

And thus it came about that the features of Jimmie Tucker were reproduced in nearly 300,000 copies of the *Chronicle*. It excited widespread interest, and nowhere more than in the offices of the rival newspapers.

What did it mean? Was this anonymous person missing? Had he been drowned or murdered? All of them had a feeling that somehow or other it was to prove or disprove the much talked-about power of the press. Before he left, Peabody Smith arranged that he was to be called to the *Chronicle* office as soon as they received any answers to the identification contest as it was humorously phrased by Clark.

The detective spent the rest of the evening putting other activities in action. He had grimly resolved that he would get Jimmie Tucker, dead or alive. In his calculations he counted largely upon the boldness of this international crook.

Jimmie was the most audacious man in the business. He was successful because he took big chances. He would laugh at the publication of his photograph—if he happened to see it and would scorn to stay in hiding. Indeed, he had a theory that New York City was the safest place in the world for any man to hide—as long as he freely mingled with the multitude.

II.

ON the afternoon of the day of the printing of the photograph, Peabody Smith received a telephone message from his friend, the editor. He hastened to the office of the *Chronicle* and there found a man sitting in the reception room with the air of a sinner on the stool of repentance. He was poorly dressed and ill at ease.

"Well, my friend, what do you want?"

"I want fifty dollars," he answered with matchless brevity.

As he spoke he produced a copy of the *Chronicle*, and pointed to the picture of Jimmie Tucker.

"I've seen him twice," he volunteered, "and if you give me the coin I can point him out to you."

"What is your business?" asked Peabody curiously.

"I'm a window cleaner, and I help the janitor of an apartment house on Riverside Drive. That's where I seen the bloke. He's got rooms on the fourth floor of our apartment house."

Peabody chuckled. It was just like Jimmie Tucker to make his habitation in the choicest section of the city. After some further conversation he agreed to go to the Riverside address with the window cleaner and obtain visual evidence of his assertion.

"But I must not be seen," warned the detective.

"Have it your own way, boss," grinned the assistant janitor. "All I care about is the fifty bucks."

It was about dusk when Peabody, Tim Farley and the other man arrived at the upper end of Riverside Drive, and they only had time to dodge behind the shade of a friendly tree when the window cleaner exclaimed:

"There he is now—the man with the stovepipe hat."

Peabody Smith looked in the direction indicated and there, in the flesh, was the inimitable Jimmie Tucker. He was just leaving the house and he swung his stick carelessly, and with the air of one who had spent his entire life in fashionable society. His tall tile was shining in the sunlight and his black mustache was waxed to a point.

A word from the detective and Tim Farley was on the track of the crook.

As soon as they had passed from sight the detective opened his wallet and handed his informant five ten dollar notes. The window cleaner thanked him and wanted to know if there was anything else he could do.

"Nothing," replied Peabody. "All you have to do now is to saw wood and say nothing."

The detective went downtown on the top of a bus and during the journey laid out his plan of campaign. He was satisfied that Tucker had not disposed of the sapphires. That was something that had to be handled with care and he felt that the clever crook was feeling his way before taking final action. His residence on Riverside Drive was a preliminary to the game he had in mind. Peabody Smith was thinking of all these things when he reached his own apartments on Washington Square. He found Tim Farley seated in the most comfortable chair in the living room. He rose as the detective entered.

"Well, boss," he exclaimed, "Jimmie went to Moffet's and had a talk with the old man. Then he went uptown again."

The detective nodded his head understandingly. He knew that Moffet was a man who bought, sold and exchanged jewelry. He had agents in all of the large cities of Europe. He kept within the law, but he was a man who was willing to take a chance where big money was involved.

"Tim," said Peabody, "we must call on

Jimmie Tucker to-night, but the thing that is troubling me is how to make sure of getting our fingers on those sapphires."

The words had scarcely left his mouth when the doorbell rang and the next moment Viola Craig was ushered into the room. Peabody was on his feet in a trice. Her presence lighted the room as if by magic.

She wanted to know what progress he had made in his investigation. He told her in detail and explained what he proposed to do that night.

"The thing is to get the gems from their hiding place. Tucker is clever and it would be folly to nab him and miss the sapphires. If I only had some one to go there as a pretended messenger from Moffet we might pull off the trick."

The wistful gray eyes of Viola Craig brightened with excitement. She hesitated for a moment and then exclaimed:

"I'll be your emissary!"

"Oh, Miss Craig!" protested the veteran. "Think of the danger you will run."

"I like danger," she smiled. "And besides I'll feel safe if you are near by."

There was much more talk, but in the end the detective yielded and an hour later they started for the far end of Riverside Drive. Peabody scanned the names in the letter boxes in the hallway and found that his gifted friend was registered as Percival Henderson. The three adventurers finally reached the fourth floor and Miss Craig tapped at the door of the designated suite. It was opened on a crack by a woman.

"I come as a messenger from Mr. Moffet," Miss Craig announced, "and would like to see Mr. Henderson."

That was the magic password which secured her admission. Cleverly enough she managed to turn the deadlatch as she walked in. The woman who escorted her was none other than Olga Brayton, ravishingly attired. They passed through a small reception room and into what was evidently a living room. A large velvet curtain separated the two apartments and as they entered the far one Olga Brayton drew the curtain.

At the same moment Peabody Smith and Tim Farley opened the outer door and tip-

toed into the reception room. The detective parted the curtain slightly and was able to see all that passed. As the two women stood there a door in the rear opened and Jimmie Tucker joined them. Viola, calm and collected, anticipated his words:

"Mr. Moffet was unable to come. He said that if you would show me the sapphires I would be able to make you an offer. I am familiar with gems and can act with authority."

"How do I know who you are?" asked Jimmie suspiciously.

She shrugged her fair shoulders and actually smiled—that winsome, wistful smile of hers.

"I don't know much about you, either, but here I am, ready to do business."

He hesitated for a moment, then turned abruptly to the telephone. He asked for a number—the number of Moffet's shop.

For a moment there was a look of fear in Viola Craig's gray eyes, but it passed as rapidly as it came, and Tucker did not notice it. She must keep a stiff upper lip. Yet her heart fluttered while the crook waited for a reply to his call.

He was unable to get his number, and presently he hung up the receiver with a grunt of disgust.

"Naturally," she said with cheerful mendacity, "Mr. Moffet has been called away on business—that's why I'm here."

Still Jimmie Tucker hesitated.

"You are not afraid of a poor-lone woman, are you?" she taunted.

That was the final straw. He hurried into the far room, and returned in a moment with two elaborate velvet boxes. He opened the lids and laid them on a small table. They were dazzling. Peabody Smith, peering through a slit in the curtain, could see the play of colors coming from every side of the sapphires.

Viola walked over and pretended to examine them critically. And all the while she could feel the wild beating of her heart. What would happen? Surely this was the cue for Peabody to enter.

Suddenly a flash of recognition came to Olga Brayton. She was trembling as she pointed an accusing finger at the girl. She almost shrieked as she spoke to Tucker.

"What's that girl doing here. She's the companion of Mrs. Sanderson. You're not going to give her the sapphires, are you?"

Jimmie Tucker gave a chuckle as he looked at Viola.

"Ah, my pretty maid, I thought you were sailing under false colors. But you have put your head in the lion's mouth, now, and you have no one to blame but yourself."

He made a dash for her, and she let out a piercing scream as she retreated to the side of the room. In his anger Tucker upset the little table and the sapphires fell to the floor. At the same moment Peabody Smith tore the velvet curtains aside and ran into the room, followed by Tim Farley.

"The game's up, Jimmie," he exclaimed. "You might as well get ready to come with me."

The detective was pointing a revolver at the crook as he spoke. Viola Craig, shrinking in a corner, watched the scene with fascinated interest. Olga Brayton, with a look of unutterable scorn on her beautiful face, was staring at the detective. It made a striking tableau, with vice defeated and virtue triumphant.

Then something entirely unexpected happened.

Olga Brayton, with a powerful sweep of her arm, knocked the revolver out of the hand of Peabody Smith. Quick as a flash, Jimmie Tucker took advantage of the situation. Both hands shot into his hip pockets and the next moment Peabody and Tim Farley found themselves staring into the muzzles of two automatics. The weapon which the detective had lost lay on the floor in front of Tim Farley, but he dared not stoop to pick it up. The voice of Jimmie Tucker made that clear.

"If either one of you guys tries to get away I'll blow your heads off."

"Collectively or one at a time?" asked Peabody with a forced smile.

But for once Jimmie was not in a bantering humor.

"Get those sapphires, Olga," he commanded, and at the same time he thundered at Peabody and his companion—"Hands up! Do you hear, hands up!"

In that fearfully tense moment Peabody

Smith saw a little black button in the wall which was within reach. And as he started to raise his hands in mid-air he suddenly contrived to push that button.

The room was plunged in darkness.

Two flashes of fire and two pistol shots spat out angrily. But at the same instant Peabody and Tim Farley dropped flat on the floor, and before you could count five there came the heavy sound of a body falling. For two minutes there was pandemonium in the darkened room, then the voice of Peabody Smith was heard calling:

"Lights! Give us the lights!"

Tremblingly Viola Craig found her way to the push button, and the room was brightly illuminated again.

The tables had been turned. Peabody and Tim had the revolvers, and Jimmie Tucker and Olga Brayton were their prisoners. A telephone message brought the police, and the two distinguished crooks were turned over to their tender mercies. By a strange coincidence, Moffet, the jewelry expert, was coming into the hallway as they passed out. Jimmie caught sight of the man and gave him a parting salute:

"You are five minutes too late, you big bonehead. Kings have lost their crowns in less time than that."

Moffet silently slunk down the hallway and disappeared in the shadows of the night.

Upstairs in the living room Peabody Smith was speaking to Viola Craig.

"If you will kindly place those sapphires in your pocket," he said, "we will see that you are escorted to the home of Mrs. Sanderson. If it had not been for your assistance our little program might have been a complete failure."

Peabody Smith stooped down and kissed the hand of the girl as he left her at the door of Sarah Sanderson's home. And that night as he sat in state in his Washington Square apartment he could almost catch the faint odor of the perfume of her auburn hair, and could see her slender form and her winsome, wistful gray eyes. He turned to Farley as he lit a fresh Pittsburgh stogie:

"Ah, Tim," he whispered, "but youth is a glorious thing."

Tim agreed without having the faintest notion about what the old man was talking.



The Free Trader

By **KATHRENE** and **ROBERT PINKERTON**

Authors of "Herdmen of the Air," "The Hidden Kingdom," etc.

CHAPTER XX.

A SWEET SURRENDER.

BICKNELL laid the skull where he had found it and stepped back out of the ashes. Except for Helen's outburst, no one had spoken. Mackeod stood staring at the missionary's ghastly find. Son of the north though he was, accustomed to its grim surprises, he seemed stunned by what he saw.

Alan, sickened and despondent, continued to watch Helen. She seemed to have expended herself in that last cry of defiance. Her face was white and her eyes were dull and unseeing. Swaying and stumbling, she started toward the house.

Mears stood as she left him. He had

not spoken. Suddenly he seemed to have become very old and completely broken.

"Grimwood," he said gently, "you see what I must do. There is nothing else open to me."

Mears nodded.

"I'll have to lock you up," the district manager continued. "To-morrow we will start for Fort Bruce."

He led the post manager back to the dwelling house and into his own room.

"Will you give me your word you will not attempt to escape?" he asked as he left.

"Listen to me, John!" Mears pleaded. "I didn't do this. I'm innocent, I tell you. It's Gray. He's at the bottom of it, somehow. I'm in a trap and you've got to help me clear myself."

This story began in the Argosy-Allstory Weekly for December 16.

"You'll stay here in your room?"

"You can depend on me."

Macleod joined Alan and Bicknell outside. As he approached them an employee of the Great North, Sandy Wolf, came up.

"You find that fur?" he asked.

"What do you know about it?" Macleod demanded.

"Look in the closet in Mears's room and in his chest."

"What do you mean?"

"My sister, Witte, the housekeeper, she make his bed this morning. She hang up the clothes in the closet. She smell fur. In the closet she see a silver gray fox."

"Come on, you two," Macleod commanded as he turned back to the dwelling house. He knocked at Mears's door and entered. His face was black as he strode across the room and into the closet. In a moment he appeared with the skin of a silver gray fox in his hands.

He threw open the lid of a chest that stood against the wall and from beneath some clothing he dragged out a dark-skinned fisher.

As he stood up he saw Helen, who had followed the others into the room.

"You can't go on with this!" she cried fiercely. "You know it is not true."

She saw the fur in the district manager's hands, took a faltering step forward and then collapsed. Alan caught her in his arms and laid her on her father's bed.

"Go, all of you," Mears said. "I'll take care of her. Go away and leave us."

The three went out into the hall. Alan ran to the kitchen for some water, which he set inside the room, and then joined Macleod and Bicknell.

Macleod seemed to be stunned by what he had discovered.

"Think of it!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "A Great North man all his life and then this! I thought I could understand the killing. He was beside himself with anger. But to steal! To steal fur from the company! I can't believe it."

