APRIL

10 CENTS

THE ARGOSY

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY NEW YORK AND LONDON.

The Argosy **[v63 #1, April 1910] (The Frank A. Munsey Company, 10¢, pulp, cover by** Gordon Grant**) [] Details supplied by Gene Christie.**

- **1 · The Clown's Mate** · Gerald N. Coe · **n.**
- **32 · Four Canvasback Ducks** · Howard Dwight Smiley · **ss**
- **38 · Insane Island [Part 1 of 4]** · Cromwell Knox · **sl**
- **51 · In Bad** · John Montague · **ss**
- **55 · A Glut of Suspects** · Seward W. Hopkins · **n.**
- **79 · Algernon, of the Kind Heart** · Forrest Halsey · **ss**
- **83 · In the Wrong Shoes [Part 2 of 6]** · Garret Smith · **sl**
- **98 · Selby's Swap** · E. V. Preston · **ss**
- **105 · The Escort [Part 2 of 3]** · Marie B. Schrader · **sl**
- **117 · His Mark of Identification** · Littell McClung · **ss**
- **125 · A Submarine Enchantment [Part 3 of 5]** · Garrett Swift · **sl**
- **140 · Mixed Company** · Joseph Ivers Lawrence · **ss**
- **145 · The Man Who Ran Away [Part 4 of 5]** · Bertram Lebhar · **sl**
- **156 · The Hawkins Seven-Shooter [*Mr. Hawkins*]** · Edgar Franklin · **ss**
- **163 · The Imposter [Part 6 of 6]** · Douglas Pierce · **sl**
- **168 · My Name in the Head-Lines** · Anthony Wright · **ss**
- **172 · The Ant and the Elephant** · Harold C. Burr · **ss**
- **176 · The Case in Question** · Fred V. Greene, Jr. · **ss**
- **181 · Fooled All Round** · Burke Jenkins · **ss**
- **189 · An Unhatched Clue** · Robert Keene · **ss**

THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXIII APRIL, 1910. No. 1

THE CLOWN'S MATE.

BY GERALD N. COE.

Some Circus Happenings that Were Not on the Bill, and a Fun-Maker Who Didn't Believe in Reserving All His Comedy for the Sawdust Ring.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

GETTING EVEN.

"THE Lord loveth a cheerful liver," said Cust, the clown.

"My liver's all right," replied Mme. Pompon, the bareback-rider and professional markswoman. "It's my red hair that's botherin' me just now."

"Don't let a little thing like that make any difference to you," Cust advised.

"It ain't a little thing. Them puffs are all that ain't real, an' even they are real expensive," she assured him hotly. "No, my red hair's botherin' me by gettin' me mad at Professor Marx. You'd think he was the whole act, an' all he's got to do is to throw up the black balls while I shoot 'em in the air."

"But Marx always was a matinée idler," said Cust. "The ladies fall for his long *Lord Fauntleroy* hair an' his *Salome* shape. He's a splendid figure on horseback."

"I'd like his figure better if I saw it stretched out in a coffin," replied the markswoman.

"Now, don't go to gettin' melodramatic," Cust retorted quickly. "Don't do the old stunt what's been overworked in story-books; don't do—"

"What's that?" she queried.

"Why, don't you know?" smiled Cust. "The lady blank-shooter gets mad at the villain, an' in the chasin'-the-bandits act she loads her gun with real bullets instead of the reg'lar blanks. Then, when the man she hates—the villain what's betrayed her—is caught an' hung, an' while he's strugglin' at the rope that's attached to a hook at the back of his neck, hid under his coat, she riddles his body with the real bullets instead of the make-believe ones. You know the act."

"I'd just as lief do it as not with this here Professor Marx. He's the limit!"

"If he's the limit," Cust replied, "then it can't be more'n a ten-cent limit."

"The way he blows around an' flirts with the country girls, an' ogles the married ladies, is somethin' fierce," went on Mme. Pompon. "Why, I seen him last night with a country girl on each arm, an' actin' somethin' scandalous. It ain't no joke to be hooked up in a act with a feller like him. Just 'cause I won't have nothin' to do with him outside the ring, he's mad at me, an' the way he throws up them balls is somethin' fierce. No wonder I can't always hit 'em. He just gives 'em a little toss about six feet high, right above his head, instead of throwin' 'em out somewhere where I can get a shot at 'em."

"I had a dog once," Cust began slowly. "That dog had a certain trick to do in the act. I was to hold out a pork-chop an' the dog was to walk under it, look up, sniff at it, then turn up his nose an' go on without noticin' it. He did it all right when he was a pup, but after a while he got old an' ugly. Then he'd snap at the meat an' bolt it whole. But I cured him of it."

"You did? How?" asked the bare-back-rider, with interest.

"I cut a chunk out of the middle of the pork-chop one day an' filled it in with cayenne pepper. He bolted the meat as usual, but he didn't never do it again."

"I should think not!" laughed Mme. Pompon.

"A similar treatment might serve for other dogs that don't do their tricks right—"

"You mean Professor Marx?"

"I've heard him called that."

"Oh, do tell me something, Cust! Tell me how I can cure him," cried the marks-woman, moving closer to the clown and watching his droll face as it twitched with an idea.

It was just after the afternoon performance. They were sitting in the dressing-room, on a big trunk, chatting while the stake-drivers and roustabouts put things in order after the show.

Cust thought for a few moments, then he pulled Mme. Pompon's ear close to his mouth and whispered a sentence.

"Great!" cried the sure-shot lady. "Great! How'd you ever think of it, Cust?"

"I earn my livin' thinkin' up them things," replied the clown, with a smirk. "You know, I ain't one of them mournful clowns you hear about. I'm the real thing in clowns. The saddest part of my life is the fact that I see nothin' but the funny side. They say them newspaper humorists are the saddest men there are: but you'll always notice that them real humorists, like Mark Twain an' Anthony Comstock, have a good time out of life. There's nothin' sad about them."

"I guess you're right, Cust. But the idea! That was a great idea. Marx will be so mad he'll probably leave the company—"

"Or shoot their famous markswoman, Pompon," suggested Cust.

"Let him try to get the drop on me!" she cried.

"You keep talkin' like one of these here story-book performers, Pomp. Cut out the melodrama. Life's a lark. There ain't no villains in real life. There's a lot of sullen people with no sense of humor that could pass for villains. Professor Marx is just obstinate, like that dog of mine I was tellin' you about. There's always a cure at hand—Nature furnished a cure for everything."

"You're right!" laughed the other. "Oh, wait till to-night. If I don't fix him. He'll be starin' around the audience—lookin' for my applause—an' then, all of a sudden, when he's tossin' up them black balls six feet above his head, so he can catch 'em when I miss 'em—all of a sudden— Say, Cust, that's a great idea! I wish I had your head."

"Want my face, too? It goes with it," smiled the clown.

"Well, no; I'll take the goods without the wrapper."

"Speakin' of faces, I'll bet you ain't really got anythin' on me, except a lot more paint an' powder. I heard on Broadway last season that it's a wise woman who knows her own face."

"Cut the comedy, Cust," she told him. "Let's get down to business. Will you help me work out that idea of yours to get even with Professor Marx and cure him of his bad tricks?"

"You bet I will. Leave it all to me. Run along to the mess-tent now an' feed your two-by-four. As for me, I'll interview the cook."

"Good! If you can't get 'em there, you'll probably be able to get 'em at the grocery-store. I'll pay for 'em."

"Don't you worry—I'll fix things all right!" And Cust swung off the trunk.

"Why people want to take this life so serious is more than I can understand," he mused as he walked to the "cookee's" tent. "Now, Pomp might shoot that feller, like they do in press-agent stories. There's no tellin' what she would do if she got mad enough. The way to get along in this life an' cure people of the mulligrubs is to play a joke on 'em. I'll fix that Professor Marx so he'll throw the balls up right. See if I don't."

He negotiated with the "cookee," and slipped half a dollar in his hand for silence. Then he borrowed the shoe-blacking, and chose a place where he could work without anybody seeing him. It took him half an hour to do the job right.

Then he sauntered into the dressing-room, which was vacant then, everybody being at supper. He fooled with the baskets of black balls used in Mme. Pompon's act for some minutes; then smiled, and went in to his supper.

"Did you fix 'em?" asked Pompon's eyes as he passed her.

"Bet your life," replied Cust, with an emphatic nod of his head.

Cust smiled to himself all through dinner, anticipating what was to come. He was happy only when he had some practical joke on foot, and probably that was the reason why Cust was always happy. After dinner he went over to Pompon.

"Say," he began, "to make it all the funnier, an' show up that Professor Marx to himself, suppose you go over now an' tell him again that you want him to throw the balls out farther so you can hit 'em, an' not straight above his head so he can catch 'em an' get applause if you miss?"

"I've told him that often enough, but he won't listen."

"That's just the point. Tell him again, an' then you'll have the goods on him when things happen in the show. He can't kick if you've warned him. You know when he throws up them balls, four of 'em in quick succession as a starter—tell him not to throw 'em so fast, an' to throw 'em farther away, so you can get a better shot. That'll make him throw 'em faster an' straight above his head. See if it don't."

"I know it will. He's so obstinate," replied Pompon, struck with the idea.

Cust, meanwhile, curveted around and got into as much trouble as possible. He was as great a clown out of the ring as in it. His was a rubber-ball nature. He was always bouncing about and getting into all the trouble there was to be found.

If he abhorred anything in life, it was the mournful clown. He claimed that a clown was made that way by Nature, and he couldn't make a success if his life were not a continual rehearsal. For doing the unexpected, Cust was almost as great a success as Roosevelt.

"The show is beginning to begin," smiled Cust, suddenly noting the activity in the dressing-tent. He had his make-up on, and fell in line when the triumphal procession formed to enter the ring.

He did his stunts carefully as he marched around, and people remarked that he was performing particularly well that night—which boded ill for somebody, and a good laugh for the rest.

Mme. Pompon's act was one of the first.

Cust was making a circuit of the sawdust track, bowing to the ladies, making faces at the babies, when in rode Professor Marx, with two guns balanced on his thigh and the basket of black balls over his left arm.

The audience clapped. He pulled in his horse, amid the craning of the stage-struck country girls, and announced:

"Mme. Pompon will now entertain you with her clever shooting act. The only woman in the world who can shoot four balls in succession while galloping bareback on a horse. I thank you, ladies and gentlemen. I thank you."

He threw on his hat over the black, lustrous curls, and cantered to the center of the ring, while Pompon entered, poised on one leg on the bare back of her horse.

When she rode past the professor, she reached out and took the gun he handed her, and then galloped around the track while he prepared to throw up the four black balls in succession. He hesitated for a moment as he picked up the balls, two in each hand, and started to look at them curiously.

At that moment the manager's whistle blew for the act to start. Marx had no more time for inspection of the balls. He threw them straight above his head, in rapid succession, in the slovenly manner that so aggravated Mme. Pompon. But she was on her mettle. Four shots were pumped from her gun with lightning speed.

The four black balls burst in the air almost at the same time.

Then it was suddenly discovered that four yellow masses dropped from the balls, which were supposed to be hollow. They dropped down and plastered themselves all over the handsome Professor Marx's head, face, and coat; for he had taken off his hat to acknowledge the applause for Mme. Pompon.

He was one smear of yellow, and yellow stuff flowed from him. He sat in astonishment, dripping the sticky mass.

Cust was doubled up outside the ring. He jumped to his feet and shouted:

"Eggs! Eggs! Four duck eggs with one rifle-ball."

Then he burst into another roar of merriment.

"Gentlemen and ladies, behold the human omelet!"

Professor Marx, realizing that he was the goat, slashed his horse viciously and galloped from the tent, the whites and yolks of four large duck eggs streaming behind him.

CHAPTER II.

RUBBING IT IN.

"WASN'T it great!" cried Cust, as he met Pompon in the dressing-room after her act.

"Yes," giggled the markswoman. "I thought for a minute he was going to find out that you had put the duck eggs coated with shoe-blacking in his basket in place of the glass balls; but the manager's whistle came just in time."

"There'll be something to pay around here in a few minutes," said Cust, looking around at those not performing, who stood in groups, laughing over the joke.

It had been a success with the company —Professor Marx was not popular with them, and they were glad to see him chagrined before the crowd. But the manager was furious. It had spoiled the act. Nothing is so necessary in a circus as discipline.

As soon as he could break away from the ring he dashed into the dressing-room and blustered up to the group which Cust and Pompon had joined.

"Who did it? Who did it?" he demanded.

"A black duck laid the nigger eggs in the basket by mistake," answered Cust, in his most facetious manner, for he had been keyed up to a wonderful pitch over the affair.

The manager's eyes rested on Cust. A light of conviction came into them.

"Who did it? I bet it was you—you little fool! Who did it?"

"I did it with my little blacking-brush, sir; I cannot tell a lie," answered Cust, stepping forward and striking an attitude, while the rest looked at him with the awe due a brave man.

"You—" fumed the manager. Then he got his breath and began once more on a new tack of well-chosen epithets that made him the admiration of all the circus people. "You—if I don't wring your neck for you, I'm a liar. You—"

Some said that the clown's name had originated from the frequency with which he was "cussed" by the various managers. Cust claimed it was the logical abbreviation for "Custard," or "Custhard," as he pronounced it. There's no telling what would have happened if the time had not arrived when the clown was scheduled to go on and drive the circus trick-mule, Maud.

The manager ordered him into the ring. He went, and did his funniest. Cust could never be kept down.

It struck him as funny that the manager was mad. The joke was a good one, the audience had recognized it; it had doubtless cured Professor Marx, and Cust considered that he had done a rather good thing.

The professor had fled the tent. He knew the hilarity with which he would be received by the performers, and the idea of facing it did not appeal to him at all.

He hurried out and found a pump, where he washed his splendid clothes and shampooed his resplendent hair with the eggs that Cust had thrust upon him. He was due in the ring to drive one of the chariots as a Roman charioteer in the races toward the end.

Cust knew that the professor could not afford to lose his job, so he hung around in the tent, watching for the advent of the fallen hero and keeping himself out of the manager's way.

Before long, Professor Marx sneaked in through the tent-flap, and tried to slip past the actors waiting for their turns.

But Cust was not standing among them for nothing. He spied the professor, and cried out:

"Hallo, Marx! They say a bird's egg in the hand is worth two in the bush."

"The bush" was a pet name of Cust's for Marx's heavy head of hair. He had saved up the joke and timed it carefully. The group of performers chorused a laugh at Marx's expense. The fellow stopped for a second and glared at Cust. Cust mimicked the expression and glared back, sending the performers into another gale of laughter.

That spurred on Cust.

"Cookee says we have scrambled eggs for breakfast," the clown cried out.

Professor Marx's face went black, his eyebrows shot down over flashing eyes.

It was well known in the company that he had a temper.

He took a step toward Cust.

The clown had often noted the funny way in which the professor walked. Now he cried out:

"Don't he act as though he was walkin' on eggs?"

This was too much for the professor. A matinée idol cannot stand ridicule and persistent plaguing. He swooped his big bulk low and grabbed up a heavy tent-stake.

"Say another word, and I'll brain you, you—you rat!" he hissed, fixing his snapping eyes on little Cust and striding closer.

"Try it once, you—you duck!"

Cust imitated the other's intonation, and glanced around him quickly. The company had fallen back, and were taking in the scene with the breathless interest of an audience watching a daring loop-the-loop in an automobile. Professor Marx paused for just one second.

Then he flung his huge frame toward Cust, holding the stick ready for a crashing blow.

Mme. Pompon screamed.

But Cust was quick and agile—a born acrobat.

He reached out quickly and landed a resounding slap on the professor's handsome face.

Marx aimed a blow at Cust's head with the murderous bludgeon, and threw all of his weight and strength into the effort.

Cust did a quick side turn and duck. The professor had overreached himself and he shot through the space where Cust had been, the power of the attempted blow unbalancing him.

Splash!

Professor Marx, in all his splendor, plunged head first into the four-foot tank used by the high diver, to which Cust had lured him—his ingenious little brain thus plotting the fall of the hero.

Floundering about like a bull in a bath, and bellowing like a sea-lion, the professor came to the surface, blew the water from his mouth, and glared around for Cust.

The little clown was standing close to the tank, making a face at his victim.

Marx made one grab, secured the club he had lost, and bounded over the edge of the tank, shaking the water from him like a spaniel.

But at that moment the manager's whistle blew, and Cust climbed hurriedly into the little auto he worked by foot-power, to the delight of the audience, and hurried out into the ring, Professor Marx pursuing him as far as the door, the gleam of a madman in his eyes.

But the manager stopped him there, and Marx had enough reason left to know that he could not afford to lose his job.

When Cust came out of the ring, after his uproarious act, he looked around cautiously to see how the land lay. Mme. Pompon was just going on, but stopped for a moment to whisper to Cust that Professor Marx was behind the elephants, changing his wet clothes for the chariot-race.

Cust thought of a dozen ways to further annoy him, but he had no time to execute them, for the manager's shrill whistle blew for the advent of the race.

Professor Marx plunged out from behind the elephants, where he had been dressing. He was arrayed in all the splendor of a Roman charioteer. He saw Cust, but had no time to seek revenge at that moment.

His eyes flashed, and he shook his fist in the direction of the clown as he mounted the chariot.

Cust stayed near the door during the race, and heard the jeers of the audience as Professor Marx swung around the ring. The clown smiled in appreciation of the crowd's memory, for he knew from their shouts that they recognized the man who had been splashed with eggs and were jollying him from the benches.

Some mishap occurred, and Marx lost the fixed chariot-race that he was scheduled to win every night. He had suddenly fallen from his throne as matinée idol, and he blamed it all on Cust. When he drove out of the ring and the show was over, he jumped from his chariot and made a mad rush at the little clown. Cust made a quick side-step, and hid himself behind the manager.

The latter caught Marx by one arm, and threw him backward. There was pandemonium for a few moments; then the manager burst out in the loud voice with which he addressed his audiences:

"We've had enough of this fighting and playing tricks around here. The next man that fights loses his job. I mean it. We've got to have discipline. Cust, come here!"

The little circus troupe gathered around the manager and shivered, as the little clown slipped out from behind the manager and queried:

"Will you have your eggs poached or fried?"

There was a flash in the manager's eye that boded ill for the irrepressible little clown, but Cust did not notice it.

CHAPTER III.

THE PAY FOR THE FUN.

"CUST!" cried the manager, and all the company looked on in awe, for their chief was a great disciplinarian, and they knew that something was coming to the clown. "Your contract calls for twenty-five a week, grub, and a place to sleep. It's a good contract for you. You're an old hand in the business, and there're lots better'n you that are getting less money—"

"Are there?" grinned Cust.

"Yes, you bet there are. This is a bad season, and I could sign up a dozen at less money in a minute. But you've been with me a good while an' your work is all right, only you start too much trouble in the company. It's getting along in the season now, and if I was to tear up your contract on the grounds of insubordination—"

The manager let the last word roll out slowly and smoothly; he loved the sound of big words, as every true circus manager does.

"I say," he repeated for effect, "if I were to discharge you on the grounds of insubordination—"

"Whatever that is," remarked Cust, and the rest of the troupe tried to hide their smiles as Cust poked fun at the manager's weakness before his very eyes.

"Get a dictionary and look it up!" cried his employer. "I was only going to say that you couldn't get a job at this time of year if you lose this one. I give you your choice; will you make out a new contract with me at fifteen dollars a week for the rest of the season or go now?"

The proposition was rather abrupt, and poor Cust scratched his head for a moment before making reply. Even the seriousness of the offer could not affect his clownish nature.

"Would I rather have a cold potato in the wood-shed," he murmured slowly, "or lick the steam off a restaurant-window?"

He paused for effect. Some of the company grinned behind their hands.

"I'll take the cold potato," he decided abruptly.

"All right, I'll keep you at fifteen, then."

The manager turned to his cowering company.

"I want you all to take warning by this," he said by way of peroration. "A circus ain't no place for foolishness. I've told you often enough that a circus company should be like an army of well-trained soldiers. I am the general; you are my men. There must be absolute discipline, or the whole show will go to smash."

"Ain't it grand?" Cust smirked to Mme. Pompon, who stood beside him, an anxious look in her eye as she heard Cust sentenced for helping her with the obnoxious Professor Marx.

"Sh-h-h! He'll hear you!" cautioned Pompon.

"He can't do much but cut me down to ten a week an' grub," answered Cust.

The manager continued with his oration until the company was thoroughly frightened and weary. Then he turned on Professor Marx quickly.

"Marx!" he cried.

"What is it, sir?" asked the matinée idol, who was a different proposition from Cust, and was willing to grovel in the dust at the manager's feet so long as he held down his job.

"Marx, I want you to remember, too, that there's order to be kept in this company. If I find you fighting with Cust, out you go. You're good enough to swell around and make a hit with the ladies, an' that's what I keep you for; but your act is poor, and I wouldn't have to look from here to Jericho to find a man that could fill your place. Remember."

"No! Any old duck could fill his place," remarked Cust, just loud enough so Marx could hear.

The professor turned quickly and glared at the clown. The veins in his neck swelled, but that was all; he managed to control himself for the sake of his job.

The manager stopped abruptly and allowed his company to change to their street-clothes.