For Alan the matter was closed so far as his participation in it was concerned. He had never feared the charges against him, but now that the worst had been proved against Mears he wished he could shoulder

the responsibility. Across the hall, broken and crushed, was the person in the world he cared most about, and yet he was powerless to help her.

He had placed little credence in Bicknell's story. He had believed from the first that Allardyce had taken advantage of his quarrel with Mears and had stolen the fur and fired the building to cover the theft. When the clerk's remains were found he had been sickened by what he knew the result would be for Helen.

"I'll be at home if you want me for anything," he told Macleod as he started away.

There was no business to occupy Alan's attention at his own post. No hunters had come in and his employees, after the hard work of fighting fire, were resting in their homes. Physically he also was tired out, and he had been under a severe nervous strain for two days and nights, but he had no desire to sleep.

He sat down in the living room. It was the first time he had been alone and had the opportunity to go over the evidence. Point by point he took up the facts produced against Mears. Until the finding of the skull he had believed the old man innocent and he saw now that he had not wished to believe him otherwise. He recalled that unconsciously he had suppressed evidence in his story to Macleod, that he had not mentioned the fact that the trading shop had been locked on the outside or that the fire had started in the office at the rear, where the skull had afterwards been found.

He admitted, too, the reason for his silence. He had wished to spare Helen. He wished to spare her now. He shuddered as he thought of how he had last seen her, crushed and broken by what her father had done. Suddenly he heard a knock at the door and arose to admit the girl herself.

White-faced, lacking completely the fire and the pride with which she had always met him, Helen walked into the room without speaking. She did not even look up. As Alan closed the door she turned to face him, but her eyes were still directed downward.

"I've come," she said in a low voice.

Alan, dumfounded, remained silent.

"Don't make it harder for me!" she cried

fiercely, and her eyes blazed as she looked up at him. "I've come. I'm yours. You said you loved me. I'll do anything. Only you must free my father of this terrible charge."

"Free him!" Alan repeated.

"Yes. You can do it. Tell the truth. You've fought my father. You hated him because he called you a free trader. You have done all you could to humble him, to drive him mad, to force him to do foolish things because you knew you could make him lose his temper."

"Stop that!" Alan commanded furiously.

He forgot his compassion. He forgot that he wished more than anything else to free this girl from a situation that was crushing her. He remembered only that she had entered that room once before and, through a soft voice and soft eyes, had disarmed him and then had abandoned him to her father's uncertain temper. He remembered how she had tricked him with a sprained ankle. He remembered the arrogance and contempt with which she had always met him and he saw now that she humbled herself only to deceive him once more, that she even offered herself as a tempting bait in a final effort to save her father.

"Stop it!" he repeated. "You can't trick me again."

"I'm not trying to trick you," she retorted. "I mean it. I'll go with you, anywhere, if you'll tell the truth, confess that you set that fire and stole the fur."

For the first time Alan realized the significance of her opening statement. She had come to him not because she trusted him, but to make terms with one whom she despised. Instantly that fierce, inexplicable desire to humble her returned. He wanted to compel her submission, to beat down her arrogance, to force her to admit his strength and seek its protection.

"I don't want you!" he exclaimed.

"Not in the way you've come. You've scorned me ever since you first knew me. You've had nothing but contempt for me. You have now, when you come to make such an offer. Because I'm not one of the chosen, because my name is not at the bottom of a Great North contract, I'm an out-

cast. I'm a weakling. I'm not fit to associate with. I'm only to be used when you need me, to be tricked.

"And down at the bottom of your heart you know it isn't true. You know that as a fur trader I'm far better than your father ever was. You know I've defeated him and you know, too, that I've done it decently.

"And yet your damnable pride and your absurd prejudice leads you to believe you can come here and deceive and insult me. What did you think? Did you believe that for your favor I would admit a crime I never committed? And yet, God help me, I would have done more than that if you had been fair."

He stepped back to the door and placed one hand on the latch.

"I think you'd better go now," he said.

"Then you refuse to help me!" she cried.

There was a despairing note in her voice that set Alan's heart to leaping.

"Help you!" he repeated. "I've been doing that. I sat up all night to guard you from those crazy Indians. It was for you I concealed facts about the fire and it was for your sake I tried to persuade Bicknell his charges were foolish. And just now, when we know Allardyce was murdered, I was going over all the evidence trying to find a loophole for your father, trying to help you, trying to save you from what this means.

"You have hated me and tricked me. You have had only contempt for me. You have put a bitterness into this winter's work that I never felt. I have no prejudices. I didn't hate.

"But I have some pride and I have faith in myself. You made a mistake when you first saw me, again when I came here, and now you have made the biggest blunder of all. Good-by."

He swung the door open, but Helen did not move. She had been watching him with wide, staring eyes. She had not winced or showed resentment when he had denounced her. She had seemed not to hear his words, but to be wakening to a new impression of him.

"The trouble with you is that you don't know a man when you see one," Alan burst

forth brutally. "If he wears a Great North label he's a saint. If he's a free trader he's a scoundrel."

"Don't!" she begged. "Don't say that. It's not true, not down at the bottom. I didn't come here to trick you. I don't know why I came. I hardly knew I had come. I only wanted—"

She had spoken with great difficulty and at last her voice trailed off.

"Go on," Alan prompted roughly.

"It was my fault," she burst forth. "I know I made you fight us. I tried to deceive myself. I kept telling myself that I hated you. I—"

"Go on," he repeated when she paused.

"I was beaten. I was wild with fear. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't go to Macleod. He believes the worst."

Alan felt his heart thudding against his ribs and crowding up into his throat. He suddenly realized that the moment for which he had waited ever since Mrs. Ashdown's tea was at hand and that he must be strong to wait for it.

"Say it!" he cried. "Say it! Your father was helpless. Macleod was implacable. So you came to me. You came because— Go on! Tell me why you came."

His sense of power rose above all else. He knew he must force her to admit his dominance, that he must not waver. He even exulted when he saw her spirit flare in revolt. Her head went up. Her eyes flashed. Her very attitude defied him. He saw the struggle, her last desperate attempt to defy him, the first wavering, and then suddenly a strange and intangible change came over her.

A new expression dawned in her eyes. It was like a sunrise, growing gradually from soft suggestion to a blazing, enveloping flood.

"I didn't know why I came," she said softly. "I didn't understand, even after I got here. But now I know."

She held out both her hands. Her eyes were warm, warm as Alan had never dreamed they could be, and with a brilliance he found dazzling.

"Good God!" he whispered huskily.

All the fight had gone out of him, all the desire for dominance. His victory brought

no fierce exultation, only an overpowering tenderness. He did not even remember that he had demanded submission. Something prompted him to grasp the extended hands and draw her closer. Then his arms were around her.

In that moment of pure emotion everything was forgotten. At last Helen wrenched herself free.

"Not now!" she cried. "There's father! Alan, you must do something. You can!"

There was the faith, the confidence, the dependence he had sought.

"I will!" he exclaimed. "I'll do it tonight. I'll surprise Macleod, hold him here and give both of you a big start for the railroad and the States."

"No! No!" she protested. "Not that way! He never did this. I know it. You must prove he didn't."

He looked at her searchingly and then asked:

"You're certain of this? How?"

"In the same way I'm positive you didn't do it."

He sprang forward and again took her in his arms. She did not try to get away, but looked up at him.

"And I know now I have always been sure of you," she added. "Only I didn't know it before, wouldn't admit it. It is why I came to you to-day, only when I got here I was bewildered and uncertain. That is why I accused you. I couldn't think of anything else to say and, then, something drove me to it. I didn't want to admit—to admit this, Alan."

It was the final surrender, an admission of his strength, but he failed utterly to feel that fierce joy of victory he had long anticipated. He only knew that the spirit he had hoped to crush was not the defiant thing he had believed it to be, that it had been only a mask in front of the real Helen, the adorable, dependent creature now in his arms.

His own strong spirit responded to the call of this distressed soul. The very plea to his strength had intensified it and suddenly he felt competent to meet any situation.

"Don't worry," he whispered huskily. "We're going to do it because we must."

"I know you will," Helen began as she leaned back and looked at him.

And then she sprang free. She had caught a glimpse of some one outside and peeked out of the window.

"Macleod is coming," she whispered. "I must go."

As she opened the door she looked back at him with an expression of faith and trust that wiped out all remembrance of the winter's struggle between the uncompromising spirits and gave to him a determination that somehow he would free her of this dread thing.

CHAPTER XXI.

MORE EVIDENCE.

IF the district manager was surprised to find Helen leaving the Chester dwelling house he did not show it.

"I'm sorry she had to know we found that fur," he said when he was seated. "She had endured too much already."

"She would have had to know it some time," Alan answered, "and she still believes her father is innocent."

"Naturally. She is devoted to him. Sometimes I wonder if her adoration hasn't kept his arrogance alive."

"But do you think he is guilty?"

"What else can I think? I don't want to. He has been a faithful servant of the company nearly all his life. If it were possible I'd hush this up. I'd be glad to."

"Why don't you?" Alan asked.

"I can't. My hands are tied. The thing is bound to get out. And at the first hint Rippingale and Starmer will be down here. Fur land isn't what it used to be."

"You think the evidence warrants your making the charge?"

"It compels me to!" Macleod exclaimed angrily. "I wish that damned, nose-puncher had stayed at the mission where he belongs. If it had been only the loss of the fur we could have hushed it up."

Alan caught a glimpse of hope. Macleod might be one of the younger men who saw the new trend in fur land, but he was still of the Great North, clannish, ready to go to any lengths to defend a fellow servant

and to hush up any scandal. It is a rare and beautiful spirit of solidarity which common devotion to the history and traditions of the great company has developed among those who serve it.

"He's not the first man to run amuck," Alan urged.

"I understand that perfectly. No one knows better than I what fur land can do to a man's mind. It is the old fellows like Mears who give us trouble. For forty years he has been running a post, shut off from the world, living among people of an inferior race, king of a small district. His word has been law. He has never known restraint. It is really a revival of feudalism we have had here in the north, and with it has come the arrogance and mistaken sense of unlimited power.

"Mears is the product of such a system and now he is the victim of it. If the Great North could save him it would leave nothing undone.

"I realize, too, that I am partly to blame. I tried to discipline him and the accumulated pride of forty years would not stand it. I don't think he ever intended to kill Allardyce, but he lost his head and struck that blow. Then he became desperate and burned the building. He thought the fire would conceal the murder and the theft of the fur."

"But he worked hard to save the fur in the loft," Alan objected.

"He had to when you were there, and then, of course, if he saved it all there was proof of theft, and theft would divert suspicion.

"There is another factor. For months he has been brooding, has believed the company was not treating him fairly. It is a common delusion these old fellows have, and he felt justified in taking any measure to even up the score. How he intended to get out and sell the fur, only he knows. It was probably as crack-brained a plan as his whole line of action has been."

"Then you agree with me that he really is not sane?" Alan asked.

"In a way, no. Not any more than any of those old fellows ever is. They all become warped and distorted. He is only an extreme instance."

"And he really should not be punished," Alan added.

"The company would understand. It has overlooked incidents like this in the past. If he had only stolen the fur he would be safe. But you can't expect the law and the Northwest Mounted to take a charitable, understanding attitude."

Alan was silent. He had gone as far as he dared in suggesting clemency. To say what he really believed, what Helen's faith impelled him to believe, would only bring his own reasoning into question and weaken anything he might do in Mears's behalf.

"But that is not the reason I came to talk to you to-day," Macleod continued. "You know, of course, that I was on my way to Barrier Lake when I got your note."

There was a new, crisp, businesslike tone in his voice, and Alan glanced up quickly.

"I was coming," Macleod said, "to take over the Chester post."

"Take it over!" Alan repeated in amazement.

"Yes. Madge Chester has sold out to the Great North and has left the north country."

Alan leaped to his feet.

"Sold out!" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes, all three posts."

"And left me high and dry! Led me on to believe that I was working for the future. Encouraged me—"

"She has provided for the salary end of her post managers' contracts," Macleod said. "The company will hand you a check for the balance of the year."

"I wasn't thinking of salary!" Alan retorted. "What was her idea? What reason did she give?"

"The deal has been pending for some time. Last summer the commissioner asked her to set a price. She did, but he refused to meet it. This winter she put over a big year all along the line. When she returned from Barrier Lake last week the commissioner was at Fort Bruce. She renewed negotiations and he took her up."

"What reason did she give for selling out in mid-winter when all her posts were going strong?"

"Of course, the price was attractive, more

than I was in favor of paying, but she told me several things," Macleod said hesitatively.

"What did she say?"

"It was in the nature of a confidence, but I will tell you. She said she had learned that no woman can run a fur trading company, that she is too much the victim of her managers."

"Victim! In what way?"

"She didn't go into details. Of course, she has had some failures. Last year at Barrier Lake her man went to pieces over whisky. She said you got the fur this year, but that you cost her a lot of money. She said you worked for pelts, not for profits."

"That's not true!" Alan cried. "I can show you the books. I never paid a cent more than I was warranted in doing."

"I gathered that there were other things. She suggested that you were one of these spectacular traders who rise like a rocket and then blow up. At any rate, she confided to me that she had taken the commissioner up at what she knew would be her high tide."

"It's a damnable piece of ingratitude," Alan raged. "Did you believe it?"

"It is hardly a concern of mine, but Madge Chester has always been a remarkable student of character, and you've never worked for any free trader more than one year."

It was true, but only Alan knew why it had been so, how his ideals of fur land had mocked and eluded him. Even the issues back of Madge's treachery must remain an issue between themselves.

She had trapped him. She had bought his brains, his energy and his loyalty and then because he had dared to love another woman she had sold him out, blackened his character and destroyed his opportunity in the north.

He remembered her that last evening, how she had led him on to talk of fur land and of how much it meant to him even while, back of that smile, back of those mocking lips, she had been gloating over her revenge.

And then suddenly a sense of freedom came to him. All winter he had been forced to fight the woman he loved. Now he was free to go to her defense, to give every

ounce of energy, all his ingenuity and determination, to the task of saving her from the disaster which threatened. His anger died as suddenly as it had come.

"As you say," he answered quietly, "neither my history nor my ability is of any interest to the Great North. You'll want to take over the post at once. But, with your permission, I am going to stay here a while, long enough to prove that Mears is innocent."

"Prove his innocence!" Macleod exclaimed. "There isn't a bit of evidence that doesn't condemn him."

"I know it," Alan answered stubbornly, "but I don't believe he did it. I suspected Allardyce from the moment I heard he had disappeared."

"You can hardly prove he killed himself, crushed his own skull."

"There's a mystery at the bottom of this and I'm going to run it down," Alan insisted.

Macleod arose.

"No one wishes you more success than I do," he said. "But I must go back. I'll have what fur was saved moved over to your trading shop."

For a long time after Macleod's departure Alan sat alone, studying the problem love had given to him. He went over each detail of the past week's happenings, searching, considering, discarding and revising. He heard the men bringing the fur from the Great North. It marked the end of his dreams in fur land, mocked him with the futility of his winter's fight.

And yet he knew it had not been futile. He had won Helen. For she had come to him, the real Helen who loved him and depended on him, and, hopeless as her cause might be, he knew that now he must not fail her.

The need of seeing her again, of having her faith recharge him with belief in her father's innocence, carried him to his feet and across to the Great North. And on the way he suddenly thought that Mears had never given the details of that last interview with Allardyce. He met Macleod at the door of the dwelling house and asked to see Mears. At once the district manager was on his guard.

"Come with me," Alan said. "I merely want to ask him some questions."

Together they went across the hall to the bedroom.

Mears was seated on the side of the bed. For the first time that winter he did not resent Alan's presence. All the fight seemed to have gone out of him. Alan explained to the old man that his story had not been exactly coherent and asked him to relate in detail what had happened.

"You heard us in the morning when we had read the mail," Mears answered dully. "You know what I said to him then, that I wouldn't give up the post. I didn't see him again until just at dark, when I was locking up the trading shop. He came in and said he wished to talk to me. He led the way back to the office, insisted that I talk there. He seemed to be very nervous. He asked me if I would not reconsider what I had said.

"I lost my temper. I told him I would not, and I told him to get out."

"Did you tell him you would kill him if he didn't, as Bicknell says?"

"I may have. I don't remember. But he did threaten to go to Fort Bruce and see Macleod and I told him to do so."

"What else did he say?"

"Nothing. He was too scared. I walked away. He followed me. I thought he'd gone out to headquarters post and I didn't care how he got there. I never saw him again."

"Was any one else there to see him leave?"

"No, and it was dark."

"You didn't go back to the trading shop that night?"

"No."

"Did Allardyce have a key to the door?"

"No. There was only one, which I carried on my ring."

Alan was silent for a moment and then turned and went out. Macleod followed him into the living room.

"Don't you see what you're doing?" the district manager protested. "You're only making him condemn himself. The door, the only door, was locked with a padlock, a cylinder lock. The only key was in Mears's pocket. But Allardyce was in the

office, killed before the fire started, and the door was locked on the inside."

"Yes," Alan answered dully, "and yet he told us the truth. I know he did."

He turned at once and went out the door. As anxious as he had been to see Helen, he wished now only to avoid her that she might not suspect the despair into which this last bit of evidence had plunged him. But he had not reached the gate in the picket fence before he heard his name called and saw her running after him.

"Don't let Macleod do this to you!" she cried. "I heard what he said, but there isn't any evidence that will make me believe it, and you must feel as I do. Don't you see? Our only chance to save him is to believe he is innocent."

"But a man's mind won't let him get around some of those facts," he told her.

"Don't listen to your mind!" she protested. "Listen to your heart, and mine. What is it that makes a successful fur trader, Alan? You know it isn't always thinking. The big things come from intuition, feeling and sensing what the other man is doing. A good fur trader must have that strange sixth sense."

"I know what you mean, but we need something else," Alan interrupted. "We've got to get down to bare facts. Macleod says he hates to do this, that he doesn't want to believe your father is guilty, but he says he's helpless. In the face of that evidence he must act."

"Take Bicknell's story and then the finding of that skull. That in itself is bad enough, but there is the finding of the fur in your father's room."

"But father never stole that fur!" Helen protested so fiercely Alan glanced at her questioningly.

"You mean you feel that he didn't," he said.

"Yes, and something more. That night I was mending a hole in his shirt. It was a new one, and he had torn it on a nail. Just before we went to bed I hung it on a hook in his closet. There was no fur there then. And that afternoon I got some things from his chest. There was no fur in it."

"But a lawyer would say your father got up after you were asleep, went out to set

the fire, and brought the fur back with him."

"But he couldn't have done that. He went to bed early. He was tired out. I sat up reading, or pretending to read. I knew something of what the Indians were saying about Mee-sa-bee. I hadn't told him, and I was worried.

"Then I saw a light in your house. I put mine out and sat at the window watching, for a long time. I didn't know what might happen. It was very late when at last I went to bed, and I had barely gone to sleep when I heard you call 'fire.' And all that time my father never left his room. Those are facts."

"Why haven't you told this before?"

"I thought the charges were so ridiculous at first, and then, when they found those bones, I guess I just stopped thinking."

"Why, it not only proves he didn't steal the fur, but that he didn't set the fire."

"He didn't steal the fur any more than he stole that fur you cached."

"You know that to be true?" Alan demanded.

"I do because I never told where it had been cached, not even to father. The tripper who went out picked up my trading outfit and was gone a week."

"But your father knew it had been cached."

"Of course. I told him and Henry that noon. But there is something more. A lot of our fur has been stolen, all the valuable pieces. They have been selected well. Only those pelts were taken which, when baled, could be easily transported and yet would be most valuable.

"My father never did that. I have been with him too much of the time. I have helped him run the post. I have been in the fur loft. That fur was all there two weeks before the fire. I checked it myself. And from that time on I was with father so much he did not have the opportunity."

Before Alan could comment Macleod called to Helen that her father wished to see her.

"Don't you believe he is innocent?" she pleaded.

"Yes, and you know I am."

"I am sure of that, Alan. But I must go. If I can think of anything more I'll come and tell you."

CHAPTER XXII.

A NEW SUSPICION.

ALAN went home and sat alone in his living room until the housekeeper called him to supper. As she served the meal she talked of the day's events. Alan was surprised to learn that the employees knew so much of what had happened, but he did not heed her palpable feelers for more information, and Kwe-ses was forced to give vent to her excitement through her own comments.

"That missionary he work hard," she said.

Alan remembered how Bicknell had come to his aid on the roof of the warehouse and he nodded.

"He stay up there when he almost cook," Kwe-ses continued. "And before that he help carry the fur to the Great North house. He carry more than any Indian.

"And me—me freeze two toes carrying water for the Great North. Wonder if Mears he pay me for those two toes now."

She rattled on until Alan was forced to hurry his meal and retreat to the living room. He wanted time to think, to rearrange the sequence of events in the light of the facts Helen had given to him. He realized that in her zeal she might have overstated things, that she might have been asleep longer than she had thought, that there might have been time enough for her father to get out of bed, set the fire and return to his room.

But these, he recognized, were only minor objections. He remained convinced of the Great North man's innocence; retained the same strong impression he had received from Helen in her last appeal to him. He became angry at Bicknell and Macleod, believed them stubborn and prejudiced. He knew Helen told the truth. Why couldn't they believe her?"

For more than an hour he paced the length of the living room countless times, trying to see his way out. He was con-

vinced, but as his resentment against Bicknell and Macleod cooled he saw that he must have facts to prove his views, that he must, if he were to save Helen, be able not only to prove her father's innocence, but point the way to the real slayer.

In this effort he went back to his first theory that Henry Allardyce was the thief, and had set fire to the store to hide the loss of the fur and thereby give him the opportunity to get his booty out of the country undetected. He saw how Allardyce might have gotten possession of the key and returned to the trading shop late at night. Bicknell had not seen him, because the clerk would not go near the missionary when such a project was on foot.

Alan was able to reconstruct the clerk's operations for the entire winter. But he could not get past the skull with the back crushed in and the fact that the trading shop door was locked on the outside.

Allardyce was eliminated. Mears was eliminated. Alan himself was eliminated. There remained only the employees, but he gave them scant thought. They lacked the initiative, the brains and the courage for such a thing. There was no possibility of a stranger coming to the post. Too many sharp eyes were on the trails, on the ice, and in the great swamps beyond the clearing.

Thus Alan's process of elimination eliminated every one. There was no one left. Except—

His pacing stopped as if he had bumped into a wall.

"Bicknell!" he exclaimed aloud. "There is no one else."

But the idea struck him as being so ridiculous, so preposterous, he laughed.

He resumed his pacing, more baffled than ever. Despair again gripped him. He was confident of Mears's innocence, and yet to prove it he knew he must find the real murderer and thief. At last he threw himself into a chair and stared at the flickering glow of the coals in the open draft of the big stove, only to leap to his feet again at a new thought.

"Why not assume Bicknell to be the man," he thought. "There is no one else."

He started his pacing again, trying to

arrange a case against the missionary, looking for evidence, a possible motive or some slip the man had made.

When Helen had asked Alan to use his fur trader's intuition she had not suggested anything spiritualistic. The north recognizes this sixth sense, and many ascribe to it something perhaps a little superhuman, and cite innumerable incidents to prove their contention. It is expressed through an uncanny ability to foretell what the opposition is doing or planning, and in check-mating clever schemes to garner fur. Some men become so successful they believe they have occult power.

In reality it is nothing more than a flash from the ever-busy subconscious mind. A lonely trader battling constantly for fur, suspecting his opponent of any deceit or trick, spends twenty-four hours a day on his job. He is not only occupied with his own plans, but he is constantly suspicious of the opposition and on his guard for anything. He suspects, he dreads, he comes to arrange the other man's campaign for him.

Every word and action of every person becomes a clue. A friendly invitation to dinner is a ruse. Illness is a subterfuge. Every snowstorm hides the departure of a tripper. If a man stops to light his pipe his cupped hands are only cover for a closer scrutiny of another's actions. Faith and trust are unknown in the battles for fur. Doubt rules always, and its finger is pointing constantly.

Alan was an unusually clever fur trader. His success had been due to loyalty, enthusiasm, and hard work, and to lightning-like flashes of intuition, which in reality were nothing more than the products of his subconscious mind's ceaseless activities.

But when he turned this equipment on Bicknell, with the determination to prove the man guilty, nothing resulted. The idea in itself was too preposterous. Though he went back over every meeting with the missionary, though he colored each word and act with criminal intent, he failed to find support.

Then, suddenly flashing out of the jumble of words, actions, thoughts, suspicions, fears, and wishes, a number of things began to take startling shape and stand out dis-

tinctly. Alan had first heard of Joe Peters's hiding place from Bicknell, and that Mee-sa-bee was no longer conjured. Everything that had led to trouble between Meats and himself had started with news that came directly or indirectly from the missionary.

Bicknell and Allardyce had been friendly throughout the winter. Why could they not have been in league to rob the Great North, the clerk furnishing the inside information, the missionary hiding behind his position and scheming and plotting?

"Why not?" Alan muttered.

It was Bicknell who had insisted Allardyce was dead and had tried to force Alan to act. It was he who had told where the clerk's remains would be found. He had told it confidently, almost gloatingly, and he had discovered the crushed skull. Alan even recalled how the preacher had at once turned that startling bit of evidence so that all could see what had caused death. Into every situation Bicknell had thrust a finger, had been the pestering, treacherous outsider.

They had been blind. All winter he had used them, kept them at each other's throats, so occupied they never suspected his operations. Even the fur Alan had believed Mears to have stolen was only another trick to deepen the enmity between the two posts. Allardyce had learned of the cache through Helen.

Other things stood out of that jumbled mass Alan had been surveying. Madge Chester had spoken of the missionary as "a little shrimp," and had said that he was so described to her. Kwe-ses had told of Bicknell carrying big loads of fur to the Great North dwelling house the night of the fire. That was when the fur had been placed in Mears's closet and chest, "planted" there.