They were playing in a big city, and each had hunted a place to sleep for himself, as the bunk-tent had not been put up, and the principals seldom slept in that, anyway.

As Cust climbed into his every-day attire he saw Mme. Pompon just leaving.

Hurriedly lacing up his shoes, the clown ran out and caught up with her. She had been strolling on slowly, waiting for him, as he usually walked to her hotel with her.

"Cust," she said, "I'm mighty sorry I got you into all that trouble."

"Got me into trouble? Say, Pompon, I don't have to be *got* into trouble; I'm always right there." smiled the clown.

"But, Cust, you're not so young as you might be. Your job's all you got, and an old clown ain't got much chance against the young ones what come in with clever, up-to-date tricks."

"'There's no fool like an old fool,'" quoted Cust. "Clown means just about the same as fool, don't it?"

"Oh, Cust, you're the limit! Will you ever get sensible?" cried Mme. Pompon.

"Not as long as there's goats like Professor Marx what need their whiskers trimmed," replied the clown, with a sly twinkle. "Wonder how he liked that settin' of eggs in his hair?"

"You know very well how he liked it, Cust. That's what I wanted to talk to you about. You know, Professor Marx has an ugly temper. He's obstinate, and the kind that holds hard to a grudge. It ain't the first time you've showed him up before the whole bunch."

"An' it won't be the last," smiled Cust.

"But listen to reason. He's got a little Spanish blood in him, an' he'll lay for you."

"Duck eggs?" asked the clown.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you said he was goin' to lay for me, an' I wondered if he would turn his talents to eggs of the duck variety?"

"Cust, you're the limit!" cried Mme. Pompon.

"You said the same about Professor Marx," the little fellow reminded her.

"Yes," replied the bareback rider, "he's the limit at one end, and you're the limit at the other. But, Cust, I wish you'd be serious for a minute. If anything should happen, I would feel responsible. I'm afraid he'll get even with you. He might sneak up behind you and slip a long, sharp knife between your shoulder-blades. Those fellows with a little Spanish blood can do it to the queen's taste."

"Not bein' a queen," rejoined Cust, "I suppose it wouldn't suit my taste. But here, Pompon, I wish you'd be serious yourself for a minute. You go on talkin' this Black-Hand language all the time, an' tellin' about deep an' dark conspiracies. There ain't none in this life at all."

"There sure is," Pompon declared. "Why, I was with a troupe four years ago when the 'tat' with the show got jealous of one of the trapeze performers who'd been making up to Pella Mella, the woman who did the loop the loop on the motor-cycle, and what did this here jealous 'tat' go an' do but—"

"Cut the trapeze-man's rope to his swing so the poor feller fell off an' broke his trepanned skull into seventy-three separate an' individual pieces."

"I know, but that really did happen, Cust," replied the bareback sure-shot.

"Did you count the pieces?"

"Don't be foolish. I tell you the 'tat' done it," cried *mademoiselle*.

"That's 'cause he was a 'tat,'" replied Cust. "I ain't never had no use for them fellers. They seem ter get some poison in their systems with the ink when they're tattooed. It makes 'em act curious. A feller ought to act curious what's carryin' a ship on his chest, like 'My Bigga Brudder Sylvest,' an anchor on his right arm, a beautiful lady with green hair on the other arm, an' a great big sea-serpent coiled careless over his back. To say nothin' of them sailor-knots and Psyche-knots what's done all up an' down his legs."

"You're gettin' away from the thread of discourse, as they call it, Cust," reproved Mme. Pompon. "I was just tell-

in' you that people do get even in this here circus life, an' you better watch out pretty sharp for Professor Marx."

At that moment a big, black form passed them in the darkness and hurried on without recognition into a cheap little rooming-house.

"There's Marx now!" cried the sure-shot lady when the big form had passed. "I tell you, you've got to be careful of him. He's got that snake-in-the-grass disposition of a tarantula."

"He's a sneaky snake, you mean, I suppose," Cust remarked.

"Well, there ain't much use talkin' to you, Cust; I can plainly see that. You'll have to take your medicine. Why, once, ten years ago, when I was doin' the mermaid in a two-foot tank with a dime-museum company the rubber-skin man got mad at the ossified feller; there was a little jealousy because they was both in the skin business.

"But, anyway, this here rubber-plant gent got mad, an' one day he substituted a real, sharp needle for the fake one that slid into the handle what the ossified man used to stab in his chest. Well, when he come to stab the real one in, it went clean into his lungs, an' the ossified man died then an' there."

"Oh, yes," said Cust wearily, "an' the other day I heard of one of these here sword-swallowers what had an enemy. This was in a story, mind you: an' this here jealous rival puts in a real sword for him to swallow, instead of the fake one what folds up like an aluminum drinkin'-cup—"

"What happened?" cried Pompon, who had a decidedly tragic nature.

"Oh, nothin' much, only the sword-swallower discovered the mistake just in time, and went an' found the feller what did the dirty work and cut his throat from ear to ear, like you slice a pineapple, usin' the real sword to do the deed."

"Oh, Cust, was that really true?" cried Pompon, as they paused in front of her hotel to continue their conversation.

"Sure it wasn't. It was only one of them fairy tales like what you read. I wish I could get hold of the feller what wrote it. I'd tell him somethin' about circus an' side-show life. They make me sick, them fellers that write up shows an' stories about this here life; I'll bet there ain't a one of 'em what's ever seen the real thing. He ain't even watched the beautiful slack-wire performer, only sixteen, in long skirts and curl-papers, after the show, pourin' coffee for her husband, the strong man, an' her whole complete family of fourteen children, what do the act as the famous Imperial Japanese Troupe of Acrobats."

"Well, there's a good deal in what you say," replied Mme. Pompon with a grin. "But I want to warn you, look sharp when Professor Marx is around, especially if he's behind your back."

"Oh, forget it, Pompy! There ain't no tragedy in life. It's all a circus, an' only the 'tat's' an' the snake-charmers an' other side-show performers know what jealousy an' gettin' even is, an' that's because they're underworked an' overfed, even to the fat lady."

CHAPTER IV.

CUST BECOMES A HERO.

MME. POMPON gave up trying to warn care-free Cust. She took her worries to her room and left Cust in the street.

The little clown was tired. He went directly home, and smiled over the jokes he had played on Professor Marx until sleep came, and he dreamed of funny pranks all night.

His business was that of being a clown, and he was a good business man.

A strange combination was Cust. Nobody knew how old he really was, but he himself told of forty seasons he had played. There was no circus manager on earth that did not know him; but still Cust was a mediocre worker; it was only because he had no balance.

His pendulum swung too far to the foolish side, and he was always in character, on or off the sawdust.

Had it not been for this, Cust would have been a head-liner. His one great fault in life was that he never knew when to stop, and he called it a virtue.

The next morning Cust got up late, went to his window and dropped a bag of peanuts on the head of a passer-by, laughed to himself for five minutes, then dressed, and went down to the tent.

He and Pompon had another serious

talk that morning. It seems that Professor Marx had been heard to swear vengeance on the clown; and Mme. Pompon, being his friend, got down to the bottom of things and tried to reform Cust for the thousandth time.

Hé was a likable little fellow, and nobody ever became interested in him without immediately beginning to reform him; or trying to, which was a far different thing.

"Cust," said the bareback rider, with all the seriousness she could command, "why don't you be a real *man?* People like you as they like the pet pony with the show. They don't understand you. You never did a heroic thing in your life. You never showed the stuff that I know there is in you."

"If I weren't so old an' you weren't such a chronic old maid, I'd think you wanted to marry me, Pompy," smiled Cust.

"No. It's only friendly interest, you know that, Cust. I talk plain."

"An' look plain, I might add."

"My looks ain't here nor there," she cried. "I ain't a born fool like you, anyway."

"What do you want me to do, Pompy? Be a *hero?* Do somethin' brave, like when Billie the Twister climbed the center-pole an' rescued Mme. Butterfly when she was doin' the fire-dance in the air an' her drapery caught?"

"That's it exactly. I'd like to see people respect you more than they do."

"Oh, well. If you want me to be a hero, that's the easiest thing we do," smiled Cust, jumping up from beside her and going off toward the animal-tent.

"Here! What are you going to do, Cust?" cried Mme. Pompon in surprise.

"I'm goin' to be a hero," the little fellow smiled back.

"But nothin's happened!"

"Somethin' *will!* I ain't the kind of hero that *waits* for things to happen. I *make* 'em happen."

He passed out through the flap of the tent, and half an hour later Mme. Pompon had quieted her fears over what might happen if Cust set out to be a hero.

That afternoon Professor Marx and Cust passed each other just before the show. They nodded coldly, for the sake of holding their jobs, and when Marx had gone on Cust turned and stuck out his tongue at him.

It was a habit he had learned in the ring and used freely in his private life. It was childish, but it was Cust.

There was a glint in the professor's eyes as he nodded to the clown, but that didn't bother Cust.

Fifteen minutes later Marx saw Cust again, just as the professor was about to lead out his saddled horse to make his triumphal entry in the arena, prepared to assist Mme. Pompon in her shooting act. Cust walked away from the horse and hurried out into the ring, where he walked around the outside circle and did his little stunts.

The manager's whistle blew, and Professor Marx flew through the door at the side and started on his glorious circuit of the tanbark. Marx was a fair rider, but was hot-headed and lost control of himself if his horse ever acted strangely.

Cust noticed the uneasiness of the professor when he flew by him.

A second later Professor Marx fidgeted in his saddle and pulled hard on the reins. His horse was acting in a strange manner. Suddenly the animal snorted, kicked, curveted, and then threw itself high in the air.

Cust turned and watched. The audience craned their necks to see what was the matter.

Just then Professor Marx dropped the two guns he was carrying for Mme. Pompon's act, and pulled on the reins for all he was worth.

But the steed suddenly had gone mad. It leaped high in the air again; Marx's face was white, and he clung on like grim death.

Then his horse snorted once more, laid back his ears, and, with bloodshot eyes, flew like lightning around the sawdust circle. Marx clung on with both hands, the basket slipped from his arm, and a trail of hollow, black glass balls flew out behind him.

"He's running away! Help—help!" shouted Marx.

The horse thundered around the circle, and everybody shouted.

A crowd was coming through the front entrance, which was open to the ring. Cust ran there like lightning and stood in the gap.

The next time the wild horse flew around, snorting, kicking, and squealing, with Marx on its back, the picture of death, Cust saw that the horse intended to plunge through the entrance and trample the crowd.

The people fell back, screaming and running for their lives.

Everybody seemed to be stricken powerless—everybody but Cust.

He stood firmly in the path of the oncoming horse, foam dripping from its mouth.

"Get out of the way! You'll be killed!" screamed a score of voices.

But Cust's little eyes glittered, and he crouched like a lion for a spring.

The horse shied as it reached him, and was about to charge the crowd in the entrance.

At that second Cust got a hold on the saddle and leaped on the horse's neck, in front of the terror-stricken Marx.

He seized the animal's head in both his hands and jerked it around by main strength, so that the horse swerved away from the entrance and started around the ring again.

Then Cust clung to its head and talked in its ear. It was well known around the circus that Cust could do anything with a horse. It was said that he was a "horse-whisperer," and the way he could manage them was almost miraculous.

When the circuit was but half completed the animal slowed down to a trot, and finally became perfectly manageable. Then Cust jumped off his back, turned a handspring and stuck out his tongue at the audience, as though nothing in particular had happened.

As soon as the people got their breath they cheered and cheered for the little fellow.

The manager, all enthusiasm, walked into the ring and held up his hand for silence. Then he called Cust to him, put a fatherly arm on the clown's shoulder, and made a long speech, in which he called Cust a hero, and told the people that they could thank him for saving the lives of those who were jammed in the entrance and trying to get out.

It was a thrilling time. Professor Marx, frightened into a faint, came to, after being worked over in the outside tent, and rushed in to thank his rescuer.

Cust was all agrin as the professor hurried up with outstretched hand to where he and the manager stood.

"I want to thank—" began Professor Marx, reaching out for the clown's hand.

"Give it to him; he's collecting them," said Cust, pointing to the manager and refusing to take Marx's hand.

The matinée idol turned white at this rebuff and drew in his hand. Then he turned and walked doggedly out of the ring.

His eyes were snapping like a Spaniard's, and his blood was up. He had been turned down by Cust in sight of the multitude, and Cust had saved his life. It was too much to bear.

"You little fool!" cried the manager. "Why didn't you shake his hand? He wanted to thank you. The audience will think you're crazy."

"Let 'em," replied Cust, with a grin. "I just got my nails manicured; he might have rubbed the shine off."

CHAPTER V.

A JUGGLE WITH FIGURES.

"WELL, Pompy," said Cust, after the show was over and everybody had congratulated him, "was I a hero?"

"Cust, it was great! I told you you weren't a born clown. You've got a lot of stuff in you!"

"Shucks! Chestnuts! Chestnut-shucks!" cried Cust, looking up at Pompon with a twinkle in his eyes as though his meaningless ejaculations had some hidden sense.

"What do you mean by that, Cust?"

"I mean just what I said. Chestnut shucks. A chestnut-bur. Are you wise?"

"No. What's the dope?"

Cust glanced around and saw that they were alone. He whispered in Mme. Pompon's ear.

"Get wise! A chestnut-bur! I put it under the saddle of Professor Marx's horse just before he went on. The bur stuck into the horse when Marx's weight got on the saddle, and the horse went mad and ran away."

"Cust! You don't meant that you did that?" cried Mme. Pompon, staring at him.

"Sure!" laughed Cust. "You told

me to be a hero, and I went out to find a chance. I thought of the chestnut-bur."

"But the horse might have killed him or charged the crowd."

"Oh, no. I was in the ring all the time. I know horses pretty well, and I had it all planned out. I told you it was easy to be a hero."

"But how did you quiet the horse?"

"Why, when I seized the saddle to throw myself on, I grabbed at the edge of it right where I had placed the chestnut-bur. I pulled it out, and dropped it in the sawdust while I was climbing up. With the chestnut-bur gone, the horse was out of pain, and it was easy enough to calm him down by talking in his ear. I'm a horse-whisperer, you know."

"And you call that being a hero?" cried Mme. Pompon with wide eyes.

"No. I didn't say a word about it. But the rest of 'em, includin' you, called me a hero."

"Oh, Cust! Will you ever understand things? Will you ever grow up?" cried Pompon.

"I hope not," smiled the clown.

Somehow, the story got out. One of the helpers in the ring found the chestnut-bur in the sawdust, immediately grew suspicious, and told some others. The thing got around, and finally Professor Marx heard of it.

He had been in the dumps ever since Cust had refused to shake his hand and accept his thanks. The story was a revelation to Marx.

"Of course he did it!" he cried as soon as he heard the report. "I remember now, I saw him coming away from my horse just before I went on. The fiend! I'll do for him yet! The dog! I'll kill him!"

Again Professor Marx's hot Spanish blood asserted itself.

He looked immediately for Cust. But Cust had gone home already.

So he fumed up to the manager and told him the story of the fake rescue.

"The deuce he did!" cried the manager.

But his voice was surprised rather than angry, for he did not like Marx and his posing overwell, and the show had received good advertising from the so-called heroic deed of the clown.

The manager was inclined to be lenient; yet it was a breach of discipline, and he called himself general of the circus army.

He walked out of his way that night to go to Cust's lodgings.

The little clown was playing leap-frog in his room with a chair, and having the time of his life, as usual, when the manager appeared.

"Cust," he said, "I came up to tell you that the story is out. You are accused of putting a chestnut-bur under Marx's saddle. Is it true that you fixed up the game?"

"Surest thing you know. I did it with my little hand. Naughty hand!" Cust slapped the offending member in such a manner that even the manager was forced to conceal a laugh.

"Cust," went on the other when he had recovered his dignity, "when you turned hero and surprised us all, I was inclined to give you back your old salary. In fact, I intended to-night to tell you about it."

"'Hell is paved with good intentions,'" quoted the clown.

"But I forgot it. Now, consider that your salary has been raised to twenty-five for being a hero and then put back to the fifteen you're getting now, in view of your breach of discipline."

"Gee! That was a quick transaction," smiled Cust. "It fairly makes my head buzz the way you juggle with figures. Give me a slate an' pencil, and I'll work out the problem."

"It's already worked out," replied the manager. "I did it in my sleep last night."

"You're a good sleeper, ain't you?" put in Cust.

"Now, Cust," the manager went on quickly, "I want you to consider this as a very serious reprimand."

"Oh, I do."

"And another thing—leave Marx alone! You'll go a little too far with him one of these days, and the papers will come out with the latest sensation, 'The Missing Clown; or, Who Did It?' The answer will be Marx, and the chief mourner will be yourself. Now, *remember*."

"Marx'll never dance at my funeral," declared the clown as the manager started to make a dignified exit.

Cust picked up his hat to hand it to him, the chief of the circus reached for it, and suddenly the hat took a flight in the air and landed on the clown's head.

"Pardon me!" said Cust, bowing low and returning the hat elaborately. "One of the wheels in your head must have got loose and stayed in the hat."

"Cust, will you ever learn to be sensible?" cried the manager, a bit ruffled.

"I hope not," answered the clown.

"Remember what I said about Marx; an' say, don't have so much to do with Mme. Pompon. I think it makes Marx sore to see the ladies try to reform you."

"Oh, is that the case?" cried Cust. "All right; tell Pompy I'll call for her an' take her down to the show first thing in the morning."

The manager paused and looked at his man.

"I wish I had the nerve to fire you, Cust," he said; "but you're such a comical little cuss. It'd be a shame, a downright shame."

With that, he left abruptly.

Cust tipped over a chair after the manager had gone and resumed his game of leap-frog, varying it occasionally with impersonations of Marx and the circus chief.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM UNDER THE ELEPHANT.

ACTING against the manager's advice, as usual, Cust walked down to the tent with Mme. Pompon the next afternoon.

The bareback rider was still worried over Cust's attempt to be a hero. She blamed it all on herself, for she had put the suggestion in the little fellow's head.

"Well, Cust," she said, as they approached the tent, "I hope you'll have better luck in the next town. We leave to-night."

"That's right," replied the clown. "I'd forgotten that we pulled up stakes after the show. Oh, well, one place's as good as another to me. I can be a hero anywhere."

"Don't bring up that question again, Cust," she cut in quickly.

"Why, that's the greatest thing I ever did in my life; why, when Billy Morey, the equilibrist, grabbed the hose and blinded Jumbo when she was on a rampage and saved a dozen lives, it was nothin' to what I done."

"But he hadn't given the elephant red pepper first to make her mad, as you would have done if you'd been the hero in that incident."

"I'd never use red pepper for that," replied Cust. "A gallon or two of whisky would have made Jumbo go even madder, and the hose would have stopped her, all right, all right."

"You're the limit, Cust!"

"I believe I've heard you make that remark before. Be original, Pompy."

"I'd hate to be original. I might be too much like you," she replied as they entered the tent.

Marx went over and spoke to Mme. Pompon, and Cust drifted over to talk with Aerial Alice, a little girl who did astonishing stunts in a single act on the trapeze.

Alice was one of the new members of the company. A more petite little acrobat was never seen. She was finely formed, and had a doll's face.

Cust had noticed lately that Marx had been paying a great deal of attention to her. It was for this reason that the clown went over to talk to her.

He hoped Professor Marx would notice it, and possibly say something. Cust was always waiting for Marx to say something; it made it easy for him to get in some gentle knocks.

"Hallo, Alice," began Cust.

"Hallo yourself, and see how you like it," she replied, looking up at him with a smile.

"I never liked it," answered Cust. "But say, Aley, I notice our friend Marx, the villain with the mustache, has been paying for your baked beans lately."

"That's about all he does pay for. He's a T. W."

"A Tight-Wad, eh?" smiled Cust. "I thought he was a P. B."

"What's that?"

"Same as what you are," answered the clown. "P. B. stands for Professional Beauty."

"Oh," she giggled, "I'm just an amateur."

Cust looked at her critically.

"From the way you use your pencil

an' grease-paint," he said, "I might venture a guess that you are almost twenty."

"I'm only eighteen!" she cried, filling in her crow's-feet with powder as she smiled up at him archly.

"You look it, from the center of the ring; there's no doubt about that."

"Thanks! But what's this donation you're handin' out about Professor Marx an' me?"

"God gave me eyes to see with, not to put belladonna in," replied Cust.

"Ah, cut it! Marx an' me ain't even friends. I hate him."

"But he don't hate you."

"I was tickled to death when you put it over on him in the ring."

"Maybe I wasn't."

"But, say! You better be careful of him. He's got something up his sleeve for you—"

"It's only that skinny arm of his."

"It's a dagger, for all I know."

"Rats!" cried Cust, watching her as she arranged her massive front hair.

"Nothing personal now, Cust!" she cried, tucking in the stray ends of her front pad of unnatural locks.

"What did he say to you, Aley?"

"Said he'd fix you, an' looked as though he meant it," she answered.

"Is he goin' to burn me in boilin' oil, the deep-dyed villain?" cried Cust.

"He may do worse than that. He's Spanish, you know."

Cust had noticed that Professor Marx had seen him talking to Alice, and having had enough revenge, and the show being about to begin, the clown sauntered away and put on his make-up.