As each fact became clear Alan grasped it and put it in its place. The man was an impostor. He and Allardyce had taken the valuable fur from the Great North loft just before the fire. Then, when they had set the blaze in the office at the rear, Bicknell had struck the clerk from behind, thereby removing a weak confederate who might turn traitor and, in view of the quarrel be-

tween Mears and Allardyce, clinching the evidence against the Great North manager.

Startlingly clear, diabolically cunning, so thoroughly worked out and executed no loose ends were left anywhere, the missionary's operations stood out in Alan's mind. He leaped to his feet and started toward the door, intent only on telling Macleod and relieving Helen and her father.

But when his hand struck the latch he stopped. After all, he asked himself, what could he tell them? Strong as the circumstantial evidence was in his own mind, he understood that it would have no value whatever in a court, and probably would not convince even John Macleod. It was something he sensed or felt rather than knew. He was without one bit of direct proof that Bicknell was in any way connected with the fire, the theft or the murder of Allardyce.

Any evidence of who had committed the murder was hidden by the fire. The origin of the blaze was left a complete mystery in the same way. There remained only the theft of the fur. If that could be fastened on Bicknell the rest would follow as a logical conclusion.

As Alan reasoned this out he found the same problem in his way. He was as certain Bicknell had stolen the fur as he was that the man was both murderer and incendiary, but he was without proof. Yet the fur had not been destroyed by the fire. It was somewhere. It was the proof he needed.

And Bicknell had some fur. Alan and Madge had seen it when they had peered through the missionary's window. Allardyce was there. They had looked it over together, and that fur had been taken.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE DARK.

ALAN leaped to his feet. "The vestry!" he exclaimed. "Madge and I saw Bicknell take it there. That is where he would hide all of it, where no one would ever think to look."

He went to a window. The Great North dwelling house was dark. Every one in

both posts was asleep. He could not see the mission, but he had no doubt but that Bicknell, too, was sleeping, confident of the success of his cunning plans.

It was his time to act. Convinced though he might be of the missionary's guilt, he knew he must have proof, and he knew it was waiting for him in the vestry.

He looked again at the dark window of Helen's room. He wondered if she were asleep. He did not understand how she could sleep. Crushed, broken, without hope, she was probably lying there waiting for him to save her.

The thought fascinated him. The dramatic instinct of youth urged him to immediate action. He took an automatic pistol, slipped it into the waistband of his trousers, and went out the front door.

It never occurred to Alan that he should get Macleod to go with him, or even one of the half-breed employees. He was possessed of the one idea of bringing relief to Helen as quickly as possible, and he wanted to bring it alone.

Low, thick clouds made the night unusually dark. Even against the snow and the whitewashed buildings he could see little. As he hurried past the employees' cabins he found them all dark, and, when he was beyond them, no light shone from the windows of the mission over near the edge of the clearing.

Alan went straight to the church. From a corner he watched the dwelling house for a few minutes. The windows were dark. There was no smell of smoke from the chimney. Bicknell, tired out like every one else at Barrier Lake, evidently had gone to bed early.

Satisfied that he had a clear field, Alan went at once to the vestry, which was a log lean-to at the rear, no more than ten feet square. Groping about in the darkness, he found the door was fastened with a hasp and padlock.

Bicknell's woodpile was near by, and Alan found an ax sticking in a block of wood. Using this as a pry, he worked at the staple until at last he had it loose. He pushed against the door, but it did not move. For a moment he believed it was fastened somewhere else, and then as he

exerted more pressure it gave slowly before him.

Ordinarily the action of the door would have aroused his suspicions, but his thoughts were concerned only with the unmistakable odor that greeted his nostrils. Fur, and a quantity of it, he knew was in the room, and he put his shoulder against the door and pushed.

Something in the nature of the door's resistance brought him to a quick stop. It was as though some one were pressing against it on the other side, trying to balk his entrance. He drew his pistol and held it ready as he listened for a moment.

There was no sound, and he pressed the door open and stepped in. His moccasined foot struck an obstruction, and he lifted it higher, but when it came down he heard the snap of steel and simultaneously felt something grip his ankle so suddenly and so tightly he could barely suppress a cry of pain. His whole body jerked convulsively. The door, released, slammed shut, and as it did so it knocked the pistol from his hand.

With that first flash of pain Alan knew he had put his foot into a bear trap, and in the same instant he understood that he would be powerless to free himself; that he must remain there until Bicknell found him. Even before he stooped to feel of the trap he understood not only his predicament, but his fate. This was the precaution Bicknell had taken to guard his secret and by which he would add one more victim to his list.

For a moment Alan was on the verge of panic, as any man of the north is sure to be when he feels the jaws of a bear trap close over his foot. But intense as was the pain, it was forgotten in the realization of what was to come. He was a defenseless victim who could only wait for the coming of his captor.

But courage returned and with it thought of his automatic. He went down on his knees, ran his hands over the floor, found the trap chain and tugged at it. It did not give, and further groping told him it was spiked to the floor.

He began at once to search for the pistol. At first he swept his hands about quickly,

and when he failed to find it he began to cover the floor systematically. Still he was unsuccessful, and he dragged the trap about until he believed he had searched all the floor within reach.

He began again, more slowly and more thoroughly, and then as he groped along the wall he heard a step outside.

In that first moment Alan hoped he had been mistaken. He tried to fight off his fear by telling himself he had heard nothing; that Bicknell was asleep and would not waken until morning. And then he heard the hinges creak as the door was pressed slowly open.

Alan stood motionless. There was nothing he could do. Fear held him, and then rage drove it away. Helpless as he was, he forgot it, forgot everything except that Helen's happiness depended on his escape. He stood there tense, ready to fling himself forward, and then suddenly the light of a pocket flash was snapped in his face. At the same moment the door slammed shut and a hand came out of the blackness and swept up through the cone of dazzling light. It grasped a knife.

Even as Alan understood that Bicknell preferred the silence of cold steel to the more certain but alarm-sounding firearm, he struck, not at his adversary but at the light. His fist sent it spinning from Bicknell's hand and the tiny globe was shattered when it struck the wall.

Alan heard Bicknell groping at the door, and sprang forward, striking blow after blow in the darkness. Once his fist caught the missionary in the ribs, but succeeding efforts failed to find a mark. As he paused he heard a slight sound behind him, and the next instant the slashing knife grazed his cheek and started the blood streaming.

As Alan ducked to the floor to avoid a second thrust he saw what the fight must be. Alone, one foot burdened with a heavy, cumbersome, torturing framework of steel, unable in the darkness to guard against attack, he must meet a man who was free and armed. But even as he saw how inevitably the outcome must be against him, his rage drove him to a passion for battle. Crouching there on the floor, he suddenly sprang forward with arms outspread like a

football player. One hand touched Bicknell's leg, but before he could make his hold secure the man leaped clear.

For a moment Alan lay on the floor listening. Then as he drew himself up for defense, the rattle of the heavy chain announced his position. He felt and heard the missionary leap forward, slashing wildly, but he crouched beneath the knife-thrusts and escaped injury. Bicknell plunged against a wall and knocked something down. Alan took advantage of the noise to rise to his feet and back away.

Panting from exertion and suspense, the two faced each other in the darkness. Confined in that small room, unable to escape, unable to see, with death the prize and the ticket to freedom, each collected his forces.

And then Alan heard Bicknell start forward. In the stillness he believed he could hear the swish of the man's arm as the knife rose and fell. The sound came from the left, then in front, to the right, and then it came closer. He knew Bicknell was striking out in the dark, but systematically, listening after each thrust, covering the entire room, certain that in the end the blade would reach its mark.

There was something so methodical, so deliberate, about the actions of his adversary, they spelled certainty to Alan. Ultimately, perhaps at the next thrust, the blade would reach his body. He flattened himself against the wall, holding his breath for fear that even the faint sound of it would reach Bicknell, shivering at the thought of the cold, implacable blade darting through the darkness so close to him.

At last he could stand it no longer. In a sudden, blinding rage he threw himself forward, striking with both fists. He felt one crunch against Bicknell's ribs, heard the sharp exhalation of the man's breath, and then the trap brought him up sharply and he pitched forward, his head striking against the log wall.

For a moment he lay there dazed, and then the regular sound of the swiftly descending arm aroused him. He started to his feet, the chain rattled, and the next instant the knife swished close to his ear, ripping open the shoulder of his coat as it

passed. He struck, and again he felt his fist against Bicknell's ribs.

After the blow all sounds ceased. The methodical swishing of the knife arm was no longer heard. There was no soft thud of moccasined feet, no faint sounds of breathing. For a moment Alan believed he was alone.

And then he became aware of Bicknell's presence—not only aware of it and certain of it, but of what the man was doing. It was nothing he could see or hear, only something he could sense; but he knew Bicknell was coming toward him slowly, with infinite caution and patience; that the man had divined his position accurately; that the knife was raised for a final thrust.

For a moment he was fascinated. After all, he thought, there could have been no other outcome. If he swayed to one side or the other it would make no difference. That knife would find him. He struggled to throw off the effect of this thought, but before he could move he felt a blow and a sharp pain in his left shoulder and was hurled backward onto the floor.

So great was the force of the blow he was thrown into a corner. The trap was jerked to the full length of the chain, and even in that moment of defeat and death he felt the excruciating agony as the steel teeth gripped and tore his flesh.

But as Alan struck the floor in the corner his arms instinctively outflung, his right hand touched the butt of the automatic pistol for which he had been searching. He gripped it convulsively and lay perfectly still, waiting and listening, and then he heard Bicknell coming softly toward him.

Even then he did not fire. He held the pistol ready, pointing upward, but he did not press the trigger until he, too, had sensed where the other man was. When he was certain he pulled, once, twice, three times, turning the muzzle slightly after each shot.

The small room echoed deafeningly. Alan's ears strained against the roar, and just as it began to die he caught beneath it the sound of a body striking the floor. There was a convulsive movement, a groan, and then silence.

For a long time Alan lay without mov-

ing. He found that he was perfectly content to remain there. Even to lift the pistol required enormous exertion. He wondered if Bicknell were dead, wounded, or only shamming. He wondered if he himself were badly hurt. He reached up to his left shoulder, and was horror-stricken when he heard the click of steel against steel. The pistol had hit the knife which still stuck in his body.

The time passed, hours Alan believed, and then he became conscious that he was very cold. He no longer feared Bicknell, who had not moved, but now he realized the danger of death by freezing.

The idea was not unpleasant. He was very tired and very comfortable. After all, he had done what he came to do. The others would be sure to find him and read the story. They would know. Helen would know.

And then the thought of her, the glory and the wonder he had only glimpsed, aroused him, urged him to action, conquered his semidelirium.

He struggled to his feet, dragged the heavy trap as he tottered across the floor to the one small window, shattered the pane with his pistol, thrust the weapon through, and fired it against the blackness. When it was empty he fell back unconscious.

CHAPTER XXIV.

UNRAVELED KNOTS.

AS the first shot echoed across the clearing Helen Mears sat up in bed. Before the sound of the last had died away John Macleod had risen from the couch across the door of Mears's bedroom, and in the little room at the rear of the Chester kitchen Kwe-ses was dressing hurriedly.

Helen opened the door of her room and heard Macleod moving about in the dark hall.

"Did you hear the shots?" she asked.

"Yes. Four."

She heard him go to the living room, from the windows of which nearly all the buildings might be seen.

"There's a light in the Chester dwelling

house," he called. "I'll dress and go over."

Helen hurried into her clothes and joined him, and together they ran across and knocked at the door of Alan's living room. Kwe-ses opened it.

"Where is Gray?" Macleod demanded.

"He not here. He not sleep in his bed to-night. The lamp it lighted. The stove it going."

"Did you hear the shots?"

"Yes."

"Which way?"

"Over there," and she pointed across the clearing.

"This doesn't look right to me," Macleod said. "Gray's up all night, and now this shooting. I couldn't believe your father did this thing, and now I begin to see how—"

"It isn't true!" Helen interrupted fiercely. "Alan has found the fur, or the murderer, or something. Don't you see? We've got to find him, help him. Come on. Get a rifle, and I'll light a lantern."

They ran back to the Great North and got a weapon and a light. As they went out through the kitchen door two employees joined them, and then another figure came out of the darkness. Macleod recognized Mears. He was about to order him back to his room, but instead turned and followed Helen, who had started across the great clearing.

"Where was the shooting?" Mears asked as he and Macleod caught up with her.

"We don't know, except that Kwe-ses said it was toward the mission," Helen answered.

"Gray wasn't home—hadn't been in bed," Macleod added.

"I told you in the beginning he was—the old man began, when Helen stopped and faced him.

"You shan't say that!" she exclaimed. "Alan is trying to clear you. That's what he has been doing. And now you stand here and talk, when anything may have happened—when he may be dead or dying."

She ended with a sob that not only silenced the two men, but added to their wonder at her sudden defense of the free

trader. Then she darted ahead, and they were forced to run to keep up with her.

"Wait, Helen," Macleod whispered. "We don't know what sort of thing we may run into."

But she did not stop until she had reached the front door of Bicknell's house and had knocked loudly upon it.

There was no answer, and Macleod pushed the door open.

"Careful," Macleod cautioned as Helen went in with the lantern.

They looked around the empty, silent room, and then Helen saw the missionary's bed through a door. The blankets were thrown back.

"See!" she cried. "He's gone, too. But he had been asleep."

She went on through to the kitchen, Macleod with her. They found the outer door open and pressed on outside, where they paused indecisively, and the half-breeds gathered about them.

No one spoke, and in that moment of bewilderment and indecision all heard a groan in the direction of the church. Macleod ran to the vestry door, Helen at his heels. The door resisted, and together they pushed it open and crowded in.

As Alan had foreseen, the people of the post could not fail to read the truth when they found him and Bicknell. Both men lay on the floor, Bicknell on his side with his legs drawn up, the front of his shirt soaked with blood, Alan on his back, one foot fast in the bear trap and the knife handle sticking up from beneath his shoulder. Behind them, piled along the rear wall, was a large quantity of fur.

Helen did not stop to read the meaning of the situation. One fact alone concerned her. Alan was wounded, perhaps dead. She threw herself down beside him and felt of his face and his hands.

"Come, quick!" she cried. "He's hurt! He's dying!"

Macleod had stooped over Bicknell and felt of his pulse.

"This one's alive," he said.

He knelt beside Alan and placed his ear on his chest.

"Gray's alive, too," he reported, "but both are nearly frozen. Get back and bring

two toboggans and blankets, you fellows, and a couple of clamps for this trap."

The half-breeds ran out and Helen crept closer to Alan.

"Will he die?" she whispered.

Macleod carefully withdrew the knife and the blood quickly flowed.

"I don't think so," he said. "It's above the lung, and that cut on the face is just a scratch. But Bicknell's done for."

Grimwood Mears had given little heed to the two wounded men. He had gone straight across the room to the fur piled against the wall.

"You see that, don't you, Macleod?" he demanded when he had finished a hurried examination. "There's the fur you said I stole. I told you Gray was the man who did it."

"Don't be a fool!" Macleod retorted. "Look at Gray's foot. Bicknell's the man we wanted. And Henry Allardyce, whom you accused of being a coward, gave his life for the company in an effort to protect the fur."

A hideous noise, half laugh and half gurgle, stopped him, and he turned to see Bicknell's eyes open.

"Henry a hero, eh?" the missionary sneered.

Even though his voice was weak there was a startling quality in it. It was hard and scornful, lacked the smooth, unctuous tones to which they had been accustomed.

"Henry a hero!" he repeated. "He wasn't even a man, the gutless dog. I'm done for, but I'd say it anyhow. I couldn't be made to swing for croaking him."

"You mean you killed him?" Mears demanded.

"Aw, hold your clapper and use your nut. I'm not telling you anything, not any of you. But I would tell Gray. I'd like to talk to him. He's got sense enough to know what I'd be saying. I hope I didn't croak him. He's the only one of you I couldn't fool, and I'd like to have him tell me how he got wise."

He stopped to cough and blood gushed from his mouth.

"Tell us," Macleod insisted. "You can't live, man, shot as you are. Clear this

thing up so that innocent people will be protected."

Bicknell answered him with curses and turned his head.

"I'd tell Gray," he ended with sudden weariness. "I'd like to tell him. You! I'd like to see you keep guessing."

The men came with the toboggan and blankets, and Alan and Bicknell were hurried to the Great North dwelling house where they were laid on the floor beside the stove. Helen bathed and bound Alan's wounds. Macleod cut away Bicknell's shirt and exposed two bullet holes in his chest.

"Don't bother about me," the man said gruffly. "I know when I'm done for. I've been shot before, but I never felt this way. How's Gray?"

Alan did not regain consciousness for half an hour, and when he did Bicknell's eyes were closed and Macleod had pronounced him dying.

Alan looked up into Helen's eyes. He was bewildered for a moment and then he whispered:

"Your father's safe now, and the fur."

"Yes, yes," she soothed. "We know. But you mustn't talk."

Alan turned his head and saw the others.

"I'm all right," he said. "I'm only weak. Is Bicknell dead?"

"He's dying," Macleod answered. "He practically confessed that he killed Allardyce, but he wouldn't tell his story to any one except you."

"I think I know most of it. It was a mighty clever scheme. Only, who is he? He's not Bicknell. He's not a missionary."

"Ask the Mounted about Dan Martin," came a voice from the other side of the stove. "They'll tell you, though they won't like to. Dan Martin fooled 'em too often."

Weak though his voice was, it held a note of pride. Alan took immediate advantage of it.

"I've heard of you," he bluffed. "Out around Lesser Slave Lake and along the Peace?"

"You've said it."

"And you came here to hide out for a time."

"I can't tell you anything."

"And the real Bicknell? He was a little man, wasn't he?"

"Say, you're worse than a third degree!" Martin exclaimed with frank admiration. "Go on. Tell it all."

Alan outlined the events of the last six months as he had pieced them together. In the beginning Martin interrupted.

"I didn't kill the preacher that way," he said. "We traveled together four days. I scared out his Indians and he got suspicious. He had nerve. I didn't intend to croak him. Go on."

Alan told how Martin had come to Barrier Lake posing as the missionary, intending only to seek a safe hiding place for the winter, and how the trouble between Mears and Allardyce and the bitter rivalry between the two posts had given him his opportunity.

"Allardyce must have got a wax impression of the key to the trading shop," he said.

"And I remember when he did it," Mears interrupted. "Two months ago. But I never suspected."

"Allardyce knew my fur was cached when I brought Helen in and told Martin of it," Alan continued. "Martin saw his chance to start more trouble and went after it."

"Allardyce told him Joe Peters was hiding at Pushkogan and Martin came to me with the news. Martin tipped off to me the story about Mee-sa-bee hunting again, knowing I would try for the fur."

"Altogether, he stirred up as much trouble as he could. He planned originally to make me out the thief, but when Macleod's orders to Mears and Allardyce came he saw a still better chance to lay the blame for everything on Mears."

"He is the one who sent Henry back to demand that the post be turned over to him. He came to me with his story of Allardyce's disappearance even before Allardyce was dead, when he was still hiding at the mission."

"And that night, while I was arguing with the hunters who believed Mears was a *windigo*, he and Allardyce came and stole the fur. When they had carried it to the

vestry they came back to set fire to the trading shop."

"And then Henry lost his nerve," Martin interrupted.

"He did not," Alan declared. "That was part of your plan from the first. You wanted all the loot, you didn't want any one alive who might squeal, and it clinched the thing on Mears. You didn't take any more chances with Henry than you did with the fur in the vestry. I have to hand it to you. You didn't overlook any bets."

"I know I didn't, and that's what gets me. How did you get wise to all this?"

"I'm a fur trader," Alan answered shortly.

"You're more than a good guesser, all right, and--"

Martin coughed horribly and blood again gushed from his mouth. He turned over onto his side as if in agony, and then his head snapped back, his legs twitched, and he was dead.

Alan did not waken until late in the afternoon. Helen was waiting beside his bed and smiled down at him. Her face was drawn by lack of sleep, but her eyes were brighter than he had ever seen them before.

"You're wonderful, Alan," she whispered. "And father is a changed man. Everything is straightened out."

A little later he persuaded her to get some rest. After she had gone Macleod came in.

"Gray," he began abruptly, as he sat down beside the bed, "we owe you a lot, the Mears and the Great North and I. How would you like to run a post for the company?"

Alan stared in amazement.

"That's all I've been hoping for the last five years," he said at last.

"All right. I've had you in mind for some time. That's what I was going to talk to you about when your brigade left Fort Bruce last summer. Then Madge Chester made us buy her out, and for a time she fooled me about you. But I knew when I saw Helen go to you there in the vestry, just what had been troubling Madge. How would you like to stay at Barrier Lake?"

"But Mears?"

"He's through. I think he sees where he was wrong. He's willing to take his pension now. He'll be in to see you later. He's a fine old fellow when he's not too fanatical in his loyalty to the company. Make it easy for him. He's really very sorry.

"I'll stay here until you're better and then we'll make arrangements. Barrier Lake is the best place for you. It'll need some straightening out after all this rumpus."

Alan did not see Helen again until the next morning. Her father had been in, and because Alan had been warned he was able to soften things in a way that won Mears's further gratitude. She sat down beside the bed and kissed him.

"This is a rotten time to have the use of only one arm," he laughed.

"But you'll be well soon," she assured him, and then she blushed as she went bravely on: "Besides, there are years and years ahead of us, Alan."

"But have you thought of those years?" he asked soberly. "Have you thought of what they may be? I'm a fur man, but I'm outside the pale. It's going to be one odd job after another. Madge Chester has sold me out and do you know what it means? I haven't any position. Can you go with me, help me fight the Great North?"

"Alan!" she protested. "Don't you understand? Don't you know now that nothing counts with me but you? I don't care where you go or what you are or whom you fight. I only know I'm going with you, that I want to, that I can't think of doing anything else. I only know I'll be happy with you, Alan, wherever you are or whatever you do."

The significance of what she said so dazzled him that the news he had been eager to tell her became insignificant. He knew that love had leveled the barrier, that pride and contempt and prejudice and hatred had dissolved before it, that even the might of the great company could no longer stand between them. As he drew her to him with his one good arm he could only mumble incoherently.



The Crawling Death

By L. PATRICK GREENE

THE people of M'Lefe's kraal, with whom he lived, called him *Nyorka* the Snake; and yet there was little about Smithers, physically, to warrant the name. But the dark children of Darker Africa sense more than the physical aspects of a man—especially a white man.

He was lying prone upon a ledge of rock overlooking the river's ford, squinting blearily along the barrel of his rifle. He squeezed the trigger; a report broke the heavy stillness and a bottle standing on a ledge of rock in the middle of the river—a hundred yards away—smashed into tiny fragments.

"Good enough," he grunted, pronouncing the words as one unfamiliar with the language. "I've got the range now—an' Hampton's bigger than that bottle."

He reached back into the hip pocket of his ragged and filth besmeared trousers, extracted a bottle of Cape gin and drank greedily.

"That's good," he said again. "Hampton's bigger than a quart bottle the— He's going to get another partner, is he? Going

to get some one else to run the store for him, is he?"

The sentence came from his lips in spasmodic jerks. He seemed to have difficulty in forming the words; mouthing them to himself before repeating them aloud. And concentrated hate was in his voice.

"He means to throw me out on my bleedin' uppers," he continued, "just because I take a drink now and again, an' keep a nigger wench or two. That ain't his business, the blasted prig. Called me a *white kaffir*, he did; said I'd gone black and that the natives had no respect for me; said I couldn't be trusted to trade with 'em. The—fool! I know 'em better than any one—I'm one of them; I—"

He stopped abruptly and clumsily—the children of the kraal called him *Umglubu*, the Pig, the Fat One—rose to his feet.

The maidens from the kraal filed past him on their way to get water for the evening meal. He watched them for a while with lust-filled eyes, then stooping with a grunt he picked up his rifle and thrust his way

through the undergrowth until he reached the path which led to the village. A few minutes later he came to the store—a galvanized shack—which was built close to the gate in the stockade encircling the kraal.

A half-starved, mangy cur of a dog ran out to greet him. He struck at it viciously with the butt of his rifle and laughed as it ran off, yelping, its tail between its legs.

The children who had been playing on the porch of the store ran off at his approach. A little, roly-poly three-year-old lost his balance and fell directly in the path of the white man.

Smithers pushed him on one side with his heavily booted foot.

A native woman came to the door of a hut near the store just in time to see the callous act. She ran to the squalling youngster and sent him on his way with comforting words.

"That was the act of a warrior, Nyorka," she said sarcastically to Smithers.

"Have a care, woman, or must I beat you with the sjambok again?"

Now that he spoke the vernacular Smithers's speech flowed easily.

"It is time for food," he continued. "Is all ready?"

"Aye, Nyorka," she answered submissively and stood aside that he might precede her into the hut.

It was rudely furnished—a deal table covered with dirt and grease; a broken-backed chair; two native-made stools; a trundle bed, on which was a vermin-invested mattress; a fly-specked mirror and a few gaudy colored prints! That was all.

The two seated themselves at the rickety table and presently another woman entered. She carried a large pot of mealie-meal which she set on the table, and the three ate—as natives eat; disdaining to use any implements other than those provided by nature.

Smithers's eyes roved constantly from one woman to the other; watching closely the amount of food each one took; cursing luridly did one grab a larger handful of the sticky, glutinous mess than he deemed proper; eating rapidly himself, determined to get his share—the lion's share—of the food.

Presently one of the women said:

"Tomasi, my father, is at the kraal."

An expression of fear showed for an instant in the man's black, piglike eyes, and he stared open-mouthed at the woman. His lips quivered and particles of food oozed out at the corners and caught in his unkempt beard.

"He has come to hold speech with you," the woman continued.

Smithers recovered himself with an effort.

"So—woman? What then?"

"He says that the money you gave him as *lobella*—marriage gift—for me is not proper money."

"Neither are you a proper woman," he growled. "Well?"

"As I have said—he desires to hold speech with you."

"Then go get him."