The company played in a rather sloppy manner that afternoon. They were all thinking of the change to the next city, and went through their work mechanically, as circus performers always do on the last show day.

Cust did well. He was a born clown, and, therefore, never found any difficulty in acting natural.

Along toward the end the show dragged awfully. The manager had left at the middle of the performance to complete some arrangements, and the assistant in charge was incompetent.

Finally the point was reached where all the clowns and acrobats turned out to do somersaults over the backs of the elephant, the camel, and the donkey, Maud. Cust led the procession, for he was the best tumbler in the outfit. He ran out onto the spring-board and did a double somersault over the animals, landing neatly on the mat.

Then the others followed in a mad rush. It was the climax of the show, and everybody shouted and tried his best to liven things up.

They tumbled over the animals in a thousand different leaps. One acrobat slipped and landed between the elephant's eyes.

Cust laughed, and ran around to his place for another leap. The elephant threw up its trunk in anger, for the falling acrobat had hurt it. Cust just missed the trunk, and landed on the mat in a comical posture.

Then suddenly something happened that wasn't in the act.

A slim little fellow, not over sixteen, well-dressed and good-looking, jumped from his seat among the audience, cleared the ropes of the ring, ran up the springboard, and hurled himself into the air over the animals.

He did the neatest triple somersault the circus had ever seen.

Cust stood back in astonishment with the others. Then the audience burst into applause, and the young fellow ran out on the springboard once more and made his leap.

This time his calculation was not so good. He slipped at the start and came down flat on the elephant's back, rolling off the slippery side and landing directly beneath the huge beast.

The company of acrobats and clowns stood back in terror, for they knew that the elephant was mad.

But Cust had no fear; he sprang from his place and leaped under the elephant just as the giant animal raised a powerful hoof with which he was about to crush the life out of the boy, who had fallen insensible on the ground below.

Cust rushed in, snatched the senseless form around the waist, and rolled with it from under the great beast.

It was the quickest, smoothest work that was ever seen. The elephant's hoof came down suddenly, just one inch from Cust's head.

Then the little clown rolled the res-

cued boy a few feet away, jumped up, turned a handspring, and stuck out his tongue at the spellbound audience.

CHAPTER VII.

BEDSIDE REPARTEE.

"WHO was the kid what got hurt?" asked Mme. Pompon after the show.

"Don't know yet," answered Cust. "He ain't come to."

"Plucky little fellow, weren't he?" went on the other.

"That's the word for it," assented Cust. "I never saw anything smoother than that triple somersault of his. We ought to have him with the show."

"I should say so. His act was good. I'll bet he's got some other stunts up his sleeve."

"Sure he has. That reminds me of the time young Charlie Schloss first hit the sawdust. That's the way those good fellows come on. Charlie was in the audience. He'd never been with a circus then; was only a kid. The congress of clowns was getting busy and makin' the people roar when Charlie jumps into the ring an' knocks the spots out of all of us with his funny stunts an' the pet chicken he had under his coat. You bet, there's stuff in a kid what'll jump over the ropes in the excitement an' mix it up."

"He'll be a head-liner, that kid."

"Sure will," answered Cust. "But I'm goin' over to the mess-tent now to see if he's come to yet."

Cust found the boy blinking weakly and the doctor working over him.

"How is he?" asked the clown.

"Oh, he's pretty fair. But he was shaken up badly, an' we're goin' to get him to bed now an' make him lie still. There may be some internal injury we haven't found yet. It won't pay to run any risk."

"No, not with a valuable kid like that," replied the clown. "Did you find out who he is?"

"No. He won't tell. Says his name is Rusty. Red-headed, you see, an' probably the kids called him that," said the doctor.

"Rusty, eh? That's a good name," mused Cust, stepping over to the young fellow's bedside.

"This man is the one who saved your life," the doctor explained to the pale boy on the improvised cot.

Rusty looked up and recognized the clown.

"Say," he cried, "your act was **good!** Did you save me? I'll try to tell **you** how thankful I am when I get well."

"That's all right. I didn't do more than anybody would under the same circumstances. Besides, it was a funny situation, and I like funny things," explained Cust.

The young fellow motioned him nearer.

Cust bent his head.

"Say, call me Rusty; that's my name," whispered the young fellow. "An' say—see if you can get me a job with the show."

"I'll do that," answered Cust promptly.

"Better not talk too much," cautioned the doctor.

Cust turned to go.

"Here, shake!" cried the boy, lifting himself up in bed a little and putting out a white hand.

Cust turned quickly and grasped it.

"I like your act," he said, "and I like you."

"Same here," answered the young fellow, a bright smile glowing in his face. "We'll be friends."

Cust faltered for a moment. He had never had a child, but somehow this lad appealed to him in the same way a son might. He liked his nerve, he liked his face—he liked him.

"Sure, we'll stick together if it takes a barrel of glue," announced the clown. "Here's somethin' to seal the agreement."

He took something quickly from his mouth, put it in his hand, and then quickly pressed the palm of Rusty's hand.

When the young fellow drew his hand away he found that Cust had pressed a wad of gum between the fingers, as he had said, "to seal the agreement."

"Here, you, Cust! Can't you be sensible for a minute?" cried the doctor, stepping quickly to Rusty's side and removing the sticky wad of gum from his hand.

"Well, I thought that might help us to stick together," replied the clown.

The rather crude joke appealed to Rusty. He was all agrin.

"We'll stick through thick and thin,"

he laughed. "Even through the measles and the whooping-cough, eh, Custard—or whatever it is he called you?"

Cust's eyes shone.

"Say, kid," he cried, "have you got it, too? Are you the same as me?"

"I hope not," answered Rusty. "But I've always wanted to be a clown. Why, when I was only a kid they tell about how I stole my grandmother's false teeth, an' they say that when she missed them I offered to go over to the neighbor's an' borrow some."

"The deuce you did!" laughed Cust. "But that ain't so much. When I was only a kid I had a pet mouse that the family didn't know nothin' about. I knew if they found it they wouldn't let me have it; so what did I do but bore a hole in my uncle's wooden leg when he was sleepin' an' make a nice little nest, where I kept the mouse night-times, an' my uncle never knew nothin' about it."

"Then you woke up," said Rusty, leaning on his arm and looking with interest into the face of the old clown.

"Here, you're getting too excited. Cust, you'd better leave him alone till he gets better," the doctor said.

"He can't get worst," said Cust, with a sly twinkle in his eyes that was answered by a similar one in Rusty's.

"See you later, bo," sang out Cust, as he started to go.

"Which place?" asked Rusty, pointing his forefinger up and thumb down.

"I'll meet you half-way, when you're coming down an' I'm going up. Heaven was built for me," replied Cust.

"But *I* built it!" cried Rusty.

Cust smiled as he made for the big tent on a dog-trot.

"That kid's all right," he mused. "Wants to be a clown, eh? I'll put him through the paces all right. We'll be a great team. I'll work up some special stunts for the two of us. 'Custy an' Rusty' or 'Cust an' Rust'—say, that'll be somethin' fine. I'll bet we could get a job winters in vaudeville."

He rushed into the tent and lapelled the manager, who had just returned.

"Say," cried Cust in enthusiasm. "I've found a new clown for you. He's worse'n I am—he's the limit!"

It was the first time Cust had ever used that expression in connection with anybody but himself. The highest compliment he could pay was to say that Rusty was the limit.

"If he's worse than you, what chance have *I* got?" cried the manager.

"You got the chance of havin' a team of the worst clowns in the world," retorted Cust.

"Has he got that same strained sense of humor that you possess?"

"Surest thing you know," enthused Cust. "Strained sense of humor? Why, his is not only strained, but he sprained it when he fell off the elephant."

"Oh, so that's the boy who fell off the elephant?" cried the manager.

"Sure, he's me hated rival. Give him a job, will you?"

"I'll wait till he gets on his legs and see what he can do."

"He don't have to be on his legs," answered Cust. "He could do more stunts on his back than most centipedes could do on their legs."

CHAPTER VIII.

RUSTY REHEARSES.

CUST'S prophecy was correct. Rusty proved to be a very efficient performer.

The company had insisted that the boy was good, and so the manager had taken him on to the next town with the show. In a day or two after their arrival there Rusty was on his feet, and he and Cust put in a morning in the ring practising together acrobatic stunts and general foolishness.

"That boy's a wonder," Cust told Pompon the night after Rusty's first rehearsal. "He's going out with me at the matinée to-morrow, an' I'll bet the manager signs him up at fifteen or twenty an' expenses for his first season — an' that's good money for a boy."

"Who is he?" asked the bareback performer. "Where'd he come from?"

"You've got me," replied Cust. "I've been tryin' to pump his story out of him, but it's no go. He's better educated than the rest of us, so far as I can see, an' his clothes are good. I wouldn't wonder a bit if he run away from home an' joined."

"He's old enough to be his own boss."

"Sure. That kid's as old as Aerial Alice any minute. I don't imagine he's

any too wise to the ways of the world, like she is, an' his years ain't much to speak of, but he's got a head on him that's all right."

"Funny how them kids run away from home to join a show. They think circus life is all peaches an' cream," ruminated Pompon. "Those kids haven't no sense. I wish I'd never seen the ring."

"But if you was gone from it two weeks you'd be lonesome to get back," replied Cust. "There's somethin' about this life, you know, that gets under your skin. I wouldn't leave it for all the money in the world. The ring's my home, an' it's the happiest home I ever knew."

"I'll bet the kid gets sick of it."

"An' I'll bet he don't. He's the happiest kid I ever saw, an' he's a born clown."

Next morning, Cust went down to the tent earlier than usual. Rusty was on hand waiting for him.

"Now, Rusty," began the clown, "let's work out that Jack the Giant-killer stunt we thought up yesterday. I think it's a good one. With your brain an' my experience, boy, we'll be head-liners shortly."

"It's a cinch we won't be tail-enders," replied Rusty, pulling out a cloth-covered framework he and Cust had made between them.

Cust helped him to put on the framework; and when the job was finished. Rusty was hidden, all but his long, slim legs, and above his trunk appeared a big plaster chest and a huge head with black whiskers.

"You certainly do the thing up right, Rusty," Cust declared. "And as for Jack the Giant-killer himself, I'm no slouch."

The monstrous giant with the black whiskers replied in a very boyish voice.

"Come on now, Cust. You start out into the ring with your little tin sword and I'll chase you on."

Cust put on a little red skirt and some more foolish trumpery to make up as the fairy-tale hero, then he picked up his little tin sword and fled into the deserted sawdust circle. The horrible giant chased him, making groans like a mad bull with a stomach-ache, and Cust fled half-way around the ring. Then his comical little face turned, and he pulled a rope from his pocket, fixed up with leaves to represent the bean-stalk.

He tried frantically to climb this, holding it high above his head with one hand and making a side-splitting effort to wrap his legs around and "shin" up.

That failing, and the giant by then thundering down upon him, Cust turned suddenly, drew out his little tin sword, and attacked his ten-foot adversary.

He passed the little sword over the top of Rusty's head, about the middle of the giant, and suddenly the plaster form they had made split in two. The part above the giant's waist-line fell to the ground, and the giant's legs ran off alone, propelled by Rusty, hidden beneath the form that had been cut in half.

One of the hustlers with the show saw the act, and said it was mighty good.

Then they went through half a dozen other stunts that they had originated, and got off some smooth slap-stick work that was sure to please the children.

After three hours' work they stopped and sat down on the edge of the circle.

"That was great!" enthused Cust. "We'll have everything our own way when we get out in the ring this afternoon. We'll kill 'em. They'll fall over in convulsions of mirth."

"Gee!" grinned Rusty. "I've always longed for this life. I'm right where I want to be now. I'm never happy unless I'm doin' clown stunts."

"There's one foolish stunt you've got to cut from your list," said Cust. "That one you got the job by. Where you tumbled over the elephant and rolled under him."

"Yes. That was a little too strong, but I'll get used to the applause. I was a little off my nerve from that."

"I know of some people that would lose their nerve an' never make a try," said Cust. "What I like about you is that you haven't got cold feet. Now, take Professor Marx, for instance. He's afraid of his horse, afraid of his own face, an' gets scared into convulsions when the camel moves his double lip in his direction; he thinks he's goin' to be chewed up on the spot."

"It wouldn't do him much harm if he was," remarked the new clown.

"What's the matter? Don't you like him, Rusty?" queried Cust.

"No."

"That ain't no way to be. Life's all

a joke. You don't want to be mad at nobody. There ain't time to get mad in this life. It's all one big practical joke, anyway. 'It is to laugh,' you know. A groan is nothing but a laugh turned inside out, anyhow."

"Oh, I'm not worrying over Professor Marx; but I don't like his face, that's all."

"I'll tell him so, and that he'd better get it fixed."

"That isn't it."

"What's the matter with him, then?"

"He doesn't like you."

"Oh, so you've found out that already. You're a pretty wise one, Rusty. No, Professor Marx don't like me, because we was twin brothers once; the old man disinherited him an' give me a million dollars, an' told me to go out in the ring an' make good as a clown."

"Yes, you look like twins. From the story you've just been tellin', I suppose you're the Gold Dust twins."

"No, we're the Wool Soap babies," replied Cust. "That explains why Marx has got the grouch."

"I don't understand."

"Didn't you ever see the picture? You see, in the picture I'm the one that always wears the short shirt an' he ain't got any. That's why he's sore."

"Are you ever sensible, Cust?" Rusty wanted to know.

"I hope not. If you ever catch me bein' sensible, just shoot me on the spot; an' remember, I don't want no flowers at my funeral. An' a very plain pine box will do; an' the inscription on the stone must be, 'He done his worst, and it was pretty bad.'"

"What are you talking about?" came a voice from behind the two clowns.

They turned around and saw Mme. Pompon looking down into their quizzical faces.

"Rusty was suggestin' that we might do a brother act in heaven," said Cust.

"Now that there're two of you, one as crazy as the other, I don't suppose we'll have any peace around the place at all," sighed Pompon.

"Be original!" cried Cust. "The manager's said that, an' half the troupe have repeated it a dozen times. You bet, the team of Cust and Rust is going to liven up things."

That afternoon they began, and their performance was good, in spite of the fact that it was their first one.

At night they did even better, and Professor Marx could not conceal his hatred for Cust, in which he now included Rust on account of the friendship of the two clowns. They got all the applause, and Professor Marx's splendid entries were usually spoiled by some clever act that drew a laugh for Cust and Rust, and diverted the audience's attention from the spectacular Marx.

Even in the last act, Cust and Rust pulled off a fake chariot-race, in which Rust played the four horses at once, explaining that each leg and each arm represented a fiery steed, while Cust drove him around the ring, imitating the grandstand pose of Professor Marx.

The audience was much elated over the satire, but Marx gritted his teeth and threw his whip across the ring.

As Cust passed him a moment later, the professor reached out and twisted the clown about, holding him by the arm.

"What do you take me for—a whirling dervish?" cried Cust, jerking away.

"I take you for a whirling demon; and, by Heaven! I'll do for you yet. You've spoiled my acts for a month and—"

The professor ceased abruptly. Cust had let fly a rubber band he had been playing with, and it caught the other on the end of the nose.

Several of the troupe were around, and their laughs provoked Marx to madness.

He lunged at the little clown, his huge fists doubled and white across the knuckles from straining.

Cust knew he could do nothing except make as hurried an exit as possible.

He found a hole under the tent and dived through. The resplendent Marx started to follow, when Cust kicked a shovelful of dirt in his face, which sent the professor back into the tent, spluttering and in a rage.

Rusty sneaked out Cust's street-clothes to him, and he changed his apparel outside the tent, the two laughing together for half an hour over the incident.

Cust thought the joke a good one; but he was a wary little fellow, and knew that it would be unwise to risk tantalizing the professor further that night.

So he and Rusty walked home.

"Be careful of Marx," warned Rusty when Cust left him at the place where he was staying and prepared to go on to his own lodgings.

"Be careful of your watch," answered Cust lightly, to show that he had no worry about the professor.

He lighted a big black cigar, and took a little stroll before going to bed. He had done a good day's work, and wished to stay awake to chuckle over it.

The streets were almost empty at that time of night, and Cust, because of his small salary, lived in the poorer part of town.

He slowly sauntered past a row of dark tenements, laughing to himself over the happy day he had had, when suddenly a tall, black figure sprang from hiding in a cellarway, and Cust caught the flash of a long knife as the man hurled himself upon the clown.

Before the knife could reach home, Cust jerked the glowing cigar from between his lips and threw it, lighted end foremost, into the man's eyes.

A hundred sparks sprang from the thing, and the man let out a cry of agony as the fire seared his eyeballs.

Cust threw out one leg and shot his arm straight at the other's stomach.

The fellow went down with a groan, and Cust bent over him quickly to secure the knife.

"Marx!" he cried.

Then Cust straightened up and smiled.

At that moment the professor sprang to his feet and rushed the clown. But the little fellow was again too quick for him.

He dodged between the tall man's legs, zigzagged through a dark alley, and finally came out alone on a safer street. Marx had been outwitted, and had given up the chase.

Cust paused under an arc-light, and stood grinning for several minutes. Then he located himself and started slowly for home, a fresh cigar between his lips.

"The only trouble with that fellow Marx," he mused, "is that he thinks there's tragedy in life. He's got a notion that a man's got to get even by killing another man. It's a lot more fun to get even by making a man see what a joke he really is. There ain't no tragedy in life. It's all a big comedy, an' the joke's on the man who takes life seriously.

"Yes, the great trouble with Marx is that he has no sense of humor."

CHAPTER IX.

RUSTY MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"WHO's the peach there?" asked Rusty next morning, as he and Cust were sitting together in the tent after the parade.

"The lady with the belladonna eyes and imported hair?" inquired Cust, looking up as Aerial Alice passed and nodded in the direction of the clowns.

"That's the angel I refer to," replied Rusty.

"Why, that's only Alice—little Alice that can put anybody in Wonderland."

"Seems different from the rest," suggested Rusty.

"Yes, a lot older, I guess."

"Older?"

"Sure. She an' the Sacred Ox are the oldest things with the show, barrin' some of your jokes," replied Cust.

"I don't believe it!" cried Rusty.

"I suppose if you was Jonah, you wouldn't believe that the whale swallowed you."

"Well, if you were Jonah and I the whale," answered Rusty, "I wouldn't run any chance of swallowing you."

"Why?"

"I'd be afraid of ptomain poisoning."

"That'll be about enough of that line of guff," answered Cust. "I tell you the lady's old, an' not only that, but she's buried three husbands an' got children in every orphan asylum on the route of march."

"I don't believe it."

"I didn't think you would. But the fact remains," said Cust.

"Where did you get all this wisdom?" queried the young fellow, who had been quite enthralled by the youthful appearance of Aerial Alice.

"Why, her granddaughter was just speakin' of it to me the other day."

"Her granddaughter?" cried Rusty.

"Yes; the centenarian with the sideshow."

"Oh," grinned Rusty.

That afternoon the younger clown had

an opportunity to talk with Aerial Alice between their acts.

That night he sent her a bunch of flowers anonymously, and then heaved a great sigh as he saw Marx take her home.

Marx had made no reference to the little knife-play of the night before.

Cust smiled when he saw the professor that morning, and noted that he was trying to cover up with paint a burn on his forehead, and that he had already penciled a place on his eyebrows where the hair had burned off completely.

It was interesting to Cust, and he liked the way the professor's eyes persisted in evading him all day.

Cust smiled when he saw Marx take Aerial Alice home. He continued to smile until he saw Rusty standing, half concealed behind a bunch of props, looking after them with wistful eyes. There was a sad sigh on his lips and a love-light in his eyes.

Cust walked up to him unobserved.

He stepped close beside his mate and delivered a gentle clown slap that brought Rusty to his senses.

"Ha! ha!" cried Cust. "I see you are touring as the mournful clown."

"Mournful?" repeated the other, still gazing after Marx and Aerial Alice.

"Yes; you look like the pensive youth, the spring poet, the man who sells the all-day suckers to the children, or some such other sentimental individual."

"Sentimental?" repeated the other. "No, I'm not."

"Sure you are," replied Cust. "You remind me of a certain member of the Love family."

"Who were they?"

"A family in my old home town that delighted in calling their children by fancy names. There was Rose Love, Violet Love, Pansy Love, and a whole lot of flowers."

"Which one do I remind you of?"

"The dog in the family. A great pup, he was."

"What did they call him?"

"Puppy Love, of course."

Rusty grinned faintly, but soon fell back into his pensive pose.

"Cut it!" cried Cust. "When I took you in hand I said I'd make a clown out of you. I'm a clown. You don't see me standing around, weeping tears, do you?"

"No; but you're so much older and—and she's so good-looking," cried the youth.

"I didn't think it was in you," answered Cust, almost provoked. "If you're going to fall in love, I'm through with you. No mournful clowns in mine. You read about them in stories, you see them in shows; but there ain't none in real life. Leastwise, if there is, I'm going to steer away from them as far as I can."

"I'm not mournful."

"No—not yet; but you soon will be if you let this thing get into your system."

"What thing?"

"This love business. It's a bad little germ; once it gets you in its clutches, a swell chance you've got to do anything except weep tears and begin to see the tragic side of life. I want you to know blame well that there ain't no tragedy in life. It's all one big Sunday-school picnic, an' the more pies you sit down in accidentally, the more fun you have out of it, you know."