As the two women hurriedly left the hut Smithers poured himself a generous drink of gin, then taking his revolver from its holster, stuck it in his belt. Changing his seat so that he faced the door he drummed a nervous tattoo on the table with his grimy, stunted fingers—and waited.

The shadows in the hut deepened as the sun set with tropical swiftness. The distant lowing of cattle and the bleating of goats betokened the fact that the people of the kraal were shutting up their herds and flocks ere the coming of darkness. These pastoral sounds seemed only to accentuate the silence.

And the man Smithers—the man who had sold his birthright, his white man's heritage of supremacy, for less than a mess of pottage—waited.

The shadows in the hut merged into one; in a little while the place would be in darkness, an abysmal darkness—blacker than Africa's heart.

Smithers lighted a candle and stuck it in its own grease on the table before him. Between himself and it he placed the cracked mirror; reflecting its light toward the door of the hut; sitting himself in a darkness intensified by the guttering light of the candle.

Mosquitoes pinged savagely; moths, flying beetles and evil-smelling flies hovered about the tiny flame, threatening to smother it. Fat spiders, red and hairy, ran up and down the walls; stealthy, snakelike rustlings

sounded in the thatched roof of the hut; two scorpions, locked together in deadly combat, fell to his shoulder, thence to the floor. With an oath he ground them under his heel.

He stiffened suddenly at the sound of a woman's voice outside the hut.

"He is in there, my father."

"That is good. Now get you gone and see that no one comes near this place until the morning's sun. Mayhap a great wonder-working will be performed."

Smithers shivered slightly; his face paled; his hand felt for, and fondled, the butt of his revolver.

A patter of running footsteps—growing fainter and fainter! The woman was obeying her father's command.

A deep, pregnant silence followed.

Smithers half rose from his chair and then a dense cloud of black smoke filled the hut. Half choked, half blinded, Smithers whipped out his revolver and fired through the open door. The fumes of gunpowder mingled with the acrid smoke.

Smithers rubbed his smarting eyes; the tears rolled down his fat cheeks.

The smoke thinned, vanished, and there, standing at Smithers's side was an aged and wizened native. He was naked save for a loin cloth about his middle and the necklace of snakes' fangs and human teeth—the necklace proclaiming him to be a witch doctor of repute. Two large wicker baskets stood on the floor by his side.

He gazed steadily at Smithers and the white man flinched under the searching, all-seeing scrutiny.

"Tomasi, the servant of the Great Spirit, is here," said the native. His voice was strangely like the harsh croaking of a vulture. "He travels on the wind and no man knows where the wind may blow."

Smithers sneered and with the sneer stilled his fears. After all, he told himself, this man was only a negro—a weak one at that. Why, he could pick up Tomasi with one hand and throw him through the door. Beside—charms and witchcraft were powerless before a revolver. Still, he wished that he had not passed off a number of copper coins—polished to look like gold—as sovereigns on the old fool!

Aloud he said with a snarl:

"Have done with words of folly. I am no child to be frightened by mummery. And when next you visit me, come openly—as a man should."

"Who shall determine the coming and going of a child of the Spirits?" Tomasi proclaimed sententiously. "In a cloud of smoke I traveled and—"

"Au-a, tula—shut up," Smithers interposed. "A handful of stink grass set on fire will make a cloud like the one on which you traveled."

"Great is the wisdom of the man who was once a white man," murmured Tomasi. "But will that wisdom show you how to avoid death?"

"Aye. And how to kill."

The revolver in Smithers's hand pointed at Tomasi's belly.

The witch doctor laughed, showing toothless, wrinkled gums.

"But you did not kill me when I came through the smoke, and could you kill these?"

He whistled softly; a plaintive note. There was a rustling in the basket at his feet; the top moved slightly.

Still whistling Tomasi stooped quickly and removed the cover.

A sickly smell, reminiscent of crushed cucumbers, pervaded the hut. Three flat, ugly venomous heads, suspended on slender columns of greenish-black, rose over the basket's edge; ever-searching, restless fangs darted in and out of gaping jaws.

"Black mambas!" Smithers ejaculated, naming Africa's most evil thing, the deadliest snake in the world. "Cover them quickly," he continued, "lest they escape."

His eyes were dilated with terror.

Tomasi smiled.

"I see," he mocked, "that you know my friends—and my servants. Think you that the cover would keep them in? Thicker than your wrist, they are; longer than your body. But, while I am here they will stay; me they know. And so"—Tomasi shrugged his shoulder—"me you might kill; perhaps one mamba, perhaps two, but assuredly not three. They are hard to kill—yes? And most assuredly the third would kill you. Have you ever seen a man after

he had been struck by a mamba? The pain is very great."

"Have done," the white man cried irritably. "You did not come here to tell me of the way of mambas."

"There your wisdom fails you," Tomasi answered smoothly. "It is well that a man should know how death will come to him."

"What do you mean?" Beads of sweat stood on Smithers's forehead.

"You have lied to me—a servant of the Spirits, you have deceived, putting my daughter to shame and making a mock of our marriage customs. Therefore death must be your portion."

A sickly grin spread over Smithers's face; his fingers itched to press the trigger of his revolver; yet, somehow, he dared not do it. Instead he said placatingly:

"I only jested, Tomasi, when I gave you the gold that was not gold."

"An evil jest!"

"Of a truth, yes; but assuredly not sufficient cause for a killing. Be at peace. To-morrow I will more than make good to you—in real gold. Two pieces for every one of the false pieces I gave you a moon ago. To-morrow I will pay all debts."

"To-morrow," sneered Tomasi. "To-morrow you will be a snake without a hole. To-morrow comes the white man, Hampton, to turn you out of this place and you will be poorer than my people's slave; aye, you will go to them begging food and shelter. You will be a thing accursed; shunned by the white; despised by us black ones. What folly, then, to talk of gold."

"How do you know this?" Smithers asked in amazement.

"All things are known to me. Now, what need to say more?"

He raised the cover of the basket.

"Put it back," screamed the white man, "or—"

"Or you'll kill me? I don't think you can do that, Nyorka. But even so, what matter? I am old and death would not be unpleasant. But you cannot kill these servants of mine. *Your* doom is sure."

"Wait yet a little while. Why not take the maiden back to you? So shall all be as it was in the beginning."

"Bah! What folly! Would you have

her appear in the eyes of her people as a woman scorned? Shall the daughter of Tomasi forever dwell in her hut alone, and shall I be deprived of the cattle that would be mine were she married to a proper man? You know the law."

"Aye—I know," Smithers assented wearily.

"And know, too, that should she become a widow she may properly marry again?"

"Aye." The assent came mechanically, listlessly.

"Then am I not just when I say that death must come to you, unless—"

"Unless, Tomasi?"

"Unless you can pay me the *lobella*, the marriage gift."

"I can do that, Tomasi—to-morrow, as I have said. Listen." Smithers drank deeply from his bottle and continued hurriedly:

"To-morrow, when the white man Hampton comes to the river's ford, I shall be hidden in the bushes about the banks. When he is but halfway across my fire stick will speak, and Hampton will fall from his horse into the water. The crocodiles below the ford will take care that no one shall know the manner of his death. Then the store, and all that is in it, will be mine. I shall be avenged on the man who would put me to this shame, and you—you shall be paid in full. Threefold you shall be paid."

Tomasi smiled sardonically as Smithers paused for lack of breath.

"And think you," she scoffed, "that no one will be with the man, Hampton? That none of the people of the kraal will be at the ford to greet him. Hast forgotten that the people of the kraal count him a man among men—as indeed he is—and they would know no rest until they had found the man who killed him?"

The look of elation faded from Smithers's face. His head drooped and his fingers fumbled at his loose under-lip. He had indeed overlooked all these things!

"Yet the plan has merit," Tomasi continued musingly. "Hampton has never seen eye to eye with me. All witchcraft, he thinks, is an abomination; he charges the faults of a few to us all. He has worked me much evil; giving information against me to the Government man. Aye; and he

has told the people my wonder-workings are but cunning tricks. And so, in some part, they are. But all tricks are not evil. If by tricks I make a man believe that I am the mouthpiece of the spirits, will not that man believe me when I say that he will be cured from the sickness that troubles him? And, believing that, will not the sickness be cured?

"This faith Hampton would destroy. So—though the people regard him with reverence—it may be that the spirits would have him die. Au-a! That he shall—and to-morrow. And you, Nyorka, you shall be the instrument of the Great Spirits. So shall you pay your debt to me.

"Come!"

Picking up the two baskets, first putting the cover on the one containing the snakes, Tomasi led the way out of the hut, and Smithers wonderingly followed.

The moon had risen and her silver rays touched the bush around with a magic wand. Near-by objects stood out with startling distinctness—yet everything seemed unreal; grotesque.

Just beyond the shadow of the hut Tomasi paused and carefully placed the baskets on the ground. From one of them—not the one he had opened in the hut—he took a large gourd. With some difficulty he removed the stopper and poured a little of the syrup-like substance it contained on his sandals. That done, he quickly replaced the stopper. A sweet, pungent odor—sickening in its intensity—seemed to fill all the air about.

The basket containing the snakes quivered as they thrashed about as though provoked to intense rage.

"And now," said Tomasi, "you shall see what few men—what no white men—have seen. When I give the word do you take off the cover of the other basket. Nay," he added impatiently as he noted Smithers's look of fear, "there shall come no harm to you so long as you keep the basket between yourself and me when you remove the lid. You will obey?"

Smithers nodded assent.

With incredible speed for one so old, Tomasi ran across the open clearing about the store, through the ashes of a dying fire,

until he came to the edge of the bush, two hundred yards away.

"Now," he shouted, and Smithers, taking up a knob-kerrie, cautiously lifted the lid of the basket with it.

Like sprinters starting from the mark at the pistol shot, three black dealers of death shot from the basket and, in long undulating curves, followed swiftly in the path taken by Tomasi. The red hot embers of the fire did not check them, or turn them from their course.

As one in a dream, half-hypnotized, Smithers watched them come almost within striking distance of the witch-doctor and then he saw Tomasi kick the sandals from his feet and leap swiftly to one side.

The three mambas swerved as one and a moment later were striking viciously at the sandals.

And, now as he watched, Smithers saw other snakes hastening toward the sandals; harmless grass snakes, and a spitting ring-hals; puffed adders and a small python. Soon a tangled squirming mass thrashed in the dust about the sandals; sibilant hisses sounded above all the night cries.

Anon the mass disentangled; one by one the reptiles vanished into the bush and when all had gone Tomasi picked up his sandals—the scent had now evaporated from them—and returned to where Smithers was standing as one stricken speechless.

"Well!" chuckled Tomasi, "does that not show you a way?"

"It is a work of evil spirits, Tomasi," Smithers said hoarsely. "But, yes—that way is sure."

"Sure indeed," echoed Tomasi. "Pay heed then: With the coming of the morning sun you will set out alone to meet the man Hampton, taking with you some of this ointment which I will give you. In some way—and it is not for me to tell you that way—put some of the ointment upon the white man Hampton. My servants—you saw them yonder—will do the rest.

"Is it understood?"

"Aye, Tomasi." Smithers's teeth chattered like castanets. "But it is a fearful death."

"But sure, O Nyorka, and no man will

be able to point the finger of suspicion at you. Do you yet hesitate?"

"Nay. Give me the stuff."

He reached for the gourd.

"Not so. Only a little of that do I give you."

"Then put some in this."

Smithers took the glass flask from his hip-pocket, drank the gin which yet remained in it, and handed it to the witch-doctor.

Tomasi then carefully poured some of the syrup from the gourd into the flask and, corking it securely, handed it back to Smithers.

"Keep it with you," he said, "lest those women of yours, seeing it, are eaten with curiosity to know of its potency. See to it that you do not fail the Spirits in this task I have given you. Should you in any way fail, or seek in any way again to make a mock of me, your death will quickly follow. Remember! The Spirits are all-powerful, swift to avenge insult and—I, Tomasi, am their mouthpiece. Now I go to my own cave; the morning must not find me here else, when Hampton dies, there will be some to accuse me of having killed him.

So saying, Tomasi picked up his baskets and strode quickly away.

Smithers watched him until he was lost to sight in the bush then, entering the hut he placed the flask carefully on the table and sat down on the trundle bed—holding his head in his hands.

He shivered violently—as if with the ague of fever.

Reaching under the bed he dragged out a tin chest and from it took a bottle of gin—his last one! He knocked off the top of it with the butt of his revolver and drank morosely.

His eyes were bloodshot; the muscles of his face twitched constantly.

Time passed. The gin in the bottle lowered steadily.

There was a long period of silence—broken only by gulping, swallowing noises.

"And he'll always have a hold on me," he muttered after a while, giving verbal expression to the thought which had been troubling him.

"But if I put him out of the way to-

night," he continued, and a crafty glint gleamed in his eyes, "no one will be the wiser, hyenas and vultures will pick him clean before sun-up."

His speech was thick; he articulated with difficulty.

"I'll do it," he said, coming to a sudden resolve. "I can catch up with him; he won't be suspecting anything. I'll show him no blame black can threaten me. An assegai will be the best. It don't make no noise, or break any bones."

He chuckled wickedly and lurched to his feet.

In a corner of the hut was a bundle of assegais—broad-bladed stabbing spears. He took one of them and reeled toward the door. His eye caught the flask on the table.

"That's good," he laughed. "I'll pour some of the stuff on the black—"

He thrashed the flask into his hip pocket, hesitated long enough for one more drink and passed out into the night.

With hurried, but uncertain, footsteps he came to where the trail led down the steep, rocky bank to the river's ford.

And there he slipped—his feet shot from under him—and, falling on his back, he slid down the bank, cursing, and clawing madly at bushes and grass in a vain attempt to check his fall. His course was halted by the big ledge of rock from which he had shot at the bottle earlier in the day.

His head hit against the rock and lights danced before his eyes; then for a little while all was dark.

When he came to he was conscious of a strong, pungent odor—sickening in its intensity. His heart seemed to be inclosed in an icy grip as he realized that his fall had smashed the flask; that his clothing was impregnated with the ointment. He tried to rise, but could not. His ankle, his knee, something, was dislocated.

Something moved on his chest and, fearfully opening his eyes, he saw a small rock python coiled there.

He opened his mouth to scream—but remained silent: he closed his eyes, but fear forced them open again.

Slithery, crawling; sounds came to his ears; rustling noises, hisses, sounded in the

grasses—to the right and the left of him; above and below him.

An odor—reminiscent of crushed cucumbers—became increasingly stronger—even stronger than that of the pungent ointment.

The hissing of snakes was like the rustling of autumn leaves when a mighty wind blows.

Heavy weights pressed about his body,

his legs, his arms. Something cold—clammy—slimy—squirmed across his feet.

He screamed in maddened terror; with one tremendous effort he attempted to shake off the crushing weights.

He screamed again and—then was still.

The sound like the rustling of autumn leaves when a mighty wind blows, seemed to be ever increasing in volume!



THE GOLFOMANIAC

ATHWART the clubhouse porch he walks
 With earnest, hurried tread;
 And out across the turf he stalks
 Like herald grimly sped.
 Behind is home, behind are cares
 Of stocks and bonds and wheat—
 What matters wife, or bulls and bears,
 When bogey is to beat?

And now he halts beside the box
 That marks, anear, the tea;
 And now in manner orthodox
 He molds his little tee;
 And now he draws his driver forth,
 Like blade from out a sheath;
 And now he gazes west and north,
 And stamps upon the heath.

He waggles—with compelling force
 His eager club he shakes;
 He waggles—and along the course
 A stern survey he takes;
 He waggles—for the distant hole
 Again he keenly sights;
 He waggles—and with heart and soul
 The waiting sphere he smites.

He's off—atrudging down the green,
 O'er smiling hill and plain;
 But every tender rural scene
 Presents its charms in vain.
 Not his the springtime's fragrant lore,
 Not his the purple fall;
 His mind, egad, is on the score,
 His eye is on the ball!

Edwin L. Sabin.



Josh Stebbins, Treasure Hunter

By A. D. TEMPLE

IT was late summer afternoon in Coonburg. In the shade trees on the dusty street tree toads and cicadas chirped their songs, the katydids occasionally joining in the chorus as the shadows grew longer.

On the stoop of McGoogle's grocery many members of Coonburg's Sportsmen's Club lounged lazily, squirting, with deadly accuracy of aim, streams of amber-colored tobacco juice at any unfortunate fly that alit within range, or filling the air with smoke from pipes loaded with rank plug tobacco as they discussed the affairs of the neighborhood.

From out a cloud of dust Fritz Stuffel-funk, farming on Mud Creek, drove up before the store. As he alighted his astonished friends saw that he came in a brand new automobile. With a hasty salute "Gudt afternoon, chentlemen," he entered

the store, coming out a few minutes later loaded down with purchases. Stowing them away snugly, he cranked up, turned on the juice, and with a broad smile and wave of his hand to the speculating crowd was gone.

Link Brown watched his dust as he disappeared, knocked the ashes from his corn-cob pipe, and asked the club in general: "Now, where in time d'ye reckon Dutch Fritz got the cash to buy that flivver? He made no crop this year, an' his land ain't worth two bits an acre: it's so poor it 'd starve a goat to death."

"They're sayin' down round the Corners that he found a chest of buried money when he dug that drain ditch in his south forty," said Jeff Tate. "Mebbe he did, but it was jest fool luck. You or me could dig an' delve for forty years round here, an' not find a durned red cent."

"Thet's so—that's so," observed Josh

Stebbins. "But this here place ain't the hull world; they's other places where a week's diggin' would make a man rich.

"Ef you'd sailed the seven seas, Jeff, like I hev, ye'd know the Coonburg is a mighty small dot on the chart, an' don't amount ter nothin'. Le's go in an' sit down while I tell you all how I missed findin' a fortune thet's still waitin' fer somebody to dig it up, an' me an' my partner are goin' to find it the next time I get round where it is buried.

"Ye see," he went on, casually helping himself to a smoked red herring and a soda cracker as he took his seat, "I was kinda beach combin' after hev'in' swum ashore at Pensacola from a ship thet hed a gun fightin' skipper an' a bucko mate. I run up agenst 'em over scrubbin' brass work, findin' after the rumpus was over thet I was low deuce ag'in' a pair of aces. So when she dropped her mud hook I took chances on the sharks, fer I knowed I'd never make the round v'y'ge I shipped fer alive, so I slipped over the side.

"I kept outa sight after I got ashore, but watched her till I seen her topsels hull down, steerin' so'th; then I started lookin' fer another berth with a hooker where the skipper an' mate's milk o' human kindness hedn't turned inter vinegar. But there was nothin' doin' in the shippin' line jest then, an' ez I was wonderin' how I could hustle one square meal fer a change from the raw clams thet I'd been mostly livin' on, a feller come up an' axed me, 'Are you, my friend, a seafarin' man?'

"Meanin' which?' I sez, ez I give him the once-over. He looked like halfway betwixt a college purfesser an' a barkeep. He wore a white duck suit o' clothes with foul anchors on the sleeves an' collar of his coat, a white cheesecutter cap with another foul anchor, an' he had on horn-bowed specs. His nose was as red as the Montauk light, sighted through a fog.

"I inquired if you followed the sea,' he sez.

"Wal, no,' I sez. 'It's t'other way round when the tide's on the flood, but it never reached me when I stayed above high-water mark.'

"How's that?' he sez.

"Wal, ye see,' I told him, 'clam diggin' is best done at low tide, an' the flood folers you up to high-water mark. An' I've been diggin' clams mostly since I quit the last ship.'

"Ah! quite so,' he sez. 'Then you are a sailor, as I judged from the cut of your jib.' He was tryin' ter talk like a salt-water man, when, fer all his rig out, he didn't look ez ef he could tell the dolphin striker from the jib downhaul.

"The skipper an' the mate o' the Ballyhoo Castle didn't seem to think so,' I answers. 'Thet's why I quit 'em without waitin' fer my pay. But I ken hand, reef, an' steer—an'—splice the main brace too,' lookin' straight at his red nose ez I sed it. I seen right then thet he knowed a little about the fust p'nciples o' navigation, fer he grinned an' pulled a flask o' hooch outa his pocket an' both of us hed a smile.

"I'm looking for a sailing master,' he sez. 'Thet's my yacht out in the stream, the Foaming Wave'—p'intin' to a white schooner-rigged craft of about a hundred tons measurement, flyin' the New York Yacht Club flag.

"Arter I'd told him thet I hed navigated the seven seas, on all kinds o' craft from icebergs an' dead whales to steamers an' square riggers, he sed I was jest the man he needed; so we traded, I shippin' ez sailin' master, he bein' the commodore or rear admiral, damfino which. His job was to look wise an' smoke good cigars on the quarter-deck while I run the yacht.

"He'd started in life poor, but honest, an' got ter be a millyunare, buyin' low an' sellin' high, till he got in the highest social circles of New York. His name was Algernon Pew Kidd. When he dug up his family tree to show 'em he was a blueblood he found thet the most distinguished members of it hed been hung as pirates about a hundred an' fifty years before his troubles commenced, one of 'em bein' Cap'n Kidd an' the other old Pew. So, seein' thet his ancestors, before they was hung, hed done about ez well in the seafarin' line ez he hed done in Wall Street and with pretty much the same principles, he bought a schooner an' started tryin' a seagoin' life by takin' a cruise in his own yacht, or ez he put it,

'Over the balmy seas where my brave ancestors immortalized their names.'

"Before I signed on he asked me ef I could pilot him in the West Indies an' the Caribbean Sea, an' I told him I knowed every rock, reef, an' island between Floridy an' Santo Domingo.

"We squared away fer the Bahamas fust, cruisin' round by Big an' Little Abaco an' Hole-in-the-Wall, then we run down by San Salvador an' Eluthera islands in water so shaller thet we could see bottom most o' the time while we was outa sight o' land. It looked ez ef we might strike a reef an' carry away our false keel 'most any minit, an' we did scrape the coral more'n once. It was risky sailin'—I'll say so—but we only scraped off some o' the barnacles so thet she sailed better instead o' worse, an' nothin' happened, nor begun ter happen, till we was steerin' so'th fer Hispaniola an' the Spanish Main, where they always was an' always will be some hell raisin' goin' on.

"Me an' the commodore—I always called him commodore—got purty chummy arter cruisin' a few weeks. He called me Cap'n Stebbins, 'cept when he hed about eight slugs of old Bourbon under hatches, then he called me Josh jest like you all do.

"At seven bells one evenin', ez we was in the cabin drinkin' whisky soda an' playin' poker at a dollar a chip, while we was makin' about twelve knots with the wind a leetle abaft the quarter, all of a sudden she hit something with a bang thet stood me on my head jest ez I was rakin' down a hundred-dollar pot thet I'd won on a full, jacks up, ag'in' two pair kings up an' a lone ace.

"I left the money on the floor an' flew up the companionway with the commodore at my shirt tail, which was flyin' straight out behind me.

"'Hey, Josh!' he hollered. 'What in hell hev we hit? Didn't you claim to know every rock in the West Indies?'

"'Commodore Algernon Pew Kidd,' I sez, very impressive like, 'I sure did; an' I never told a lie in all my life, ez is well known ter them thet hez been acquainted with me longer'n our brief acquaintance hez lasted. We ain't hit no rock, fer we're

off soundin's. Rocks don't drift off their moorin's. What we hit was a derelict, or a whale, or mebbe the sea sarpent thet they say lives down here somewhere. Heave the lead!' I yelled at the forward lookout; 'ye lubberly, cross-eyed son of a sea cook!' He run out a hundred fathoms an' reported no bottom.

"Jest ez he called out, somethin' broke water on our stabbard beam thet looked like a small submarine, only it was alive an' makin' the water fly as it sloshed round like a dyin' wild duck givin' its last kicks. It swum round an' round in a circle, rollin' over now an' then, so we could see it had a shell somethin' like them armidillers they is down in Texas, an' there was a big hole in it amidships with the blood streamin' out, makin' its wake red with gory foam. It was about thirty foot long by twelve beam, with a neck like an African giraffe fer length, but covered with scales like an alligator an' topped off with a head like a snappin' turtle, only a heap bigger."

"Josh," said the schoolmaster, who was an interested listener, "that answers to the description of a fossil reptile, the 'plesiosaurus,' that has been extinct for more than a hundred thousand years."

"Mebbe it was a plezysorus, or a whim-bampus, but ef he'd been dead so long, he was the liveliest corpse I ever run foul of, fer it was roarin' an' bellerin' till it could be heerd ten miles away."

"I see," interrupted Pat McGoogle, "that there's a lake in South America where scientists think that this reptile still exists: maybe that this was one that in a freshet had been carried out to sea and was trying to find its way back to the lake when your yacht struck it?"

"Like enough, Pat—like enough; but they wasn't a single nacherlist nor bughunter in the hull crew. We didn't give a damn what it was ez long ez it didn't board us. All our scientific interest hed gone blooey.

"'Fer the luvva Mike, commodore,' I sez, 'git a gun! There's the rock we hit, or I ain't nothin' but a pierhead jumper!' A few rifle shots in its head an' neck put it outa business, an' it sunk.

"We tried the bilge pump an' found she was makin' water so fast thet it was plain

she'd started her plankin' when we hit the whimbampus or plezysorus, whatever it was—I ain't a goin' ter risk my repytation fer truth an' voracity by claimin' any per-tickler name fer it. Ez a truthful man I jest state what we all seen, an' the scientific guys ken do the rest. What we hed ter do mighty pronto was to find a harbor o' some kind where we could careen her an' calk the leak, fer ef our pumps broke down we stood a mighty good chance of founderin' an' makin' a call on Davy Jones. The chart showed two little sand keys, Rat an' Mouse Island, was the nearest land S. E. by E. of our course. Ez I was givin' the man at the wheel his course, the lookout forward sung out 'Sail ho!' an' there on the stabbard beam was a square rigger bearin' down on us with a bone in her teeth. It was dark already, but we could see her plain, ez she was all lit up with a kinda green light like foxfire on sails, spars, riggin' an' hull.