"Well," laughed Rusty, "I guess you're right. It was her beauty that got me, though."

"Beauty! Her beauty is only skin-deep—an' it's a skin-game at that. I don't take much stock in the kind of complexion you can put on and take off."

"Well, she has to make up a little for the act."

"Yes, and a lot more for the Johnnies like you," replied Cust. "This Johnny game is a bad one; an' it's a lot worse if you're with the show. You're gettin' to be a regular chorus man. Now, forget it! There ain't no place in this life for marriage, an' if you go an' get mournful I'm done with you."

Rusty was not convinced. He was young and untried; his experience was limited, and to him Aerial Alice looked to be no more than the proverbial sweet sixteen.

Cust soon recovered from his momentary relapse into talking sense.

"Well," he said, "if you've picked the girl, you ought to pick a better rival. I wouldn't have a snake like Marx for my rival."

"That's just the trouble," said Rusty. "I think she ought to be protected from him."

"Protected! Aerial Alice?"

"Yes."

"Say that again—it tickles my ears."

"That's just what I mean. He's apt to talk her into marrying him or something like that, and ruin her young life," replied Rusty.

"Say, that's a fine idea. I never once thought of that. Yes, Aerial Alice needs protection all right. Why, say, boy, if you wanted a good strong right arm to take care of you I don't know a better one anywhere than Aerial Alice's. And as for knowing the world, she's traveled all over it for sixty years—ever since she was thirty. Do you mean she needs a protector? Well, hardly."

"But I hate to see that man Marx running around with her," protested Rusty.

"Then, go in and cut him out. You can spend your twelve dollars a week on her if you want to. She won't kick at all. Ask her to go out an' eat with you after the show, an' see how quick she'll take you up."

"Do you think she would do as you suggest?"

"Surest thing you know. About the only light in which Aerial Alice can see a man these days is in the light of a human meal-ticket. Take it from me—I'm telling you right."

"I don't believe she's as mercenary as all that," cried the little clown with great feeling.

"No, but you will."

With this prophetic advice, Cust left his partner and went home. He did not let the matter worry him—Cust was the kind that sheds trouble as a duck sheds water.

As he sat alone in his room, playing practical jokes on himself, for want of another subject, an idea suddenly occurred to him.

"Say, that'll be great!" he cried. "There'll be good fun in it, an' it may cure the kid."

Hunting up a scrap of paper, he carefully wrote the following note, and addressed it to Aerial Alice at her boarding-house:

DEAR ALEY:

The kid what does a turn with me is daffy over you. He thinks you're the finest stick of candy in the jar and he's going to have you.

He gets twelve dollars a week. Don't go more than two or three dollars a week above that. The kid can't borrow much more. But spend every cent of it for him.

Also, he's jealous of Marx, so work that game on him. I want to get him cured and I know, for the sake of old times, you'll help me.

Go the limit with his wad and don't put on no brakes. Make him think you love him better than the flowers in May.

And, say, Aley, pin your front hair down tight so it won't fall into the soup when he's taking you out to dine.

Be careful of the kid. He's fragile and young and I don't want any wrecks on my hands.

Don't let him drink nothin' an' sing him all the pretty songs you know about love in the sawdust ring. Tell him the romance of Fat Nell and Barney the Dwarf. How they loved each other in spite of difficulties.

Play it up strong and eat up what little coin he has, for the sake of your old pal. CUST.

The clown read the epistle over carefully. It was a long one for him, and he considered it quite a work of art. Then he placed a rubber band twisted about a couple of matches in such a way that when they were released they would make a frightful whirring sound. This machine he placed inside the letter, to surprise and frighten Aerial Alice when she should open it.

Then Cust grinned, put on his hat, and quietly sauntered out to the mail-box to post it.

"I can't have my partner a mournful clown," mused the clown as he sauntered home again. "He's got to be broke to the business an' learn that women are nothin' but what Kipling calls 'em—a rag, a bone, an' a hank of hair; only, nowadays, it's a lot of swell rags, a hipless bone, an' a Psyche knot."

Having grinned over what was coming to Rusty when Aerial Alice took his case in hand, Cust went to bed very much tired out.

CHAPTER X.

RUSTY'S COMPLAINT.

THE next afternoon when Cust reached the tent he found Rusty talking to a few

of the old-stagers who had come down early.

Cust managed to get a word alone with his mate.

"Well," began Cust, "how's your loved one to-day?"

"I haven't seen her," answered Rusty, with a worried look.

"You haven't heard from her, either?" asked Cust sharply; for he began to see that there was something the matter.

"Well — well, yes," Rusty answered slowly. "I found something waiting for me when I came down here this morning."

"What was it—a lemon?"

"No. It's too sacred to mention. I wouldn't have spoken of it to any one else."

"Too sacred! It isn't the sacred white ox?" cried the clown, assuming a pious expression.

"Don't bother me," snapped Rusty. "Foolishness is all right in its place, but when there's love and the ladies to be considered it's a little out of order."

"That's just when a man needs foolishness most," said Cust. "The ladies make a serious man foolish, but that's no reason why they should make a foolish man like you serious. Get the point?"

"I get the point, but don't believe it."

"Let me see the note?" requested Cust.

"She—she wrote it to me alone. It—it's confidential," said Rusty, flushing up a little.

Cust looked at him fixedly.

Finally he said: "Rusty, didn't we say we was goin' to be pals in everything, an' that we was never goin' to be sensible with each other?"

"Yes."

"Well, if we're pals, I ought to see that letter. I'm a lot older'n you, an' I can probably give you some advice that would be worth while."

"Maybe that's right," admitted the other.

"Then, show me the letter."

"Will you take it seriously?"

"I'll take it as serious as I would take a pill," responded Cust, making a wry face.

Rusty reluctantly drew out a little pink envelope, and slowly extracted therefrom a much-thumbed letter.

Cust grabbed it and read eagerly, a shrewd little twinkle in his wise old eyes:

DEAREST BOY:

I seen you looking at me all day. When the flowers come I thought it was the judgment day.

They are so beautiful. As beautiful as my thoughts of you.

I knew in a minute they come from you. While us ladies in the ring are in the habit of receiving many attentions from the opposite sects, we pay no attention to them from the outside.

You are different. You are one of us, an' I've had my eyes on you ever since you come with the show.

I was so sorry when the elephant almost put his foot on you and then didn't.

Will you meet me at the corner near the ticket-office before the show to-day? I must thank you personally and unconditionally for them flowers.

Ah, dearest—let me call you that—and won't you call me:

Your own ALICE.

"Alice, where art thou going?" whistled Cust, when he had finished the epistle. "Oh, isn't that some la-la of a letter? Say, kid, you're the luckiest I ever heard of. I know a million men that would give their right hands or their left ears to be in your boots for one minute."

Rusty looked a little dubiously at his friend.

"You said you'd be serious," he broke out suddenly. "The letter isn't written in the best style, and it hasn't any too much grammar about it. But the underlying heart-throb is there. The real sentiment of a wonderful woman shows forth strongly through every line. I say it may not be written in the purest English; but what is English, anyway? Merely a form of expression—and are not there far greater forms of expression than the mere use of language?"

"Whew-w-w!" whistled Cust, his eyes opening wide. "Where'd you get your education, kid—at a convent, or a girl's cemetery? What's the matter with that there letter?"

"Well, it—er—" The young man was plainly embarrassed. "It's all right. I should not criticize one word of it. The feeling behind it all is great. But I must hurry along now. It's time to meet her at the corner."

Without wasting another moment, Rusty hurried out, with the paper safely planted in his breast-pocket.

Cust looked after him with awe. The little clown's education had never been much, and he really wondered and felt provoked that Rusty could find any fault with a letter written in such perfect style —according to his notions.

"Say," said Cust to himself, "I'd like to know who that kid is. He ain't no common kid, an' he ain't no common performer. The way he talks about education would show that he's had some. I'd like to know whether he's the runaway son of some Pittsburgh steel man. or the kidnaped son of an heir of a Wall Street financier. He certainly doesn't belong in this bunch. If he did, he wouldn't never have fell so hard for Aerial Alice, an' so sudden, too."

Cust could not get the worry out of his mind. He wanted to know more about the young fellow who had come with the show in such a sensational manner and made good so easily. He almost missed a chance for a practical joke in his abstraction over the matter.

But just then he saw Aerial Alice and Rusty come through the tent-flap. Cust recovered himself immediately, and, picking up a flute, tooted out Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" with great spirit, to the amusement of everybody in the dressing-rooms, with the possible exception of the professor, and maybe Rusty. They separated when they reached the group of performers, and Cust managed to slip over and speak to Alice while she was performing that feat with her crow's-feet and powder-puff.

"Say, you did that swell, Aley," enthused Cust. "The kid thought he was the real thing when he come in with you. An' that note! Say, Aley, they was some class to that! I didn't know you had so much poetry under that there bunch of puffs you're pleased to call your hair."

"Poetry! Say, Cust, I'm the real thing in poetesses. I'm the all-around, catch-as-catch-can Sweet Singer of Michigan. When I begin lettin' me fair fancy flow, there ain't nothin' that can stop it, especially when there's an easy twelve a week in it to help piece out me insufficient an' modest competence."

"It's killed the kid. He's hidin' behind the elephants now, readin' over the note you wrote him."

"Did you get your peepers on it?"

"I sure did. It was swell, as I told you, Aley."

"I hoped he'd show it to you. It took me two hours to compose. You know, Cust, when I was a girl I could always do well with them essays an' things like that. I got a prize one time for writin' a song."

"As long ago as that, eh? My, what a memory you must have!"

"I haven't much of a memory, at that, Sixteen summers will float by so fast an' pleasant that it's really hard to think what you did the sixteen summers before—"

"An' that other sixteen, too — don't forget that, Aley."

"Forget nothin'. I'm only on the sixteenth lap of life's Marathon, an' if there's anybody ought to know it, it's you, Cust," and she rubbed in the paste to fill out the wasted lips and make them young and bright and red and youthful.

"Say, Aley, don't have no pity on that kid," went on Cust. "He needs experience more than most of us."

"Don't worry, Cust. It'll only cost him twelve a week for a while; an' if I ain't worth it, I miss my guess."

"Write him some more of them notes, Aley. They get him where he lives. He's got a heart as big as a puff-ball in the pasture. Give it to him right. He'll double up an' pass away to the slow music of your seductive charms."

"Here! Cut it, Cust. No poetry. You're stealin' my business!" she cried.

Cust grinned and slipped around behind the elephants to the secluded spot where Rusty was reading over, for the hundredth time, Aerial Alice's artistic effusion.

"Ain't it grand?" Cust remarked.

"And the way she says she loved me the first time she looked into these honest eyes of mine!" cried Rusty, entranced.

"Oh, you ingénue!" mocked Cust.

"It may seem funny to you, Cust; but I believe in these sacred sentiments. What's more, I believe in love at first sight."

"Do you also believe in fortune-telling, the language of flowers, automobile courtship, postage-stamp flirtation, and Mrs. Henslow's soothing sirup for broken-hearted swains?"

"Surest thing you know," smiled Rusty, beginning to brighten a little as he remembered that Alice had agreed, after some persuasion, to go out to dinner with him that night.

He told Cust of the engagement.

"Ain't that grand?" cried the clown again. "Treat her right, boy. She's worth anything. Nothin's too good for the lady you love, no matter what her age."

"Her age?" queried Rusty, beginning to look anxious again.

"Yes; I think it could be called that by now. It's old enough to be referred to in terms of respect, at least."

"Probably she is more than sixteen," answered Rusty, "but if she is, she surely doesn't look it."

"That's what they used to say about the toad out at Bronx Park that was three thousand years old. People admitted that it might be, but all agreed that it didn't look it in spite of its wrinkles."

They broke off their talk here, as it was time to dress for the show.

While they were getting into their comical things, Cust noticed that Marx glared at Rusty several times. The professor had been on hand when Rusty had accompanied Aerial Alice to the tent.

Mme. Pompon passed Cust on his way to the ring.

"Say," she queried, "what are you lettin' this kid friend of yours run around with Aley for?"

"Want to get him cured."

"Of what?"

"The disgusting disease called love for want of a name more fit for it."

"Oh!" said Mme. Pompon, seeing a great white light.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTER.

THE show went off well that day with the exception of Rusty's work. He was absent-minded; and when he should have been pulling off that "Jack the Giant-killer" act with Cust, he was staring up at the trapeze in the center of the tent where Aerial Alice was going through her stunts.

Rusty was on the *qui vive* every moment that she was in the air, and was ready to bound away and catch her if she should fall.

Cust called him down several times for his abstraction, but it did no good. Rusty's mind was on Aerial Alice.

"Say," he inquired after the show, "what does it cost to get married?"

"Two dollars for a license an' two thousand for a divorce," answered Cust.

"No; I mean, what would it cost two people to live? Live commonly, you know."

"Circus people, you mean?"

"Sure."

"Wife gettin' a salary?"

"Well, er—I haven't just decided on that. But supposing that the wife didn't work. That only one of them worked."

"Well, I don't know," answered Cust slowly. "You see, if your wife didn't work, you'd have to pay her traveling expenses, an' they're very high. Besides, if your wife ain't delicate, and is a good feeder, that'll cost more'n keepin' a horse."

"Don't talk like that!" cried Rusty.

"You wanted to know what it cost."

"Yes, but not in those words."

"Oh, you wanted it expressed in poetry? Well, you'll have to go to Aerial Alice for that. It's a little out of my line."

That ended the discussion; but Cust laughed for half an hour afterward at the young fellow who had a notion that he wanted to marry the first spectacular woman that had ever come into his life.

Rusty took her out to dinner that night, and Aerial Alice winked to Cust as she passed him before the evening show.

"What did you sting him for?" whispered the clown.

"Three dollars for the meal an' one fifty for flowers," she replied.

"Fine. But you can't eat the flowers."

"The kid wanted to get 'em for sentiment, an' I took him to a florist what said he'd give me fifty cents for 'em if I'd bring 'em back. I took 'em back while he come on to the show an' got the four bits cash in me stocking."

"Good, Aley. You ought to 've been a financier."

"Whatever that is," she replied. "I had a father onct what called himself a chicken fancier."

"Was he a coon?"

"My father? Well, not's I know of," she answered.

Marx went by at that moment, and stopped for a second to say:

"Alice, I want to speak to you for a minute."

"Here's where I get the call-down from my regular meal-ticket." Alice winked to Cust. "He ain't near so generous as the kid. I'm goin' to give him the go-by."

"Better wait. The kid may get tired of reachin' into his change-pocket, an' then you'll want your steady diet back again," cautioned Cust.

"Not if I know it. Here's where he gets his in bunches," replied Alice.

Cust watched out of the corner of his eye while Alice and Marx talked in low, strained voices. He knew that the woman was living up to her word, and was telling Marx that she had a softer thing now to take her out to meals.

When the conversation was finished, Cust slipped back to Alice and asked:

"What'd he say?"

"Said a few insinuatin' things about you, an' told me he'd get even with the kid."

A frightened look came to Cust's eyes.

"Better tell the kid," he advised.

"I'll write him a note an' give it to him durin' the show. I don't want nothin' to happen to him no more than you do. He's so easy."

Cust went on with Rusty and did their first act, and while they were waiting for their next entry, he told the young fellow to be careful of Marx. He explained to him how the professor had tried to get even with him on several occasions, and sought to put Rusty on his guard.

But the boy was too much interested in Alice's act at that moment to hear a word.

A little later she slipped a note into his hand, and he read it at his first opportunity.

Then, remembering Cust's advice, he showed it to him.

The little clown read:

DARLING BOY:

I see a gent with black eyes and hair. He's jealous of you and has swore revenge.

He'll do for you if he can. He's a Spanish prince incog. with the show.

Don't let him get too near you. He's got a knife in his boot-leg, and I'd hate to hear them ring for the ambulance for you.

Keep up your courage and don't have no bloodshed over me if you can help it, and then if you do make it his blood.

Love to the folks—I mean, hastily,

Your own ALICE.

"Better take warnin' from that, Rusty. That there Marx is no joke when he gets started," was Cust's comment.

"Jealous of me!" cried Rusty. "Well, he's got good right to be. I'll show him if he tries to start anything."

"Don't worry about that, but just be careful."

"All right, I will."

Rusty was studying the note again.

"Ain't she the real poet?" remarked Cust.

"Ah," replied Rusty, "the feeling is all there. She has wonderful sentiment. While she phrases it in a peculiar manner, it is doubtless due to the fact that she has been brought up in this environment. Well, it's my chosen life, and I will abide by it."

"Don't talk like that!" cried Cust. "That letter's beautiful; don't go an' try to make no excuses for it."

"Oh, it's very beautiful in her tender care and thoughtfulness of me," murmured Rusty with a far-away look.

"You make me tired!" cried Cust. "I thought you was a born clown."

"I was, until this affair came into my life, and now I seem to have been reborn," replied the youth.

"Well, you'd better get over it an' settle down to business. The manager didn't like your act at all to-day, an' it's out you go unless you take a good brace."

"I'll be happy again when I get things arranged to suit me. How much did you say two people could live on?"

"Oh, fifty dollars a week," answered Cust.

"Fifty dollars! And I'm only getting twelve. Oh, is that really true?"

"It's the surest an' saddest thing you know."

It was time for the clowns to get ready for their fake chariot-race, which they executed in the ring while the real chariot-race was being run between Professor Marx and another driver.

Cust dragged out the little cart in which he sat and drove, while Rusty was harnessed between the shafts to do his stunt of playing four chariot horses at once.

The doors were opened, and the two chariot teams, of four horses each, dashed out and made a triumphal circuit of the ring. Marx looked grand as he bowed to everybody.

In spite of the man's smiling face, Cust seemed to see something in it that resembled the expression the half-Spaniard had worn the night he had attacked Cust with the knife on the street.

It made the little clown uneasy as he drove Rusty out into the ring and turned his attention to the comical business of evading the two onrushing chariots.

The chariot-race was a fixed affair in which Marx always won, except the one time that Cust had made him lose, to his great chagrin.

The two chariots always started neck and neck. They made two turns each time they went around. The first turn was always made by Marx, whose business it was to cut in ahead of the other and take the inside track, while the other chariot would slide out of the way and take the outer track. Then, half-way around the circle, at the second turn, Marx would turn out, and the other man would cut in and take the inner track.

This was repeated at each turn, and at the last one Marx would cut in on the inner track and win by half a length.

The thing had been run that way ever since it had been a feature of the circus, and so Rusty and Cust knew just when to get out of the way of the plunging horses with their little travesty on the race.

The race was started, and the people craned their necks as the chariots dashed around the ring, once, twice.

Then Marx had the outside track at the first turn, and Cust and Rusty were near the tape, beyond the second turn, where it was their business to jump out of the path of the horses when Marx swung into the inside track and vault over the ropes into the audience.

They were in the middle of the track, preparing to do this stunt. It was perfectly safe, for both of the chariots took the inside track on the home-stretch.

But Cust was uneasy. He didn't like the look on Marx's face.

Just when the last turn was to be made, when Marx should cut in and take the pole to win the race, Cust shouted to Rusty:

"Make for the ropes and get out of the way now."

But Rusty trotted along slowly, knowing that there would be no danger with Marx's chariot on the inside track.

But at that moment, with a wild shout to his horses, Marx swung his team, against the rules, into the outer track and sped down on the two clowns like lightning.

"Jump! Jump!" shouted Cust.

He saw in a flash what Marx intended to do, and would make no move till Rusty was safe.

Rusty turned and saw the horses dashing down upon him. He was stricken powerless.

Cust reeled from his seat and jerked his mate toward the ropes. But just at that moment there was a sudden crash.

The off-horse caught Rusty, and he was thrown high in the air, only to come down before the hoofs of the plunging horses attached to the second chariot.

Cust had been missed by a hair. He turned abruptly, gaged the distance, then leaped through the air and grappled Professor Marx around the neck.

With a sudden jerk he pulled the white-faced man from the chariot, and the two rolled together in the sawdust, biting and clawing, just a few feet ahead of the insensible Rusty and right in the path of the onrushing chariot.

CHAPTER XII.

UP AGAINST REAL LIFE.

Rusty was caught under the horses' hoofs, and the second chariot passed over one of his legs.

Cust and Marx fought in the sawdust, and the four-horse team plunged madly down upon them. They had been frightened by the runaway ahead, and it was almost impossible for their driver to manage them.

Marx saw the chariot just in time, and managed to roll to one side; but, just as the horses were plunging by, the hoof of

the outside animal caught Marx in the head and killed him instantly.

Cust was knocked insensible by a slighting blow from the swinging chariot, and a score of attendants rushed into the ring to quiet the horses and pick up the three bodies left on the track.

The suddenness of the tragedy had held the people spellbound. When they slowly recovered from the excitement, they filed out in sorrowful procession, not knowing how many had been killed, and hardly realizing exactly what had happened.

Of course, they took it for an accident, and the manager was more than anxious that every one should consider it in that light.

Only the little circus troupe, gathered together in the dressing-room, knew how the thing really occurred, and why Marx had driven out of his course in an effort to run down the two clowns.

Everything was said in whispers in the dressing-room. They all hung around until hours after the show to hear how Cust and Rusty were getting on. It was known that Marx had lost his life in his villainous attempt, and nobody sympathized with him, or shed a tear over his part in the tragedy.

"Well," said Mme. Pompon, as she found herself alone with anxious Aerial Alice, "it was all your fault."

"My fault? What did I have to do with it?" demanded the trapeze woman with a worried, self-accusing look.

"If you hadn't made Marx so jealous, he would never have been driven to do what he did."

"I didn't make him jealous. I just bowled him out and told him where he got off at," answered Alice.

"Of course," said Pompon; "and that made him mad, an' then he got jealous of the kid."

"Well, have it your own way. I didn't do it on purpose. Anybody can tell you that."

There was real grief in Alice's tone. The tragedy had saddened them all.

Here the manager bustled up and told the frightened troupe to clear out, that Cust and Rusty were about to be carried to the ambulances waiting without.

They drew back in fright. Marx's body had been borne through some time ago, and a few of them had caught the horrible look on his dead face. They did not wish to see either Rusty or Cust, for fear that they, too, might have died while the physicians had been working over them in a secluded part of the tent.

So, no curious faces were present when Cust and Rusty were carried through the dressing-room and placed in the waiting ambulances.

As luck would have it, the show was leaving town that night, so none of the people had a chance to see either Cust or Rusty, who were left behind, of course.

It was late in the afternoon of the next day, when both of the clowns were rested and had recovered partially from their excitement, that the doctors in the public hospital allowed Cust to be wheeled into Rusty's room.

Rusty's red hair stuck out with startling brilliancy in contrast to the white sheets and his almost whiter countenance.

Cust was also as pale as the powder with which he usually covered his face before going into the ring.

"Mornin', Rusty!" cried Cust as soon as he saw his little team-mate.

"Good morning, Cust. How are you?" said the little fellow, looking up happily.

"Oh, I'm able to sit up an' be wheeled around," replied Cust.

"What is the matter with you?" asked Rusty anxiously.

"Got my foot smashed when the chariot hit it. They took off the only toe that was left, this morning."

"Heavens!" cried Rusty, wondering at the stoic strength of his friend.

"But that's all that's the matter with me," went on Cust with a plucky smile. "Gee! I'm glad it weren't my fingers."

"But you won't be able to do much walking without the toes on one foot," cried Rusty.

"No, I guess not," smiled the other; "but I'm not a tight-rope walker, so what's the harm?"

"It's a shame."

"What are you in for?" demanded Cust suddenly, attempting to laugh.

"The same chariot," answered Rusty. "Busted my shin-bone, but the doctor says it'll knit. See! They've got it in a plaster cast. Busted one of my ribs, too; but I don't hardly feel it."

"Say, you're all right, kid! Here I been talkin' about my hard luck an' complainin', while you lay there with a busted rib and a busted leg, an' never said a word about it," enthused Cust.

Rusty smiled.

"There's one good thing, though," began Cust. "I'd rather have a broken rib than have a whole one removed from me like Adam did, an' have a wife made out of it."

The remark was too spontaneous to be judicious. Cust regretted it the moment he had said it, for a far-away look came into Rusty's eyes, and he turned to his nurse with the question:

"Was there any mail for me? Did anybody leave a message?"

"No," answered the nurse; "only the manager said he would write to both of you from the next town."

"I thought Aerial Alice might have written me a note," Rusty explained to Cust.

"She will, my boy; she will," answered the other.

They questioned the nurse about Marx, found that he had been killed outright, and the two little clowns fell silent for some time.

"Well," remarked Cust finally, "I guess we're up against it, Rusty. But we'll make the best of it. The show's gone on without us, an' it'll be a long time before we can earn any money."

"Yes, and I did so want to earn some," said Rusty.

"Oh, well," Cust rejoined cheerily, "we'll think up some good stunts while we're lying around here, an' go back to the circus twice as clever as we were before."

"Do you think the manager will take us back after all this?" inquired Rusty.

Cust had hoped that this question would not be asked, for he knew that the manager had learned the extent of their injuries and would fill their places in the next town.

"I don't know, Rusty," he replied slowly.

The same far-away look came into Rusty's eyes again. It was clear that he was thinking of Aerial Alice, and wondering if he would ever get back to the show with her.

For a long time neither of them spoke. Then Rusty reached his hand over and pressed the palm of the little clown.

"Say, Cust," he murmured slowly, "I thought you said there wasn't any tragedy in life."

The little clown's lips trembled, his eyes skipped from Rusty's, and he passed a hand quickly over his feverish face.

"There ain't, Rusty! There ain't!" he cried suddenly, the ghost of a smile flickering on his lips.

"I wish I had your nerve," returned the young fellow.

"I'm—I'm glad you haven't," replied Cust slowly.

They tried to cheer each other for some time. The efforts were laudible, but the results were not great.

It was a rather sad outlook. Neither had any money, except the small amount due them from the manager. Rusty had lost the company of Aerial Alice, and Cust was sure that neither of them would get back to work that season.

"Well, boy," said Cust as it grew late, and he knew they would soon wheel him back to his own room, "keep a stiff upper lip, an' always remember that life's a comic-opera."

"But tragedy creeps in once in a while."

"Yes, once—" Cust's eyes became vague. Then his mouth twitched with a jerk. "No, never. There ain't no tragedy in this life at all."

At that moment an attendant entered and carefully wheeled Cust back into his own room.

"See you in the morning," said Cust, as he left.

Rusty sang out a cheerful good-by, then buried his head in the pillow and wept, the picture of Aerial Alice before his swimming eyes.

When Cust was back in his own bed he did not exactly cry, but it was as close to it as the little clown ever came. Before his mental gaze was the picture of failure. With one disabled foot, he could never hope to be much of a clown again.

Cust was growing old, and he knew it. He could picture himself without a cent, and with nothing to cheer him in his old age.

Then he got the upper hand of his troubles again, and began humming a little clown song that he remembered.

"Life's an aquatic meet," he muttered suddenly. "Some swim, some float, some back-water, and the rest sink."

CHAPTER XIII.

NEWS AT LAST.

Two weeks had passed since the tragedy. Both Cust and Rusty were anxious for news from the company, but none came.

They had put in the time trying to encourage each other. Both were doing nicely. Cust had taken care of himself so well that his foot had healed, and he was able to limp about a little.

Rusty was still in bed, though his leg and rib were knitting well.

No news reached them from the company until two weeks after the tragedy.

Cust opened his letter from the manager. It was the one he had been waiting for anxiously.

Fifteen dollars dropped from the envelope. Cust shoved the money in his pocket, and then read the note:

MY DEAR CUST:

Sorry you've had so much trouble.

I enclose one week's salary, although you did not finish the week with us.

Your place is filled, and I'm sorry to say there'll be nothing for you next season, if you get around in that time.

The death of Marx opened my eyes to the way you people have been quarreling, and I'm weeding out that kind of stock in my company. We haven't time for fights.

Good luck,

D. ETTENBERG.

Cust forced a smile as he read the manager's sprawling signature. Then he bravely whistled: "It's all goin' out an' there's nothin' coming in."

Turning to Rusty, for they were occupying the same room now, Cust inquired:

"What's your mail, boy?"

"Note from the manager, enclosing my week's salary."

"Let's see it," requested Cust.

"The salary or the note?"

"The note. I'd get nervous if I put my fingers on so much money all at once."

Rusty handed over the letter, and Cust glanced at it, to find that it was almost identical with the one he had received.

"Well, I guess we're up against it, boy," he observed.

"Yes—I—that is—" Rusty answered mechanically, his eyes glued on the other letter that had come for him.

"It's from her? At last?" cried Cust.

"Yes. Read it!"

Rusty threw the letter over to Cust and collapsed on his pillow, his face turned from the clown.

Cust read the following, on lavender note-paper, scented with Jockey Club:

ONCE DEAREST BOY:

I regret that our late lamented love came to such an untimely end.

I was just beginning to enjoy you and yours, when you were snatched from my arms, so to speak, and carried to the hospital on a stretcher.

I told you to be careful of our mutually dead friend. I knew he would do for you if he could. He did.

The show has been getting along fine without you.

It is very sad for me to think what might have been.

Ah, well, boy, I will rake up no more dead ashes.

The manager says he is sending you your salary to-day.

There was a hat in the town where you are that I seen and liked very much while I was there.

I intended to have it, but you was taken off so sudden I didn't get around to it.

It was in that store next to where you bought the flowers for me. It was in the window, and priced at $9.50.

I need a hat, although I have plenty of other clothes.

I regret all that has happened, and sincerely wish it hadn't. You were a good boy while you lasted.

AERIAL ALICE.

P. S.—Here's my address, should you wish to send any slight token of your esteem.

P. S.—It was the hat with the spangles. The new waste-basket shape.

P. S.—I mean—peach-basket shape.

Cust looked over at Rusty. He had an appreciative smile on his little face, and wanted to say something the worst way, which was usually the way Cust chose to say things.

"Ain't it sad, Rusty?" began the clown, seeing nothing but the back of his partner's head.

"Which part?"

"The whole thing; but especially about the hat."

Rusty rolled over and looked steadily at Cust for some minutes before he spoke.

"Say," he began suddenly, "I think you came closer to having the right dope on Aerial Alice than I did."

"Blinded by love. That was your great trouble."

"I seem to see it a good deal differently now," answered the young fellow. "Yet her love for me was the real thing. She has a great fund of affection."

"Yes," replied Cust, with a twinkle. "I've noticed myself that she's awful affected."

Rusty grinned. Just then he caught sight of the letters Cust had received.

"Who'd you hear from?" asked the young fellow.

"Oh, I'd forgot. I got a letter from the manager like yours. an' one here I haven't opened yet."

"Open it, and let's see who it's from."

Cust tore the enclosure open, drew out and read the following epistle:

DEAR CUST:

I'm mighty sorry you've dropped out of the show. You're the best friend I had here, and things ain't as nice since you've been gone. But it's swell not to have Marx around any more.

I hope you get along all right. I enclose a five-spot to help out. It's all I can spare, but I know you need it a darn sight more than I do.

Us old-stagers, like you and me and Aerial Alice, understands what real life is, don't we?

Well, I hope these few lines will find you well, and that you'll not get to cuttin' up in the hospital. Leave that to the doctors, Cust.

I hope we'll hitch up in the same company again, some time, and for the sake of old friendship, I hope the accident will knock a little sense into your foolish head, Cust.

Remember me to the kid. He's all right. But a little too serious.

Aerial Alice has got another sucker to take his place, and all she regrets is, that the new kid is gettin' only ten, while Rusty was gettin' twelve.

Two dollars seems to make a lot of difference to Aley in her old age. Good luck, Cust. Your old friend,

MME. POMPON.

Without a word, Cust threw the letter over to Rusty, having carefully extracted the five-dollar bill and added it to the manager's fifteen.

Rusty read it slowly, and then lay staring into space for a few minutes after finishing it.

"Say, Cust," he shouted suddenly, "I was a fool!"

"*Was?*" repeated the clown, with marked emphasis.

"Yes, was and am and always will be. I never thought I'd have the wool pulled over my eyes like that. Why, here I've been worrying for two weeks because I didn't hear from Aerial Alice, and all the time she's been running around with another sucker. I guess I must have looked like a good thing to her."

"Oh, yes. You looked big to Alice."

"But I see it all now," went on Rusty. "All she saw in me was what those X-ray eyes of hers detected in my pocket."

"That's the surest and saddest thing you know," replied Cust.

"I wish I'd have taken your advice earlier. I couldn't ever see what you meant by a mournful clown. I was too far gone over Alice."

"I'm glad you're beginning to wake up now. Maybe, after a while, I can convince you that there ain't no tragedy in this here life," said Cust.

"Well, I'm not quite ready for that. But it's beginning to look a little more like it every day. Say, wasn't that a frightful letter of Alice's? She isn't even clever. The way she slapped on all that business about the new hat. I wonder if she thinks I'm a fool?"

"I thought for a time she'd found you out," replied Cust, with a grin.

"How much longer will we be in this place?" asked Rusty suddenly.

"Oh, I don't know. Three or four weeks, I guess."

"Gee! I want to get out of here."

"What's the hurry?"

"I'm just beginning to wake up, that's all. I've been fooled on another thing just the same as I was fooled on Aerial Alice."

"What's that?"

"Circus life!" cried Rusty. "It isn't what it's cracked up to be. Look at you. Here you are, down and out, without a cent in the world."

"I've got twenty dollars!" cried Cust enthusiastically.

"Yes, but what's twenty dollars? You're more of a fool than you make up to be, Cust. You're getting old. Your foot's on the blink. You're tired out. You've done your life's work. Life is all a comic-opera, as you say, but only up to a certain point."

"Why this sudden burst into Fourth of July oratory?"

"Oh, I don't know. I guess I'm sick of seeing the tragic side of life," answered Rusty.

"The tragic side?" repeated Cust.

"Yes, that's about all I've seen since I've been with you; and I'm getting sick of it."

CHAPTER XIV.

TWENTY DOLLARS AND AN IDEA.

A MONTH later Cust and Rusty were discharged from the hospital.

They had twenty dollars left between them, having purchased some extras.

Their plans had been made for weeks. Rusty had recovered from his despondent spell, and the two clowns had begun to look on the sunny side of life again.

Together they had worked out a clever stunt called "The Talking Camel."

Cust was something of a ventriloquist, and they had hit upon the notion that if they could get a circus camel and lead it around the ring, after advertising it as a talking camel, that it would make a hit with the audience. Cust was to use his knowledge of the art of ventriloquism, so that his voice would appear to come from the camel, while Rusty was to walk alongside and work the camel's mouth with a couple of concealed strings, so that it would appear as though the camel itself were really talking.

The season was almost over, but they figured that the camel act would make a hit and reinstate them with some company.

So Cust and Rusty started out with twenty dollars and an idea to try to make good.

They spent half their money in car fare to the nearest town where there was a circus.

There they managed to get a try-out, but the act was not big enough to warrant the manager in taking on two clowns when the season was almost over.

They felt rather down in the mouth over their failure; but each cheered up the other, and they went on to the next circus.

Their money was gone while they were still fifty miles from the show.

From necessity they took to walking the ties. On account of Cust's maimed foot their progress was slow; but they stuck to it with determination, and plodded along for a whole day.

That night they had nothing to eat. It was real life they were living now. Everything had seemed cheerful when they left the hospital, but suddenly the whole world had turned against them.

They stopped in that night to get a little rest at a small railroad station, and both seemed disgusted and down in the mouth.

Cust sat staring at the wall opposite him, while Rusty's head slumped down on his chest and he fixed his gaze on the floor.

Cust's eyes encountered a placard in large print on the wall in front of him. He read it slowly, and then fell to musing.

"Rusty, we've got to find somethin'," he remarked presently. "We're almost down an' out. For the first time in my life I'm beginnin' to see the tragic side. If it weren't for this blame foot of mine, I think I could stand things all right."

"If it weren't for a certain notion I had," replied Rusty, "we wouldn't have to worry now."

Cust had noticed that his partner had made similar remarks several times. But he could never understand.

"Your nerve is all that's been keeping me up, Cust," said the young fellow slowly. "If it hadn't been for you, I'd have given up long ago and gone back."

"Back where?"

"Where I came from."

"And where's that?"

"Oh, never mind. Let's forget it."

Cust's eyes again settled on the poster in front of him.

"Gee! I wish I had luck like some people have," said Cust slowly.

"You're beginning to lose your nerve."

"Yes, I am. I admit it," answered

Cust. "I'm just beginning to get a notion of what the tragic side of life is. I'm just beginning to think that I'd rather see you a butcher, a baker, or even an undertaker, before I'd see you put in all your life in this here circus business. It's a hard life, an' what chance have you got when you get down an' out, like me?"

"Oh, cheer up!" cried Rusty, trying to convince himself. "Life's all a comic-opera."

"Yes, maybe so. But it's hard on some of us. It's beginnin' to seem hard to me. I've been sittin' here lookin' at that sign there for the last half-hour."

"What does it say?" asked Rusty, not taking the trouble to look up.

"It's got the figures $5,000 staring me right in the eyes."

"Five thousand dollars! That's a lot!" cried Rusty. "If we had that, we could get a job without much trouble."

"I should say yes," grinned Cust. "I could live the rest of my life on that, an' never have to work again."

He glowed with a strange enthusiasm as he thought of having that amount of money and never having to go back to the ring.

"What's the five thousand for?" asked Rusty. "Maybe we can get it."

"It says '$5,000 Reward,'" replied Cust. "I haven't got past that yet. The big amount of money attracted my attention."

"What's the reward for?" asked Rusty, glancing up, and following the direction of Cust's eyes to the sign.

"It says, '$5,000 reward for information leading to the discovery of the whereabouts of James Clarence Tillinghast, a young man of—'"

"Why, what's the matter with you?" cried Cust, breaking off and looking at Rusty, who had jumped from his seat and rushed toward the sign.

Rusty turned. His face was crimson.

"What's the matter?" demanded Cust.

"I'm James Tillinghast. That's all."

Cust dropped back to his seat, limp.

Rusty read the sign. It described him exactly, and told of his sudden disappearance from home, suggesting that he might have been kidnaped or have run away from home to go on the stage.

There was nothing about his being with a circus; evidently his family had never considered that as a possibility.

"Tell me about it, Rusty," cried Cust, beginning to understand.

"I haven't much to tell," replied the young fellow slowly. "My family treated me well; too well, almost. But they made me go around with servants all the time, and wouldn't let me do a thing for myself. I wanted to get out into the world and do some real work. Make a living for myself. I never thought of running away. I would never have done that.

"But the afternoon of the circus I managed to slip off without anybody knowing I was going there, for they wouldn't ever let me go to such a place; besides, it was ten miles from my home town, and they'd never let me go even that distance alone."

He stopped for breath, and Cust stared at him in wonder, with drooping jaw.

"Well, then," went on Rusty, "I jumped over the ropes and did that stunt with the elephant. I had learned that at a gymnasium, and I was carried away with the excitement and all. You know the rest. I was taken on with the show, and never had a chance to realize that I was running away—I liked the work and you so well. I'm just beginning to realize all I've missed. I think I'd like to go home."

The young fellow broke down for the first time, and Cust held him as he would a child of his own.

"Well, you'd better go home then, Rusty," he said slowly, sadly, realizing what it would mean to him to be left to continue the journey alone.

"But you must come, too," cried Rusty, brightening.

"No, no," smiled Cust. "They might not like the company you've been keepin'. Besides, rich folks aren't in my line. They wouldn't like my looks."

"You'll come, whether you want to or not, and whether they like you or not," cried Rusty.

"No," said Cust. "I'll go on alone."

"You will not. Listen! I've got an idea. My father wants me to come home; I want to go home, and you want five thousand dollars. The idea is simple. You take me home and you get the five thousand."

"But that wouldn't be honest, when you can go home alone and save your father that."

"He won't miss it, and he'll be so glad to get me back that it won't make any difference. Come on! Let's get started."

Rusty did a handspring toward the door, and Cust jumped up and followed him.

They walked along the tracks with new energy. Cust was his old self again.

"Didn't I tell you life was all to the merry, Rusty," he smiled, as he thought of the possibilities of that five thousand dollars.

"Yes, and I didn't doubt it for a minute until we had such hard luck, and when that tragedy came in and turned things upside down."

"Tragedy!" cried Cust. "There ain't no such thing in the world. You was the mournful clown for a minute when you was in love with Aerial Alice, but that was only near-tragedy. You're all right now."

"Sure I am. I believe you. There's no tragedy in life."

"Unless the old man spanks you when you get home," Cust reminded him.

"There's no danger of that," replied Rusty. "He'll be so glad to see me that he won't have time to find fault."

And so it turned out. Rusty's father welcomed the boy and insisted on paying the five thousand dollars to the clown in spite of the latter's objections.

With the money Cust bought a little shop, where he spent the remainder of his life, selling and renting wigs and costumes for masquerades.

Cust found it a great deal more agreeable than turning handsprings with his damaged foot; and he lived to dandle Rusty's children on his knee and teach them little jokes of a practical nature, which were the only kind Cust could ever fully appreciate.

THE END.

Four Canvasback Ducks.

BY HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY.

The Odd Conditions Governing a Rich Man's Legacy, and the Still Stranger Circumstances Under Which It Was Won.

AROUND a massive mahogany center-table in the sumptuously appointed library of the late lamented James Graham, founder, and until his demise the permanent president of the Abbottsville Hunt Club, sat the ten surviving members. They were listening breathlessly to the discourse of a legal-looking gentleman, who stood at the far end of the table.

"And in this codicil," he was saying, "Mr. Graham sets down that on October the twenty-eighth, the anniversary of the founding of the club, this house, his late residence, shall be thrown open to the members for the purpose of holding a banquet commemorative of the event; and he further stipulates that one of the courses served at this banquet shall consist of at least four canvasback ducks, to be acquired by a member of the club within the boundaries of the county, the said possessor to be considered host of the occasion, and, to quote the exact words of the codicil, 'as a reward for his enterprise and energy I do hereby give and bequeath to said member my home, known as Spreading Oaks, consisting of one twenty-room brick-and-stone house, together with entire contents, three hundred acres of land under cultivation, barns, outbuildings, implements, live stock, and all other appurtenances in use on said permises, to have and to hold the same, his heirs and assigns forever.'"