"'Hard a port!' I hollered, an' we sheered off jest in time. I could 'a' throwed a chaw of terbaccor aboard of her ez she passed us; our bowsprit almost raked her port counter. An', fellers, I'll allow thet I was wabby in the knees an' gooseflesh all over by the time she was outa sight in the darkness, fer we hailed her, an' she never answered. Her ports was all closed; she didn't carry no lights; an' there was nary a livin' soul aboard of her, fer ez we could see, but the devil must 'a' been at her wheel, fer she was steerin' a straight course with never a yaw ter port or stabbard.

"By her build, high poop and low at the bows, besides the cut of her canvas an' the way her shrouds was rigged, I knowed too durned well it was the Flyin' Dutchman. An', boys, of course I never git skeered, but I'd 'a' give a thousand dollars right then ter hev been sittin' whar I am now, in Pat's grocery, with the crackers an' red herrin's handy an' the cider bar'l close up, fer every sailorman thet's sailed the seven seas, when that craft comes abeam of him, knows bad weather an' bad luck follers in its wake."

"Josh, what is the 'Flying Dutchman'?" asked Jeff Tate.

"Nobody knows fer certain, Jeff, except it is Davy Jones's flagship. They tell in

the fo'c's'les thet about three hundred years back an old Dutch sea cap'n named Detrick Van Dam sailed outa Amsterdam on his ship the Full Moon, bound fer the East Indies by way o' the Cape of Good Hope. Off the cape he run inter contrary winds an' got blowed back every time he tried ter round it, till he swore he'd double it in spite o' God Almighty, the devil, hell, an' high water! He's been tryin' ter round it ever since, except when he takes a cruise through the seven seas, leavin' hurricanes, shipwreck, an' every other kind o' bari luck in his wake fer every ship thet sights him."

Link Brown took his corn cob pipe from his mouth, and as he knocked the ashes from it, remarked: "Josh, I can believe that you struck a plezysorus an' sprung a leak, but claiming that a man has been sailin' the ocean for three hundred years is kinda hard to swallow."

"Link, twenty years ago, ef Jed Styles, sittin' over there, hed sed he was goin' ter fly from London to Paris, an' afterward callated ter fly to Berlin an' Vienna, you'd 'a' notified the county commissioners an' they'd 'a' shut him up in the bughouse fer violent lunatics. But only last week he told us how he flew over half o' the old country, an' we all knowed he told the truth. The Bible tells how Methusley lived nine hundred an' sixty-nine years--what's ter hinder a hard-biled Dutch sailorman like Cap'n Van Dam from livin' several hundred years.

"'Commodore,' I sez ez the craft went outa sight in the darkness and the wind and sea began ter rise, 'the quicker we make a safe harbor the better, fer it's goin' ter blow great guns before daylight.'

"He turned kinda white around the gills, an' asks, 'How d'ye know?'

"'That craft thet jest passed us is a sorta stormy petrel, an' means wind,' I told him, an' he went below an' turned in, while I ordered all sail clapped on.

"Next morning we made the two islands an' dropped our anchors in a little bay on Mouse Island, layin' snug an' safe till the blow I knowed was comin' hed blowed itself out ez we lay to the lee o' the island. We run the Foaming Wave ez near the beach ez we could at high tide, an' with a Spanish windlass on each mast careened

her so thet after shiftin' her loose ballast aft, the leak in her bow was outa water an' easy calked.

"While the crew was workin' at it the commodore an' me took a boat an' sculled over to Rat Island; thet was about a half mile to leeward of our anchorage.

"The commodore put a queer-lookin' pole in the yawl, ez we pushed off, all painted up with rings an' figgers such ez I never seen before.

"'What ye got there, commodore?' I asked him.

"'It's a divining rod, Josh,' he sez, 'an' cost me five hundred iron men.'

"'What's it good fer? What ken it divine? It ain't a talkin' machine, is it?'

"'It tells where there is water or other liquids, or the precious metals, such as gold and silver. It don't talk, it merely points the place to dig.'

"'Sand an' salt water is about all we're going ter find over thar, commodore, or I miss my guess,' I told him.

"He sez, mighty solemn, 'I have a hunch that my ancestors that sailed the Spanish Main in search of glory and riches buried some of the property they had no use for at the time on some of these beautiful isles of the tropical seas. In fact, I am sure of it, only I don't know on what islands they are hidden. Some verses written by Captain Kidd, my ancestor, who met his death at the violent end of a rope some years before his untimely end, evidently refer to hidden wealth. Listen to these words:

"'Fifteen men of 'em good and true;
Every man Jack could 'a' sailed with Old
Pew.

There was chest on chest of Spanish gold,
And a ton of plate in the middle hold;
And the cabin's riot of loot untold,
And there they lie that took the plum
With sightless eyes, with lips struck dumb,
But we'll share all by rule of thumb,
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum.'

"'Sounds like the prospectus of a mining company in Old Mexico,' I sez. 'All gold and silver an' dead men; but that last verse sounds best to me—I'm kinda tired o' drinkin' your rye and bourbon since the sody water give out, an' a bottle o' rum would taste mighty good fer a change—let's go.' An' we went, jest ez soon ez we hit the

beach; me with a pick an' shovel, the commodore packin' his divinin' rod between both his hands so it could swing down, up, or sideways, the way the man thet sold it to him hed told him to handle it.

"We pushed our way through the brush, walkin' abreast, when, ez I was lookin' at a flock o' green parrots up in the coconut trees overhead, an' wishin' we'd run on to a bunch o' monkeys to throw us down some nuts, fer I was awful dry, an' green coconuts make a fine drink like lemonade, all ter once the rod twisted in the commodore's hands so sudden, one end of it hit me in the jaw an' the t'other p'inted down, pullin' down his hands till it stuck in the ground.

"'Ureeky,' sez the commodore. 'Josh, here's where we find what we're looking for. Here the treasures of the Indies are buried. Get to work with your pick and shovel.'

"I'd dug down about two foot when the pick drove right through a skull. 'Hell's bells,' I hollered when I seen what it was. 'Commodore, yer divinin' rod has fouled us with a boneyard!'

"'Keep on digging,' he told me. 'That was the gardeen o' the treasure; they always buried two or three of their prisoners with the cache to take care of it.'

"A little deeper I struck wood, an' dug up a twenty-gallon keg full o' somethin' thet I was sure wasn't water.

"'Hev you got a corkscrew?' I axed him.

"'No, but there's a gimlet in my jack-knife,' he sez, pullin' it out an' startin' a hole in the staves. A little jet o' liquor squirted outa the hole he made. Ez soon ez I got a whiff of it, right away I put my mouth to the hole an' took a long swig.

"'Be careful, Josh, it may be poison,' sez the commodore.

"'Poison be damned,' I told him. 'This is old Jamaica rum thet's been buried an' agin' in the wood since long before yer glorious ancestors met their end at the end of a rope. Them ancestors o' yours was good judges o' hooch, I'll say that much for 'em, though I've heerd thet their manners an' morals was low grade. Take a swig an' see fer yerself.'

"He took a good drink, then he smiled an' smacked his lips, then he sez, 'This 'd

make a fine punch if we had some lemons and sugar.'

" 'It 'd be all jake ef we hed a few o' them green coconuts over our heads; they're full o' the best kind o' canned lemonade,' I tells him.

" 'Get up aloft there and heave down a few,' he orders.

" 'I ain't no monkey to shin up the bare trunk,' I come back with.

" 'Can't a sailor go anywhere aloft where a monkey can?'

" 'Yes, except where the monks use hands, feet, an' tail, like they do when they pick coconuts.'

" 'If it wasn't that I'm vice president of the Fat Men's Club, and weigh three hundred and fifty pounds, I'd climb up myself,' he sez, an' tears come in his eyes ez he looked up at them coconuts.

" 'After I took three or four more drinks I must 'a' got lit up a bit, fer I ain't certain ez to jest what happened—I reckon I musta clumb up an' got some nuts without knowin' whether I was goin' or comin', an' hed come down headfirst fer a windup. My shirt an' breeches was all tore to pieces, I hed a lump on my head ez big ez a hen's egg, an' one shoulder was black an' blue an' stiff when I found myself 'bout sundown arm in arm with the commodore, ez we held each other up, both of us singin' 'We won't go home till morning', an' kickin' the keg along in front of us toward the yawl. Mebbe ef we hedn't sech a deckload we could 'a' carried it on our shoulders; when we got to the beach we sung 'For he's a jolly good fellow' before we got in the yawl. When I looked fer the divinin' rod the commodore told me he'd left it stuck in the ground where we'd found the treasures of the Indies; then he hugged an' kissed me an' said thet when we went back to dig up the rest o' the treasure he'd divide up with me fifty-fifty. I reckon his conscience was troublin' him fer havin' taken more than his share o' the hooch while I was knocked out. Anyway, I hed all I could carry, an' then some. But we never went back.

" 'When we came aboard the leak was calked an' the Foaming Wave was ready for sea. We told the watch on deck thet ez

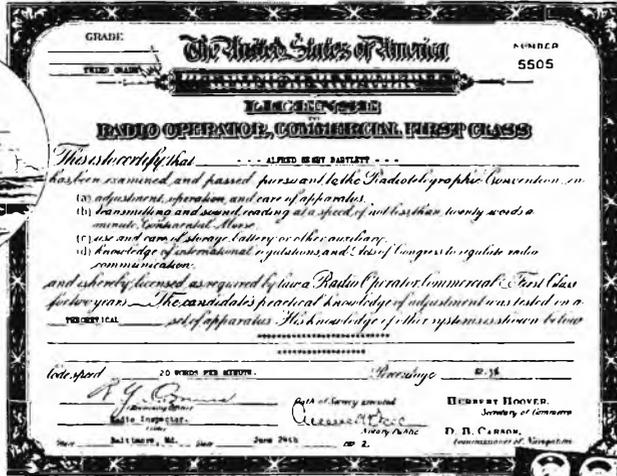
the wind was raising to put out two anchors, an' then we turned in. At about two bells a hurricane from the southwest woke us up.

" 'We made all snug, with our canvas furled and lashed an' battened hatches, with all hands below decks, an' hoped to ride it out where we was, but the hurricane kicked up what they call 'a tidal wave,' which is nothin' more or less than the wind pilin' the water up in front of it in an extra heavy blow like this one. Our anchors wouldn't hold and dragged ez the wave carried us right over and across Rat Island, thet by this time was all under water. They held us a bit when we was about the middle of the island like they'd found holdin' ground, then let go an' we was blowed out to sea. It looked ez ef we'd keelhauled a church when we histed 'em a week afterward off Floridy. The port anchor was fouled in about ten feet of a steeple on one fluke an' the other hed hooked onto the bell. It was a mighty high wave we'd rode fer sure. Both anchors hed us weighed down by the head so deep it was a wonder we hedn't foundered. It took all hands at the capstan to hist the stabbard mud hook, an' when we got it aboard there was a big iron pot full o' Spanish gold ounces hangin' on the flukes—we musta fouled it when we dragged across Rat Island.

" 'After we'd shook out our canvas the commodore ordered me to steer a straight course fer little ol' New York. He allowed he was all fed up with life on the ocean wave, an' callated to foller in the path of his lamented ancestors by startin' a bucket shop in Wall Street, ez it paid better than their old-fashioned way of doin' business.

" 'When he paid us off, ten thousand dollars was my share of the treasure over and above my pay ez sailing master. I lost every cent of it the next week bettin' on the races at Sheepshead Bay. I reckon the rest of my shipmates didn't keep theirs very long neither. Sailors ain't savers, ye know.

" 'But, fellers, in spite o' the Flyin' Dutchman an' Davy Jones I'm goin' down to them islands agen. There's millions buried thar in gold an' hooch, an' with a prohibition agent to help me, I'll find the hooch anyhow, an' the gold won't be far away, I'm tellin' ye!'



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- Business Law
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- Wireless Radio
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Brant	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Large Ducks	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Mallard Ducks	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Golden Plover	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Squirrels	3	1	2 1/4	1
Rabbits	3	1	2 1/4	1
Small Ducks	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Flamingos	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Pheasants	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Doves	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Quail	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Song	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Woodcock	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
Shore Birds	3 1/2	1 1/2	2 1/4	1
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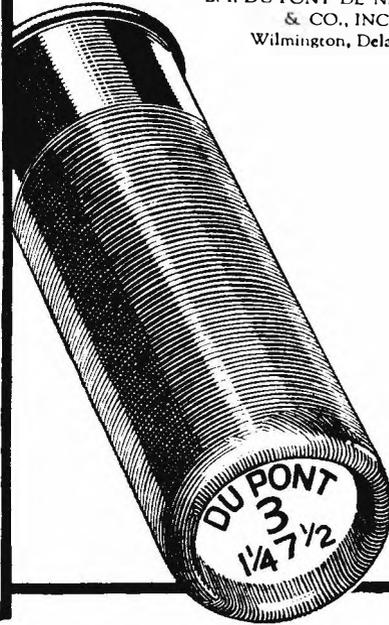
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