The lawyer paused and looked around at the faces of the ten members. He smiled satirically as he noted on nine of them a ludicrous mixture of dismay and baffled greed. He knew what was passing through the minds of those well-groomed, prosperous merchants.

The face of the tenth member expressed nothing at all. Unlike the others, he was roughly dressed; his patched trousers were tucked into heavy felt boots, his shirt was collarless and open at the throat, and his face was covered with a scraggly beard.

He was sitting a little apart from the others, deeply lounged in his chair, his teeth gripped grimly on a stubby cob pipe, and his eyes gazing off into space with a vacancy that bespoke a seemingly utter disregard of what was going on.

"I believe that is about all, gentlemen," concluded the lawyer, gathering up his papers.

"Wait a minute, Dennison," spoke up Mr. Beuel, the clothing merchant; "why haven't we been informed of this thing before? Here it is October twenty-first, with the anniversary only a week off, and Graham has been buried for six months."

"These are the instructions he left," answered the lawyer. "You were to be kept in ignorance of the existence of this codicil until to-day, when I was instructed to have you meet here and make you fully acquainted with its contents. Mr. Graham evidently believed that a week would be sufficient for you to fulfil the requirements of the hunting contest—if, indeed, it can be so termed."

He added this last with a suggestion of amused sarcasm in his tone.

"And if we fail to procure the ducks within the stipulated time, what then?" asked Mr. Carson, the druggist.

"In that case provision has been made for another disposal of the property. I have reasons to think, however, that there is but small probability of a failure."

The lawyer's glance shifted to the tenth member, who still sat apparently lost in reverie. The eyes of the other members followed the lawyer's, their expressions denoting mingled envy and hatred.

"See here, Dennison, Joe Beam isn't eligible to enter this contest, is he?" Mr. Beuel spoke quickly, as if the thought had just occurred to him.

"Why not?" asked the lawyer in apparent surprise. "Isn't Mr. Beam a member?"

"Why, I never considered him as such. He has always acted in the capacity of general roustabout and man of all work. I don't think he was ever properly enrolled as a member."

Without so much as a glance at the speaker, the tenth member rose leisurely from his chair and stepped across the room to an elaborate gun-case that adorned the north wall of the library. He took therefrom a beautiful English shotgun and began to examine it, affectionately caressing the polished stock with his rough hand.

"Of course he never was," put in another man. "Mr. Graham took him in because of his intimate knowledge of the hunting-districts. He never paid any dues, and was considered merely an honorary member. We won't consider him as eligible."

"I greatly fear that you will have to," smiled Mr. Dennison. "Mr. Graham distinctly mentions him in the codicil as a member."

The others, who had begun to look hopeful, resumed their expressions of gloom at this intelligence; while the lawyer, still smiling sardonically, gathered up his papers and departed.

Mr. Beuel promptly addressed the rest of the gathering.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this won't do at all. If this loafer is permitted to enter the contest, there won't be a ghost of a show for us, and—"

The speaker paused abruptly as the tenth member turned slowly from his inspection of the gun-case and fixed him with a steely glitter in his eye.

"You referrin' ter me?" he inquired with a slow drawl.

"I am," replied Mr. Beuel bruskly.

"Which bein' the case, I reckon I got a few remarks ter make. I dunno what you fellows 'low to do erbout this here affair, but I'll tell you a few things I do know: Me an' Jim Graham was pards. We hunted this here district over tergether for weeks at a stretch, stomped tergether, an' et tergether an' slept tergether an' were as close tergether as two men could be who wa'n't brothers—mebbe a leetle more so," and he glanced meaningly at the Merrett twins.

"Me an' Jim was erbout the only active members o' the club," he went on. "I allus went erlong with him, whereas there ain't one o' you ever went more'n twice, an' that fer two reasons: first, that

you was too all-fired wrapped up in your business to spare the time; an' second, because when Jim found out what dum fools you was when it come ter shootin' he wouldn't have you erlong, nohow.

"Jim organized this here club because he was a sportsman an' wanted ter work up a leetle enthusiasm, an' you all j'ined because he was rich an' owned prop'ty, an' you thunk you'd cater ter him that a way. You never paid no dues no more'n me, fer you know that Jim made this club a free proposition an' paid fer the expenses out o' his own pocket. If they'd been any dues ter pay, you wouldn't 'a' j'ined — you're too dum stingy fer that.

"Now, the p'int is that I *be* a member, an' I aim ter have my rights. I'm goin' after them duck; an', if I get 'em, you'll find me an' the wife ready ter serve 'em up to you at Jim Graham's house a week from ter-night. You've got the privilege ter go out an' hunt fer 'em, same's me; an' you'd stand a dum sight better show if you'd paid some attention to Jim while he was alive an' helped him to make his club a success, 'stead o' a fizzle. Thet's all I got ter say."

Joe picked up his hat and strode from the room, while his audience gazed after him in speechless amazement. These financial magnates of a small town were not accustomed to being addressed in this manner.

Mr. Beuel was the first to recover himself.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "this won't do at all. We all know that Joe Beam is a lazy, worthless loafer, but he's the best hunter in this section. If he enters the contest, it will mean, in my mind, that he will become undisputed owner of this magnificent property, inasmuch as Mr. Graham had no living relatives to contest it. We must prevent his participating in the thing."

"I suggest," said one of the Merrett twins, "that we elect a new president, and then proceed with this matter in a businesslike manner."

"That's right!" chorused the others.

Half an hour later, when the meeting broke up, Mr. Beuel had been elected president of the Abbottsville Hunt Club, to succeed the late lamented James Graham, and by a unanimous vote Joe Beam had been dropped from the roll.

II.

For the next week business life in Abbottsville was chaotic. The nine leading merchants of the town departed early and returned late, each armed with a shotgun and enough ammunition to supply a regiment.

They thoroughly ransacked, as they believed, every nook and cranny of the county that might hold a canvasback duck, and they shot at everything that wore wings to be certain they were losing no opportunity of acquiring the game they sought.

Water-fowl were plentiful in that section, and they brought in innumerable mud-hens, hell-divers, and occasionally a real duck, but never the canvasback.

When the seventh and last day arrived most of the members had given up in despair, and had returned to their places of business.

"I'm no hunter," Mr. Beuel acknowledged to his friends. "I am a business man, and shall henceforth confine my efforts to that vocation and leave the other to Joe Beam and his ilk."

Joe had not been seen since the first day of the week, when he had been observed going south of the town with his dogs and hunting outfit. The story of the contest had become town gossip, although the members had not divulged the fact that Joe had been dropped from the club. As it was generally conceded that he was the only one of them all who stood a chance of winning the magnificent prize, the interest was naturally centered in the result of his trip.

About noon of the seventh day he suddenly appeared on Main Street, his gun slung under his arm and a grain-sack over his shoulder, followed by his dogs. He was promptly surrounded by a curious crowd, among them Mr. Beuel.

"How did you come out, Joe?" some one asked.

"Hoofed out," was the laconic reply.

"Did you get the ducks?"

For an answer, Joe unslung the sack from his shoulder and dumped the contents out on the sidewalk. They were four plump canvasback ducks!

The crowd at once broke into congratulations—all but Mr. Beuel, who eyed the ducks greedily, groaning inwardly. Suddenly an idea struck him.

"Joe," he said, "come over to the store a minute. I want to talk to you."

"What erbout?" asked the hunter suspiciously, at the same time replacing the ducks.

"A little matter in connection with the club. Something you should know at once. Come along," and, seizing the reluctant man by the arm, he hurried him over to the store and into the little back office.

There Joe learned, for the first time, that he was not a member of the club.

"It wasn't any of my doings, Joe," Beuel assured him. "They voted on the question, and it resulted in a ballot of eight to one in favor of dropping you. I was the only one who voted for you."

He felt safe in making this statement, although he knew it to be untrue.

For a moment the hunter seemed stunned by the news; and then, without a word, he picked up his sack and gun and started to leave.

"See here, Joe," Beuel interposed, "what will you take for those ducks? They are worth only the market price to you now; but, if you care to sell, I'll give you fifty dollars."

Joe turned slowly with his hand on the door-knob and shot a withering glance at the merchant.

"If you offered fifty thousand, it wouldn't do no good. Them duck ain't fer sale. It was a low-down trick you fellers played on me, an' I think you had as much to do with it as the others. You needn't pose as no saint ter me. I know *you*. I'm goin' ter see Lawyer Dennison erbout this here proceedin's," and with that he passed out, slammed the door in the face of the astonished Beuel, and strode angrily out of the store and across to the lawyer's office.

When he apprised Mr. Dennison of the state of affairs that gentleman became suddenly very grave and thoughtful.

"This is too bad, Joe," he said finally. "I am afraid you have lost out, which is extremely unfortunate, as Mr. Graham was confident that you would win the prize if any one did. He was greatly attached to you.

"He knew that you were the only hunter in the crowd, outside of himself, and that the others stood no show of winning even were they given a year in which to shoot the ducks. He was exceedingly bitter over their lack of interest in the club he had tried so hard to make a success. Knowing their parsimonious natures, he chose this method of rubbing it into them, as you might say, positive that your superior marksmanship would win the day for you.

"I am sure that he did not anticipate any such move as this on their part, otherwise he would have taken proper precautions to prevent it. So confident was he that you would win that he made provisions for another disposal of the property, should you fail to get the game. He did this merely as a blind, to mislead the other members, for he did not think there was the remotest chance of your failing to shoot the ducks.

"As it stands now, however, you are out of the contest for good and all, so far as I can see, unless you can induce the others to reinstate you, which isn't at all likely."

"It ain't the prop'ty I'm feelin' bad erbout so much as it is gittin' kicked out o' the club, Mr. Dennison," drawled Joe. "I was mighty proud o' bein' a member o' Jim Graham's club, an' I done my best ter make it interestin' fer him. I know how he'd feel if he knowed the way they've treated me."

"Yes, I know how you feel, Joe," said Mr. Dennison kindly; "but I don't see that it can be helped now. All you can do is to grin and make the best of a bad bargain. What do you intend doing with the ducks?"

"I dunno," answered Joe gloomily. "I stomped over the hull dum county fer 'em."

"Why don't you raffle them off to the other members? They will jump at the opportunity. You can charge high for the chances and clean up a snug sum."

At first, Joe would not listen to the scheme; but the lawyer urged and pleaded, until finally he agreed that perhaps it was the best plan under the circumstances.

When he left the office he returned to Beuel's store and informed the merchant of his intention.

"I'll come down to the Roister Hotel at seven o'clock to-night an' pull off the raffle, an' there won't be no one in it but the members. You be there. I'll let the rest know."

III.

At the hour set the nine members were congregated at the hotel, and ten minutes later Joe appeared with the grain-sack over his shoulder and accompanied by his son, a fifteen-year-old lad.

The landlord opened up the sample-room for their use, and Joe at once proceeded to business.

"I got the hull thing figgered out," he informed them. "I fetched my boy erlong ter do the cipherin'; I ain't very strong on that. I got four canvasback duck in that sack, an' they go to the one o' you that holds the lucky number; an' that won't be me."

"How many chances are there to be?" asked Mr. Carson anxiously.

"They ain't no limit on 'em." Joe answered with a malicious grin. "We got two thousand tickets made out now, an' enough blanks fer as many more if necessary. I will sell a million if I can."

There was a chorus of expostulation at this; but Joe was obdurate, and informed them that unless they conformed to his methods he would call the whole thing off and go home.

"An' they's another condition I ain't mentioned," he informed them. "Before this here raffle proceeds, you gotter put me back into the club. I was mighty proud o' bein' a member an' Jim was proud o' me being in it— a dum sight more'n he was any o' you fellers—an' I don't like the idee o' bein' ousted out this way. I'll raffle off them duck, all right: an' one o' you'll get 'em, an' not me; but before you do, you gotter put it down in writin' that I'm a member o' Jim Graham's club fer all time."

After some discussion among themselves the members agreed to this, and quickly drew up a paper reinstating Joe, which was signed by all of them.

The hunter promptly despatched his son to the lawyer's office with the document to be assured that it was all right, and when the boy returned with the information that it was he started the raffle.

"The tickets are now on sale," he told them. "Cost yer one dollar each."

"I'll take five hundred!" cried Mr. Beuel promptly.

"Wait a minute," interposed Mr. Carson. "There's no sense in our putting so much money into this thing. Beam has been reinstated in the club, and we can now force him to do as he has agreed. The fact that he has not settled on any stipulated number of chances is really in our favor, for we don't need to buy but one each. That will give us all an equal chance at the cost of only one dollar each."

At first, Joe appeared to be nonplused at this turn of affairs, but he quickly recovered himself and grinned slowly.

"I might 'a' expected that you catamounts would spring some low-down trick on me 'fore we got through," he observed. "You seem ter catch me at every turn. But I'm game; go ahead an' buy yer chances, gentlemen."

In ten minutes it was all over, and Mr. Beuel had drawn the lucky number.

He glanced at his watch, and then addressed the crestfallen losers.

"I must have that dinner on the table before midnight in order to fulfil the conditions of this contest," he informed them. "It is now past nine, and I will have to hurry. I'll phone my wife and have her go right up to Graham's house, and we will have the duck roasted and ready to serve by eleven-thirty."

He seized the sack containing the ducks and hurried out to the telephone, while Joe pocketed his nine dollars and silently departed followed by his son.

IV.

At the urgent request of Mr. Beuel, the other members accompanied him to the Graham household, where they were admitted by Mrs. Whiting, the housekeeper, who had had charge of the house since Mr. Graham's demise. They were joined shortly by Mrs. Beuel and two servants, who took charge of the sack, and at once adjourned to the kitchen, while the club members settled down in the library to await the banquet.

They had hardly seated themselves, however, when an uproar from the

kitchen caused them to start up again. A second later Mrs. Beuel appeared.

"What sort of a joke is this?" she indignantly demanded.

"Joke, my dear!" said Mr. Beuel bewilderedly. "What do you mean?"

"You come with me, and I'll show you," answered his excited spouse.

She led the way back to the kitchen, followed by her mystified husband and his guests. There she pointed dramatically at the table.

"You tell me what those mean!" she exclaimed.

Arrayed in a row on the table lay four weather-beaten wooden decoy ducks, each with a narrow strip of canvas glued to its back.

"Where — where'd you get those?" gasped Mr. Beuel.

"Why, out of the sack, of course; where'd you suppose?"

For a moment every one was absolutely speechless; then a low chuckle from one of the members snapped the tension, and instantly all the guests burst into uproarious laughter.

"Canvasback ducks!" they howled, slapping each other on the back. "Canvasback ducks!"

Mr. Beuel did not join in the merriment. He seemed to be on the verge of apoplexy.

"Why — why — that miserable scoundrel!" he finally exploded, and then subsided again because he was utterly at a loss what to say, do, or think.

After a moment he collected his wits enough to realize that time was precious. Unless he had those ducks on the table before midnight he would forfeit the prize.

"That man Beam thinks he's turned a clever trick on me," he said; "but it isn't going to work. Now, you go right into the library and my wife will entertain you while I go down to his house and get those ducks. This is a swindle, and I can undoubtedly scare him into giving them up."

Mr. Beuel thrust the decoys back into the sack, and dashed from the house and away in the direction of Joe's humble domicile, half a mile distant.

He had hardly departed when a figure, with features concealed by a slouch-hat pulled over his face, stole silently up to the kitchen-window and peered in cautiously.

The room was empty. The guests had evidently followed their host's instructions, and the two servants had also disappeared, probably to the housekeeper's room, to laugh over and enjoy the unlooked-for situation.

The figure stepped back into the shadow of a small spruce-tree and gave a low whistle. A minute later it was joined by another figure, bearing a large market-basket, closely covered with a cloth. Silently they stole around to the rear of the house and entered at the back door.

V.

HALF an hour later Mr. Beuel rushed into the house from a fruitless visit to Joe's home, which he had found dark and deserted.

There was no one in the library, and calling loudly for his wife, he hurried through to the dining-room. Here he stopped in startled amazement.

Around the long table were seated his wife and eight guests, all of them looking very meek and very much subdued. At one end sat Mrs. Joseph Beam, radiant, but somewhat confused in her unusual surroundings. At the other end stood Mr. Joseph Beam, his face set and grim and his eyes glinting with a determination that was not to be trifled with.

On the table before him, on a large platter, lay four roasted ducks.

"Come in, Beuel," Joe drawled quietly, but in a tone that commanded the other's instant respect. "We're a waitin' fer you. I'm host o' this here feed, an' as soon as you set down I'll proceed ter carve up an' serve these here canvasback duck, which the wife roasted up to our house while I was down ter the hotel a pullin' off that raffle. We sort o' figured that mebbe it'd turn out this a way. Set down," and Joe motioned to an empty chair at the table.

"But, see here, you—" began Mr. Beuel.

Joe took one step in his direction, and again pointed to the chair.

"Set down," he said grimly.

Mr. Beuel considered the stalwart hunter for a moment.

Then he sat down.

INSANE ISLAND.

BY CROMWELL KNOX.

The Riotous Proceedings, Set to Music and Otherwise, that Took Place in Latitude and Longitude Unknown, After Some of the Orienta's Passengers Left the Ship Not Wisely but Too Soon.

CHAPTER I.

DISCORDS AND OVERBOARDS.

"JOLLY blow coming. Bore. What?" Thus Mr. Cartwright, of London, turning up his collar.

To which Mr. Jadwyn, of New York, who was going to Melbourne to find out whether the Australians had any particular longing for the Imperial Washing Machine, replied:

"Looks like it, anyway."

And to which Mrs. Wesley, of Philadelphia, added:

"This is the third storm we've had since sailing, and I always thought the Pacific was always pacific."

"Haw!" said Mr. Cartwright, with the monosyllabic laugh which always implanted in Jadwyn's bosom the intense desire to hurl him over the side. "Isn't, though, is it?"

Whereupon the wind gave a particularly vicious whistle, and Mr. Cartwright clutched hard at his cap and scowled.

A little group of half a dozen men and women came up and looked at the blackness overhead, and instinctively all moved closer together.

"Cold, isn't it?" murmured the little bride from Denver.

"Good time to take a walk around the boat and go to bed," suggested the chronic globe-trotter from Washington. "It's too chilly to stand about just now."

Mr. Cartwright laughed again, scornfully this time.

"We'll walk aft soon enough, old chap," he observed. "It's nearly time now, y' know."

"Eh?"

"It's an hour now since dinner. The band's about due—eh?"

From the small assemblage a little moan went up.

"So it is, Mr. Cartwright," said the bride. "Isn't it too bad! And the breeze is *so* lovely up here!"

"Yes, dear," assented her husband, as Mr. Jadwyn prepared to speak up with:

"Say, Cartwright, you've traveled on these boats before, haven't you?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, do they always have this kind of a band aboard to make life miserable for the passengers?"

Mr. Cartwright laughed.

"Hardly, old chap. I told you I'd crossed this way three times—what?"

"I believe you did."

"Then can't you give a chap credit for better taste than to think he'd tackle it again after one such experience as this?"

"Then they usually have good music, eh?"

"They usually have no music at all, y' know—that's one of the chief beauties of the line."

Mr. Cartwright cleared his throat and leaned against the rail as he smiled, and proceeded:

"This awful brass band that's giving us daily concerts aboard is an accident, as I understand it, y' know. It isn't the regular thing at all. This line never carries a band—never has. This outfit that's blasting our ears out for two hours twice a day is a little German band, as they call them in the States."

"But—"

"They're bound for somewhere in Australia—I can't give you the name of the place. His majesty's—er—something or other—infantry's stationed there, and they've no field music, as I take it. Anyhow, these seventeen pieces of brass were gathered somewhere in the States and started out there."

"But that—"

"Just a moment more, old chap. That

doesn't excuse it, I know. I can't tell you just how they were assembled, for I don't know that, either; but, at least they're going in charge of their bandmaster—that fat man who plays the cornet, y' know—and when they landed aboard, it struck the captain that it'd be a good thing to have a little music out of them twice a day. I believe he talked to the agent at San Francisco, and they made some sort of arrangement with the band, so that they'd give us music afternoon and evening, and—"

"Then why *don't* they give us music?" inquired the bride plaintively.

"Because they're not capable of it, dear lady," said Mr. Cartwright, with his faint smile. "They were evidently placed upon earth to give us some vague idea of what future torments await the ungodly. Yes?"

"It sounds that way when they start up their ragtime," Mr. Jadwyn agreed grimly. "They're about the limit."

"P-s-s-t!" said the bridegroom.

Conversation stopped suddenly.

From one of the doors there had stepped to the deck an extremely portly figure in plain blue uniform. He was distinctly round and fat, this newcomer, and his face wore the expression that tells of a placid soul and a good dinner within the material body.

In one chubby hand he carried a shining cornet; with the other he removed a quill toothpick from his mouth.

Behind him came a long file of blue figures—some short, some tall, some stout and some slender—all of them distinctly Teutonic of mien, all of them satisfied of countenance. Each, too, carried his own particular instrument of torture—cornet, trombone, or horn.

The large man nodded amiably at the group. The group, as one person, turned away. The large man — it was Julius Schweitenheim, the bandmaster—gave a few tentative toots on his cornet, nodded again, and took his station on the little platform which had been arranged for his own particular benefit.

The band followed suit by occupying their little chairs, with sundry soft grunts and sundry gentle tootings of their instruments.

And the evening concert was about to begin!

The group on deck fled for the rear, and Mr. Cartwright snarled aloud:

"Beastly, blasted, wretched nuisance—that's what it is! I can't understand, for the life of me, how a company like this dares try it."

"And our first trip this way, too!" complained the bride. "Couldn't we speak to the captain about it?"

"Haven't we sent a committee to him, dearie?" her husband reminded her.

"And he said that at least one passenger appreciated the music!" Cartwright added grimly.

"That little chap?" asked Jadwyn.

"Yes."

"Who the dickens is he, anyway?"

"Down on the passenger-list as Lewis Sping, New York," said the Englishman. "At least, I believe so."

"But, Mr. Russell," the bride broke in, "says that he's almost sure he's that vaudeville contortionist—what does he call himself, dovey?"

"Luigi Spingara, dear," responded the bridegroom dutifully.

"Yes, Russell told me that, too," Mr. Jadwyn continued. "He said the little lunatic gets five thousand dollars a week for his stunts, and that he's bound now for a ten weeks' engagement in Australia. Wonder if it's so?"

"Well, if it is, the beastly little bounder must have a better idea of acrobatics than he has of music!" Cartwright remarked sourly. "He—bah! There he is now!"

The group paused again and looked back.

Upon the deck of the Orienta had appeared another figure, clad in a trim gray suit this time. He was small in stature, for one thing; beyond that, there was almost nothing about him that could be called noticeable.

His face was keen, without being in any way extraordinary. Furthermore, it did not denote a great number of post-graduate college courses along classical lines.

But, all in all, he was a sufficiently good-looking little chap, broad-shouldered and lithe of movement as a tiger, and entirely unconcerned as to what the rest of creation might think of him.

He ignored the group with the same calm that had impressed them unpleas-

antly before. He walked leisurely to Mr. Schweitenheim, and they could be seen laughing together for a minute or two. He stood away, then, and the bandmaster could be seen to raise his cornet—and the little group of passengers fled precipitately.

"Infernal idiocy!" contributed Mr. Cartwright. "It's—it's—"

"The limit!" Jadwyn supplied cheerfully, as he dragged a chair after him and steered aft.

And then—it happened!

One fearful blast of misjudged melody floated down to them. It was followed by an ear-splitting crash of seventeen pieces of brass; and close on the heels of that, in turn, came a volume of blood-curdlingly discordant sound that might logically have been expected to rend the Orienta apart!

The group came near to running. Deck-chairs were seized and dragged noisily astern—farther and farther and farther. Until at last, with some dozens of others, they settled down and turned up their collars and waited in miserable silence for the hour to pass.

Forward, meanwhile, the band was faring in far better shape. When all the world seems to be against you, one faithful friend looms up large as the Rock of Gibraltar.

That may be the way Mr. Julius Schweitenheim felt toward Mr. Lewis Sping; for, when the initial selection ended, the bandmaster turned with a brilliant smile to the little man almost at his side.

"Goot—yes?" he inquired.

"The whole mustard!" Mr. Sping answered enthusiastically, as his feet ceased to shuffle to the tune. "Gimme the little old brass band seven days in the week for real music!"

"You like him yoost der same?" Mr. Schweitenheim continued almost fondly, as he laid the cornet on his knees.

"She gets better every time you shoot her off," the acrobat responded cordially.

"Und yet—der people vot sails here on der boat—"

"What?"

"Dey don't like der music any better as it goes on, I guess. Always dey run avay."

Mr. Sping smiled contemptuously and laid a hand upon the chief demon's shoulder.

"Don't let that bunch of also-rans worry *you*, Bill," he said. "You've got the real goods and you're passing 'em out to the queen's taste. If that crowd wants to shy at it, let 'em. That's their loss, ain't it?"

"I haf t'ought dot same thing myself, Mr. Sping," rejoined the bandmaster gravely, and, perhaps, a little sorrowfully. "It's necessary, ain't it, if we get paid for it, we shall strive to please—yes?"

"That's the song they'll give you anyway," Mr. Sping replied loftily. "But if I was you—"

"Last night I gif dem Wagner," Schweitenheim continued mournfully. "Pretty near two hours of der divine Wagner — Lohengrin, Tannhäuser, such a bunch of der Nibelungen Cycle, und so on."

"Greatest thing you ever did," the band's sole admirer commented. "The Metropolitan Orchestra couldn't touch it, old man."

"Und yet," sighed Schweitenheim, "vot said dot damned Englishman—him vot dey call Cartwheels, or something like id!"

"Well, what did he say?"

"He sent der second officer with a message dot if I shall play one more tune he steal a small boat und row der rest of der way to Australia."

His artistic head sank in shame. Mr. Sping gave him another pat upon the shoulder and snorted his disapproval.

"Say, if you pay any attention to that swell-headed bunch of hash-eaters you're a piker yourself—see! What's next?"

"I dunno," said the bandmaster spiritlessly. "I got a lot of good things here, but—"

"Well, have you got that 'boom, boom, boom!' from the second act of 'The Girl and the Goblin'?"

"Yes."

"Get it by the neck and shake it, then!" commanded Mr. Sping. "Put your lungs up against that, old man, and if it don't start their feet going they might as well jump overboard. They ain't got anything more to live for."

They began. It was one of the selections which the band could do with un-

qualified bad execution. It was one of the few things which even they could murder from start to finish, and they went about the task enthusiastically.

They blared—they pounded—they blasted the rushing ocean wind. They split the silence of the night into a thousand shattered pieces. They shook the deck and made the windows rattle, even in the port-holes. They caused the masts to quiver and the decks to vibrate, and Mr. Sping's heels to go more violently than ever.

They sent Mr. Cartwright and Mr. Jadwyn below, to inspect the engine-room once more and find a place where there was at least some sort of noise to drown their din. Even did they cause the captain to wipe his brow and rue the day that he had ever suggested their furnishing music for the Orienta; and they even set him to meditating a revoking of the orders he himself had given and going down there to Schweitenheim and—

Crash!

That was all of it—the alpha and the omega of the whole affair—one deafening crash!

It seemed to shake the Orienta from end to end for an instant. Then every electric light on the vessel went out at once.

The motion, too, and the vibration of the engines ceased together. In the unfathomable blackness the big hulk was but a lightless cork upon the tossing waves; and—

"Schweitenheim!" came wildly out of the darkness.

"Yes. Vot? Vere? Vot is it?"

"It's me—Sping! The blamed thing's going down, Schweity! We've got to cut loose!"

"Vot?"

"Yes!" A powerful hand was laid upon his arm. "Come along, Bill! Bring the boys with us! There's a lift-raft over here—you've seen it every time you've been on deck!"

"Sure, but—"

"Well, it's big enough for the whole lot of us even if we are crowded. Come on, I tell you! Get the boys together, you chump. You don't want to stay here and be drowned, do you? Come on, then!"

For an instant there was a tense pause in the darkness. The wind roared about the motionless vessel, as she heaved up and down on the waves. Then:

"By Gott! He got right! Come on, boys! Dis vay! *Geschwind, du allen!*"

"That's the cheese!" Sping's voice announced, from somewhere near the rail. "Give 'em the good old Dutch an' get 'em here, and—Schweity!"

"Yes?"

"Get hold of that line! Here. Here's my hand! Yes—this line here—it's what's lashing her to the deck. What? Sure she's big—that's the beauty of her. Big as a house. Now! Loose? Better yet. Heave her over. This thing here works on a pulley, and we can slide down the cable and cut her loose when we're all aboard. I'll go first. Is the bunch there?"

A chorus out of the impenetrable blackness answered in the affirmative. A dozen pushing figures huddled about the vaudeville artist, until his arms went out and pushed them back.

"One at a time now!" he yelled. "Don't all try to get down at once, if you expect to get off. Yes, here's the rope right here. All you've got to do is put your legs around it and slide. You can't miss landing, and anyway I'll be there to catch you. Hurry up about it, though. The blasted old thing's settling."

"You bet she's settling, boys!" the bandmaster's frenzied voice cried. "I feel her in my feet und—"

"*Here goes!*" floated to them in Sping's familiar tones.

There was the vaguest hint of a vague shape near the rail. Above the wind came a swish of a man descending a rope. Then:

"Come—on—all of you!" from far below.

Julius Schweitenheim was a born commander, even if only of a German band. With courage worthy of a better cause, he tucked his cornet inside his coat and gripped the rope as he went over the side. And within a minute his voice, too, arose somewhat sputteringly, with:

"Come on, yet! Come on!" There was a gulp. "It's all right down here! It's fine!"

For some unknown reason, the big whistle of the Orienta let off a blast that second. It was such a blast as would

have drowned even the seventeen pieces of brass—and it produced a distinct effect upon the hesitating ones among those seventeen pieces.

There was a sort of subdued rush for that particular spot in the darkness which had already engulfed their leader and Sping. Wordlessly, pantingly, one by one, they went over the rail and into the fathomless depths below, only a slim cable between themselves and eternity.

One by one, too, their voices came up, giving courage to the remaining crowd on the black deck, and spurring them to greater confidence in the hair-raising dive over the side of the Orienta and down the slender rope.

One by one, they disappeared; until only the flute was left, carefully taking down his instrument in the blackness. The component parts of this he thrust into his pocket, then grasped the cable and slid wildly from the sinking ship.

And he found—well, what he found was deduced mainly by feeling about in the inky night. He found, first of all, a wave, which caressed him gently from head to foot. He found then a friendly hand, which threw him headlong upon some slats that poured water.

He heard next a jumble of familiar voices, each one reassuring the other that all on earth and sea was well. And at last the flute sat up and caught his breath and heard:

"Saved, by thunder!"

CHAPTER II.

IMPRESSIONS AND A BUMP OR TWO.

WHEREAFTER, for a time, followed intense and thoughtful silence.

In the mind of Mr. Lewis Sping, of New York, the first impression was one of utter craziness.

Vaguely, he was aware that his strong pocket-knife had cut loose the big starboard life-raft of the Orienta. He seemed to know, in a sort of haze, that he and seventeen other life-loving citizens were afloat somewhere in the South Pacific on a contrivance of heavy slats, and that at either side of them was a big, watertight iron cylinder—and that the two were practically bound to keep them afloat as long as they wished.

He knew, too, that there were numerous ropes to which they could cling in case of emergency. He seemed also to know that there were many instruments of brass aboard, for even in the blackness he had collided with more than one cold, round metallic surface which has no place on the ordinary life-raft and which strongly resembled the noise-making contrivances so lately held to obloquy aboard the liner.

Then, too, there was the senseless chattering of many men—some of it in German and less of it in English—which came from every quarter, and the occasional remarks of Schweitenheim himself.

And then—the wind!

Apparently, it had come up suddenly once more, for the raft gently rose and stood on one end for a space of several seconds. It went down again, not quite so gently, and a yell arose from the eighteen.

And once more it heaved upward.

There was an unspeakable splash, then—the first of several hundred similar unspeakable splashes. Some two or three hundred gallons of salt water detached themselves from the Pacific Ocean and rose bodily over the raft.

They descended as a unit—and a new volume of screams arose from the little raft out in the blackness. Curses, too, filled the wet air—some in German and some in English.

They ceased abruptly as the raft slid cheerily up the side of a new aquatic mountain—and poised thrillingly for an instant—and descended again to the very depths of the pitchy ocean-bed, as it seemed at the time.

"*Himmel!*" screamed Mr. Schweitenheim.

"Hang on, Bill!" commanded Mr. Sping. "Keep a stiff upper lip and hang on—that's all. And—"

His words were very literally drowned.

The raft had essayed a new ascent of a new mountain; and when the descent was over Mr. Sping had adopted the course of every other man aboard—he was flat on his face and clinging frantically to the ropes which some wise mind had provided.

Conversation ceased for the time.

Whatever the fate of the Orienta, the occupants of the raft were facing a blow

such as might have struck terror to the hardened mariner. They were facing it, too, without the faintest hint of protection—cover or warmth or anything else.

Their sole solace must be that, while their grip held out, they could not do otherwise than float—and all in all, it was really a considerable consolation. One may be thoroughly soaked, but it takes at least a day or two to die of pneumonia.

Whereas, if one gets under the water with all one's clothes on and an imperfect knowledge of swimming—and more particularly in the center of the huge Pacific Ocean—it is hardly probable that more than a minute or two will be necessary for one to accomplish the full trip to the Celestial Gates—a trip for which no return ticket is issued and which the average mortal hesitates to undertake, unless pursued by his landlord or an affinity.

The wind roared on. This, doubtless, was wholly involuntary on the part of the wind, but was no more pleasant on that account. The waves rolled unceasingly—something like fifty feet in height it seemed, probably nearer fifteen.

The raft, with its burden of eighteen prostrate figures, rolled with them; now up and now down, now under water, now above it for a minute or two; until the only sounds were the sousing of the waters and the stifled and strangled and breathless shouts of the shipwrecked band and its acrobatic companion.

And then, after a time, it seemed that matters were growing a little easier.

The pitching and climbing grew less marked. The raft took to rolling easily instead of climbing frantically. And some five minutes after this happy state of affairs dawned upon the group, Sping was sitting erect with:

"Say! She's easing up!"

Mr. Schweitenheim, too, struggled to a sitting position.

"By—by *Himmel!* I guess you got right!" he spluttered. "She ain't making dose somersaults—no!"

He took breath with a watery gulp. From another quarter of the shrouded raft came:

"Hey, Chulius!"

"Yes?" cried the bandmaster.

"Iss it ofer? Are ve dead?"

A mirthless laugh left Mr. Schweitenheim's lips.

"Not yet, but soon, I guess, Henny!" he replied. "Are ve all here?"

"Call the roll," suggested Sping, from his corner, more or less gravely. "I don't believe anybody got washed overboard—but you'd better try it, anyway, Schweity."

"Dot's right." The last of a few teaspoonfuls of ocean left the bandmaster. He cleared his throat with some difficulty and began:

"Schnellbaum?"

"Hier!" said a dismal, choked tone.

"Stieffelhaus?"

"On der chob!" came a husky voice.

"Meyer?"

"Also unkilled!" issued from a distant spot.

"Fritz Berger?"

"Still breathing!" rewarded him.

"Louis Berger?"

"In der same class."

"Obendorfer?"

"Vait till I get der vater out of my mouth!" growled another distant voice.

"So!" The rising inflection seemed to denote a rise in the bandmaster's feelings. "Weilstaum?"

"Shut up, you fool!" was the response. "Uf it shouldn't be for you ve wouldn't be here!"

"What?" screamed the bandmaster.

"Yes!" answered the insurgent voice. "It was you that led der vay!"

"Dot ain't so!" said Schweitenheim. "It was me, maybe, that blew up der old steamship?"

"Who said she is blowed up?" persisted the ugly tones.

"You heard it?"

"I heard a bump— dot's all. Maybe she ain't gone down. Und anyway, vot is der use of coming out here to die of starvation, when we could have stayed aboard und gone down mit der ladies und gentlemen?"

The bandmaster's tone rose to a scream of anger:

"Und most likely you radder go down like a gentleman than lif like a musician in my band—yes?"

"Gee! I dunno." The sulking mystery was not amenable to argument.

"Der ain't much difference, der vay things looked aboard der boat!"

"Say, now I tell you one thing about dot band on der boat und der people on der boat!" Schweitenheim began excitedly. "If you should know better as I vot constitutes der best music of—"

"Aw, I say! Cut that out, Bill!" issued from Sping's corner. "*Cut it out!*"

"Vell, shall I sit here und listen to—"

"Drop it! I don't know anything about the inside machinery of a Dutch band," the acrobat went on. "But I do know this: We ought to be so darned thankful not to be down at the bottom with the poor old tub that there'd be nothing else to think about. Now go on with the roll-call, Schweitenheim, and cut out the scrapping. Now!"

"Haugelspiel!" roared the bandmaster.

"He's busy, Mr. Schweitenheim," came a timid treble from the darkness. "His horn's all full mit vater, und he's trying t' get it out."

"Is dot you, Willy Fluegel?" asked the bandmaster.

"Yes."

"Und Haugelspiel hung on to his horn?"

"So did I!"

"Und der rest of us?" Schweitenheim went on amazedly. "I got my cornet, but I never suspicioned—"

"Der bass drum is still on der chob!" greeted him lustily. "I took her on my back!"

"Und der slide trombone still exists!" issued facetiously from another quarter.

"Und I've got mine!" some eight or ten voices cried at once.

Mr. Schweitenheim gasped aloud.

"Is dere any member of der band dot ain't brought his instrument with him?"

There was a dead silence.

"Iss der—iss der any member of der band dot isn't present now?" Schweitenheim went on, with growing emotion.

Another intense silence followed. Only the wind whistled over them for a moment, and died away again. The bandmaster's voice was broken with tears as he cried:

"*Gott!* We are all safed! We are all here, und every man has his instrument with him. It's vonderful—dot's vot it iss—vonderful! Nodding like it ever happened before in der vorld."

His voice failed altogether.

For a time there was no word spoken. Then, in his own particular corner of the dark raft, Sping gave evidence of his being through clearing his throat:

"Gentlemen!"

"Yes?" said the bandmaster.

"I want to say a few words. I'm not much accustomed to talking, so if you want to call me down, do it," went on the acrobat. "I want to say, in the first place, that we have a very great deal to be thankful for; and while I'm not egotistical, I want to say, too, that the credit lies mainly on myself and Mr. Schweitenheim here. If we hadn't thought of this life-raft when the crash came which sent the poor old Orienta to the bottom—if I hadn't thought of it, in fact, and if both of us hadn't urged you aboard it, we should all be down at the bottom now with the poor old ship, and dead as doornails."

"How der dickens do you know she sunk?" a skeptic queried.

There was a pause—a highly dramatic pause. Then Sping's voice came again with:

"Can you see her now, gentlemen?"

It was the answerless question. Gaze as they might through the pitchy night, there was never a sign of the familiar lights of the steamship. Then:

"She is gone," said Sping gravely. "She is gone forever, and we alone are left to tell her fate. She is gone—"

"Hey!" interrupted him.

"What?"

"Like fish she iss gone," said a wild voice. "Look over dere!"

In the blackness, Sping was beginning to see. He saw the seventeen turn as one man and gaze in the direction indicated by a wild, standing figure whose arm was outstretched from the other end of the raft.

And there, on the far-distant horizon, in sight now as they rose, out of sight again as they dropped into the trough of the sea, was a tiny yellow blotch which meant a blaze of electric light.

It was a familiar arrangement of lights, too—an arrangement which, to quick eyes, meant the lines of port-holes and windows with which the Orienta had been equipped. It glittered distantly, alluringly before them, and Sping gasped:

"Holy smoke! She's still floating!"

"Yes, und by Gott, she's steaming, too!" added Schweitenheim breathlessly.

There came another intense pause. After it:

"She didn't get wrecked at all," said the dismal, timid treble. "She ain't sunk at all. Dere wasn't nothing the matter with her, only her dynamo machine got busted with that bang—und her lights went out. Dot's all."

"Und for dot we chumped into der Pacific Ocean, with only slats underneat' us," Schweitenheim groaned.

"And she seems to be all fixed up now," said Sping grimly.

"Und it's your fault, you American lobster, dot ve're here!" another wild voice cried.

"Say, you go chase yourself," came loudly and bitterly from Mr. Sping's region. "When a man—"

Schweitenheim broke in:

"Now, dot's enough of dot, Louis. Mr. Sping und myself did what seemed for der best at der moment. If you didn't vant to be safed, you didn't haf to come along."

"Und we are safed now—now dot we are lost?" the voice asked wildly.

"Be quiet!" commanded the bandmaster.

A growl answered him, and the growl was echoed. For a little while one might almost have imagined that a dog fight was about to begin. Then came silence, utter and absolute.

Eighteen men were watching one boat on the horizon.

And the boat, apparently, was behaving in hardly polite fashion. Minute by minute the Orienta grew smaller and smaller on the skyline.

There was, to be sure, a tiny, snow-white point somewhere aboard her which indicated that the search-light was being used. At that distance it might as well have been a tallow candle, as far as it availed in finding the raft.

The yellow lights were so distant now that one could hardly make out more than a blotch against the sky. And then—they vanished altogether!

The life-raft and all on board had been abandoned.

"She's gone right on," said the treble voice.

"Yes, und I bet she's glad ve ain't aboard her," the bandmaster responded bitterly. "I bet you, after der vay we got treated there, she ain't spending no time to find us."

"But ve are human beings, Chulius," protested another plaintive voice.

"Not ven ve play in a band aboard such a boat, I guess," Schweitenheim replied savagely.

There was no response. In the hideous blackness talk seemed to go out of existence; and thereupon began such a night as none aboard the life-raft would have cared voluntarily to undertake for any earthly money consideration.

Primarily, as the hours began to drag by, they realized that they were wet—very wet, indeed. In fact, they could hardly have been wetter without remaining altogether under water. That little spell of blowing had soaked every stitch on every man to the last limit.

Again, they were angry and sullen, and with very good cause. Whoever might have been the original demon of the affair, the cheerless certainty remained that they had deserted a seaworthy ship pell-mell because something below exploded, and that the ship had deserted them with equal promptness. Whatever dangers the moment might have suggested, it appeared that they had been in no danger whatever.

And because of that crash below decks, because the lights had gone out in a somewhat amazing but wholly accountable fashion, they had transferred themselves to this extremely open-air craft. Now, without food or shelter or any other of life's desirable things, they were blowing nicely along the black South Pacific, with no hope of rescue, no hope of breakfast, no hope of anything, in fact, save slow starvation.

It was a situation to make men silently thoughtful, and these men became silently thoughtful.

Now and then, as they blew along before the wind in the opposite direction to that taken by the Orienta, a low growl arose, or a hum of angry talk for a minute or two. In each case, however, it died down as quickly, and only the regular splashing of the waters broke the horrible stillness.

Midnight came and was announced, as Sping consulted his watch by the light of

a match from his waterproof box. The acrobat had kept track of changing time on the seas, and was mournfully proud of it now.

Two o'clock, approximately, was called out. And three. And four. And by that time the eternal blackness had become so unbearably intense that the bandmaster suddenly wailed aloud:

"*Herr Gott!* Shall it efer be der day-time again?"

"Dot makes a big difference, I don't guess!" sneered a voice some few feet from him. "It is maybe easier to die in der day-time as in der night-time?"

"Now, say! Now, looka here!" It was Sping who spoke up argumentatively. "Just drop all that knocking talk, boys. There's nothing in it. We're not dead yet, and we're not going to be for a few years more. Just buck up and be cheerful all around. Even if we don't have beefsteak for breakfast, it ain't the first time for any of us, I guess. And about the time the sun gets up and opens business for the day—"

"Den we shall know how it feels if you drop a puppy off der dock mit a bag around his head—so?"

"Say, I dunno who said that, but if I had him over here I'd stick his head under water for a while," Sping replied gracefully. "Cut it out! Cut it all out, I tell you. Just as soon as the sun gets up we're going to be all right. This is the regular path for ships, and we're bound to meet one within a day or two, at the worst, and we won't starve in that time."

"Und with this wind blowing us all over everywhere—"

"Well, let her blow. We'll get out of it all right. There isn't any more danger here than there would be walking along Broadway, and—"

"Danger!" came in an indignant chorus.

"No, there's no danger at all!" roared the acrobat. "We're just as safe here and just as comfortable as we could be anywhere on earth. We may be a little wet, but we're on a craft that can't possibly go down unless we take an ax to these cylinders. We're on the safest sort of—"

"Der dickens! Vot is dot roaring?" queried another pessimistic soul.

"What—roaring?"

The acrobat listened hard. Even he could not deny the fact of the roar. From somewhere dead ahead of them, from somewhere in the precise direction to which they were being driven by the fresh breeze, an intermittent series of crashes was coming.

To a child of five, accustomed to the beaches, it would have been apparent that breakers were somewhere in the neighborhood. To Sping, whose whole soul was centered on minimizing dangers, there was no sound at all.

"Why, that's nothing!" he yelled above the tumult. "That's just the water that's—"

"By *Himmel,* der *iss* something!" the bandmaster said gently.

"No, it ain't, either. That—"

The roaring grew louder with every second. Crash followed upon crash. The raft began to heave violently now with each wave. The men clung hard to the ropes, and began to murmur again.

"*That—*" shouted Mr. Sping convincingly. And then: "O-o-o-of!"

A renewed chorus of shrieks rose above the din of the waters for an instant. Then the raft soared into the air, and came down on seemingly solid ground, with a bang which fairly loosened the teeth of every man aboard!

CHAPTER III.

SUNRISE AND SURPRISE.

A TREMENDOUS pause, in which the raft seemed to hang in space, supported by some mysteriously solid thing beneath.

Then a renewed, rushing roar—a momentary swirl of wind above their heads—a fresh burst of shrieking.

The big cylinders of the life-raft pounded madly for an instant, and the raft itself soared into the air once more. A perfect sea of water, a torrent of lashing spray, burst over the castaways.

And the raft was floating again!

"Ve're smashed!" screamed a voice.

"Ve're done for! Jump!"

"What for?" roared out Mr. Sping. "What the dickens d' you want to jump for?"

"Say, ve ain't wrecked!" the bandmaster's tones trumpeted. "We choost hit something or other, und now—"

"Now ve hit one t'ing more und go into seventy million pieces—yes! Und—"

"Say, will the man that made those remarks kindly jump overboard and drown himself?" Sping called sharply. "Now, look here, boys! There ain't any use getting excited about this little thing. It's the sort of trifling misfortune that could happen to any man, and now that we've gone up against—why, we've got to laugh at it—that's all."

There was no reply. Sping and Schweitenheim, side by side, fell back into more or less gloomy silence, while the water washed up between the slats of the heavily laden raft.

And yet conditions were certainly better than before. The pitching and tossing had ceased altogether, and in their place was a long, even roll of water that lifted the raft gently at regular intervals and lowered it again just as gently.

The breeze, too, while still decidedly fresh, was no longer the chilling proposition it had been a little while back. As dawn approached, it seemed warmer and better tempered to thoroughly soaked clothes. Even the water itself, when Sping tried it with his fingers, appeared distinctly less frigid.

Then, after half an hour or so of silence, a new development appeared.

At first it was difficult of recognition. A very few minutes later it began to be impressed upon them that the raft, if not altogether stationary, was at least very nearly in that condition.

She was no longer rising now; in fact, she was scarcely more than trembling with the run of the water. Further, she seemed to have settled on something soft and grinding, and each minute drove her farther into it, and—

"Say, we're aground!" Sping cried.

"Yes, und der east is lightening up, also," contributed another enthusiastic voice.

"Und der clouds also are breaking, like der very dickens!" cried Schweitenheim excitedly.

The group turned their eyes aloft. For them, it seemed, had been reserved the sudden coming of a tropical sunrise, made many times more sudden by the abrupt breaking away of the night's heavy clouds.

Overhead, great fissures were coming as if by magic. Black masses were rolling away, to leave great spaces of brilliant blue. Magically, too, the whole scene lightened.

The sky grew brilliant from end to end; the sun rose with a sudden burst of glory. And almost in a twinkling, as it seemed, they had passed from the dense horror of darkness to the joy of a shining day, and—

"We're ashore!" Sping screamed.

Seventeen pairs of eyes dropped from aloft. Seventeen men turned squarely about and faced in the direction of the acrobat's pointing finger.

"Und ve've gone ashore in heaven!" cried Schweitenheim, in sullen awe.

The rest seemed struck dumb.

Not thirty feet away from them, suddenly glittering in the rays of the sun, lay a long, deep crescent of brilliant beach, and with water hardly more than a foot deep intervening between it and the raft.

They were, indeed, well within the points of the crescent, and hard aground in one of the most beautiful bays conceivable to the human mind.

Behind the beach, the land rose slowly but decidedly, a mass of thick green foliage, with a small tree here and there, and flowers of startling hue.

There were vines about the few trunks visible; there were birds who rose straight skyward at the shout, fluttering incredible plumage and singing melodiously. There were monkeys, too, that chattered violently as they made for higher regions in the trees, and there were—

But the spell broke.

With an inarticulate yell, Mr. Lewis Sping, of New York, shot over the side of the raft and into the water.

With a fat grunt, Mr. Schweitenheim gripped his cornet and slid after, landing scarcely above his knees. With a chorus of shouts, the sixteen followed enthusiastically, their bright brass instruments glittering in the growing sunshine, their legs splashing sturdily through the placid, sparkling wavelets.

It was a brief progress, and a hurried one. Land was the sole desire in every breast, and land was soon attained.

One by one they splattered their way to the beach and up over the deep sand. One by one they realized that there was no further fear of drowning—that the night had gone, and that they were ashore.

And, after a tense pause of half a minute, they began to look at one another and to burst into the maddest of hysterical laughter.

The senseless mirth came to an end after a minute, and found Sping the gravest one of the whole company.

"Say, boys," he said, "we're here. Let's have some music to celebrate."

The bandmaster thought for a while.

"We ain't got no notes, Mr. Sping. We ain't go—*ei!* I know vot it shall be. Are you retty, boys? All right. *'Lieb Vaterland magst ruhig sein.'*"

With a swish and a clatter the instruments came into position. There was a momentary sputtering of water in some of them, then "Die Wacht am Rhein" burst forth with all the intensity of true German lungs.

The din all but split the skies, as Sping stood by enraptured and listened with all his ears. The undergrowth disgorged a few dozens of innocent birds and hurtled them frenzedly upward. The leaves above sounded faintly with the new chattering of more monkeys. Even the air itself seemed to sway and tremble.

And then it was over, and the Fatherland had been reassured and the dumb brutes of the island sent into hysterics; and Schweitenheim, red-faced but satisfied, remarked breathlessly:

"By *Himmel*, I bet we nefer played better than dot!"

"And I'll bet you never had cause to, either," chuckled the acrobat. "And now for—"

"Und now for der breakfast—yes!" said the treble of young Mr. Fluegel, revealed now as a youth of twenty, with a caterpillar-growth of yellow fuzz on his upper lip.

The bandmaster regarded him almost with disgust for a moment.

"Such as porterhouse steak und some fried potatoes und a couple of cups of coffee und some *apfelküchen*—dot's enough for you, yes?"

"Huh?"

"Den go und find 'em!" snapped his superior officer. "Dere's more important things now than eating."

"That's dead right, Schweity," Sping agreed. "We'll have to talk this thing over and decide what's going to happen next."

"Und how we are going to lif until it happens, also?" murmured the bandmaster.

"Exactly. Come over here."

He took Mr. Schweitenheim's arm and led him some dozen paces along the brilliant beach.

He selected a hard spot in the sand and thoughtfully removed his soaked shoes and socks. He sniffed at the air, which was rapidly growing in warmth now, and proceeded to further disrobing.

Mr. Schweitenheim considered him pensively for a little while and followed suit. The band, at a distance, considered the actions of both and imitated them, until the hard, hot beach was one long string of garments, the owners thereof seated about in something a little less ornate than their full-dress uniforms.

"Half an hour 'll dry the whole bunch," murmured the acrobat.

"Yes."

"That's the first thing."

"Yes."

"And the next thing after that is to find something to eat."

"Yes."

"And I suppose the only way to find that is to dig in and hunt like the dickens," pursued the vaudeville man.

"Yes," asserted the bandmaster again.

"And then, after we've discovered whether there's a free-lunch counter in sight, we'll have to figure out ways and means of getting away from this charming little spot."

"Yes."

"And that's either going to be a cinch or it isn't. We must have blown the very deuce of a way last night, but I guess we're still somewhere in the track of steamers."

"Yes."

Mr. Sping scratched his head and grinned.

"So that I presume that's all we need discuss just now," he ended.

"Yes," concluded Mr. Schweitenheim. "I guess, between us, we got der situation pretty vell doped out. Say! By chingo, dem clothes are near dry now, Sping!"

"Of course they are. Fifteen or twenty minutes and they'll be as dry as the day you got 'em." The acrobat yawned and stretched out on the warm sand. "Say, I'm tired, Schweity."

He closed his eyes and dozed for a little while, as the bandmaster watched him gravely and reflected that they had analyzed the situation in a really masterful manner, and knew precisely what they were to do.

The band, finding the sand comfortable, stretched out as well, and a drowsy half hour sped by. At the end of it the acrobat sat up suddenly, and Schweitenheim with him.

"Well, so long as we've got trousers and shoes to wear again, I guess it's time to get busy," remarked Sping. "Call that bunch over here and let's give 'em some instructions."

The band came at the signal. Mr. Sping regarded them.

"You two fat ones—what's your names?"

"Dot's Hagenbusch und Winkleburger," supplied the bandmaster.

"All right. You two look husky." The acrobat rose briskly. "You start off that way together—see? Over there. Look around and see if you can't hook up with a cold-roast-beef tree or a potato-salad vine or something. If you can, just hire a cab and bring back all that she'll hold."

"You t'ink dere's something to eat here?" asked Hagenbusch somewhat doubtfully.

"*Think?* I don't think anything about it. There *has* to be. You never read or heard of people being marooned on a desert island and then starving, did you?"

"Vell—"

"Now, as for these two lightweights—what are they carrying around in the way of names?"

"Dot's Willy Fluegel und Henny Stromberg."

"Good! Sounds like a delicatessen-store. Well, you two beat it. You can scout around among the trees. There are trees—also birds. If there are birds, there ought to be eggs. If there are eggs, *we eat!* Go find the eggs."

The quartet started out. Sping scratched his head and looked at the balance of the band.

"And as for you," he said, "you just sort of break ranks and skirmish around here till you get tired. See what you can find to eat. That's all, I guess."

He sat back at Schweitenheim's side and watched them depart, and a more or less strenuous day began.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BAND'S ULTIMATUM.

For an hour little or nothing happened. The men were gone upon a quest which, logically, must have occupied their whole souls, and it was a considerable time before the first of them returned.

That first one was the eminent Mr. Obendorfer, from whose bass drum the last wet spots were departing.

He had climbed and climbed, but he had absolutely nothing to report, save that the island seemed to be infinite in extent, if one might judge from the quarter-mile he had traversed. At all events, it was long and narrow—so long that the end was nowhere in sight from the elevations, and so narrow that one could see the ocean on either side almost to the skyline.

Another hour passed before the appearance of Mr. Louis Berger. He, too, was barren of encouragement. He had essayed the capture of some shell-fish up the beach. He had also contrived to fall flat in the water; and, with an extremely brief report, he went into disgusted seclusion and disrobed anew.

Noon came. One by one the wanderers returned, empty-handed. Afternoon was a reality before Messrs. Hagenbusch and Winkleburger got back—not empty-handed. Their hats were full, their pockets were full—of berries. They were wild, weird berries, but at least they were food, and the crowd gathered around in breathless eagerness and snatched at them.

There was a moment of wild and ecstatic crunching. There was, thereupon, a frantic volume of sound.

Fourteen men were trying madly to rid their mouths of an apparent combination of red pepper and garlic. Two men, in the center, were standing blankly watching the performance, until at last Schweitenheim screamed:

"Der devil! What are dey?"

"How der dickens do ve know?" Hagenbusch retorted. "We done der best we could."

"Und you didn't taste 'em before you picked 'em?"

"No."

A concerted gasp went up. Several eyes began to flash. Mr. Sping stepped into the gap, with a choking:

"Gentlemen, there's some things that you can't talk about in words. I guess this is one of them, and we'd better let it drop. Chuck those infernal things into the sea."

His order was obeyed. The group broke up into little bunches and took to muttering as they settled on the sand again.

Somewhere toward three, Fluegel and Stromberg returned. They had been hunting eggs until the last atom of vitality seemed to have left them.

There were no nests, no eggs, and very few birds. And such birds as seemed to exist refused to be cajoled into coming down and eating imaginary grain from one's hand.

They had, indeed, climbed trees without number. Once, also, Fluegel had obtained a firm grip on the tail of some wildly colored flier, and had the tail in his pocket to show for it. But the bird, by the simple expedient of discarding the tail and risking the growth of a new one, had made for other and safer quarters.

So that, by mid-afternoon, they were precisely where they had been upon landing — eighteen distinctly hungry men. And it is not on record that exposure and an empty stomach have ever improved the temper of man.

Sping wandered off by himself, silently and rather wearily. Mr. Schweitenheim followed in somewhat doglike fashion, and thus they progressed several hundred yards along the beach.

The acrobat seated himself. His chin sank to his hands. The bandmaster volunteered no suggestions, for it was plain that the deepest mind of the outfit was engaged in heavy thought.

Far behind them the band had gathered together—closer and closer together as the minutes passed.

Now and then a low, angry murmur left their neighborhood. Now and then, as Schweitenheim observed and Sping did not observe, three or four sullen faces would turn and look at the pair.

Thus passed another hour of what had taken on all the aspects of a devout fast-day. At the end of it Sping looked up, his brows wrinkled:

"Say, Schweity!"

"Yes?"

"There'll have to be something doing here mighty quick."

"I bet you," responded the bandmaster. "Und also I bet you ve ain't goin' to be the ones what does it."

"Huh?"

"Make such a look in der direction of my esteemed subordinates," murmured Schweitenheim dryly.

The acrobat turned suddenly and stared at them.

Mr. Hagenbusch had arisen and was addressing his comrades. The words were beyond hearing, yet they seemed fervid in the extreme. Hagenbusch shook his hands in the air, waved his arms and nodded, as it seemed, at every third syllable.

He came to an end, then, and a little cheer arose. The entire band turned their more or less intelligent eyes toward the isolated pair. Mr. Winkleburger rose also and took a position by the side of Hagenbusch.

There was a word or two, apparently of parting, and the two gentlemen of the brass band wheeled about in military fashion and walked straight toward the directive minds of the assemblage.

Something distinctly peculiar seemed to have infused itself into their mien. Their chins were set, their faces cold, their shoulders very much *à la militaire*. With unfaltering stride they advanced, until they stood within ten feet of bandmaster and acrobat.

Hagenbusch's hands went behind his back. He puffed out his chest and cleared his voice with:

"Chentlemen!"

Sping rose to his feet with a springy bound.

"What?"

"Der has been a consultation of der band. Dey are all hungry."

"Huh?" said Schweitenheim.

"More dan dot. Dey feel dot der blame for der present uncomfortable circumstances is upon der shoulders of you two chentlemen. Dey feel dot if you hadn't made der rush for der raft we wouldn't be here now."

"Bah!" quoth Mr. Sping.

"Und *as* dey are hungry, und *as* we are here, und *as* you are to blame for all of it, it—it"—Hagenbusch gulped a lit-

tle—"it has been decided dot we shall haf something to eat, here und now."

"Good!" said the acrobat.

"Und furder," concluded Mr. Hagenbusch, as his excited voice rose to a shrill treble, and his somewhat scared eyes settled upon Sping, "it has been decided dot we shall eat *you!*"

"*What?*" The acrobat, in the intensity of his emotion, whizzed a full half-dozen feet into the air. He landed before Hagenbusch, his fists clenched and his wild eyes spitting fire. "What was that? You're going—"

"We are sorry, Mr. Sping," added Winkleburger apologetically. "It ain't der chentlemanly t'ing to do, und we know it. But dere must be something to eat, until we find something else, und—you are it!"

He stepped back a pace or two and swallowed.

"Maybe you don't understand der vay a Cherman appetite can get excited, Mr. Sping, but—"

"Well, maybe I don't!" screamed the acrobat; "but I can understand something else, and that's the way *I* can get excited. And if I hear any more of this jackass talk there'll be so many black eyes and busted noses on this island that it'd take a whole force o' census-takers to count 'em."

Mr. Hagenbusch sighed.

"It's natural you get excited," he said gently. "It would be funny if you didn't. But it ain't any use, Mr. Sping. Der boys is too many for you, und dey are also hungry. Ain't it better to go peaceful und cheerful, und considering dot propably you'll taste good, dan to—"

"No!" The acrobat ducked nimbly, rolled up his sleeves, and whipped a little pistol from his pocket. "And the first man—"

His words passed out of existence. His jaw dropped suddenly, and he stared blankly at Hagenbusch.

For out of nowhere in particular unsuspected forces seemed to have hurled a challenge at that same Hagenbusch.

In short, a huge, flat-bladed spear had whizzed through the air—had cut cleanly through Mr. Hagenbusch's blue cap—and, passing on after leaving his shaggy head intact, had whizzed out to sea, with the cap on its point, and landed with a resounding splash in the placid waters!

(To be continued.)

IN BAD.

BY JOHN MONTAGUE.

Gregory Makes an Awful Break, Whereupon Fate Works Him Into the Spinning of a Brand-New Web.

"PHYLLIS, will you marry me?"

"On ten dollars a week?"

"I'll be rich some day."

"So you have told me a dozen times."

"And I'll have my own car to drive you—"

"Gregory, if you don't stop talking about that car, you'll turn into an automobile."

"I wish I could. I wouldn't have such a hard time finding a wife."

"Oh, so you have asked other girls?"

"I didn't say so."

"Humph!"

The silence couldn't have been split with an iron wedge and a sledge-hammer.

"Besides, you are nothing but a stenographer. When asked my husband's employment, I should have to answer: 'Typewriter.' Not very overpowering, you'll admit."

The young man's face was between his hands; his eyes stared into the darkness beyond the ray of light cast upon the porch-steps by the moon. This was a very, very tragic moment in his life.

What was he to do? The express passed through this little town at two o'clock in the morning. He took out his watch, but put it back without striking a match; he couldn't hold up the express single-handed.

The town bank came next to mind.

Idea abandoned as soon as hatched: everybody in this jerk-water burg was so close-fisted that said bank contained probably not so much as five hundred dollars. Hardly enough money with which to buy an automobile and flee the country with a bride.

The outlook was as black as the night; the possibility of riches as opaque as his despair. Slowly he arose, said good night and good-by, mounted his lean, old mare that stood sleeping at the gate, and rode away.

And right here that intangible, elusive something called Fate, with a smile of derision, began to spin its web. Like a spider who, seeing a fly fall into his mesh cunningly woven for the purpose of capture, pounces upon the unfortunate insect and binds it securely with silken strands, so did Fate begin to enmesh Gregory Sanderson.

In his mind were but two thoughts: to possess Phyllis Sherwood as his wife and to own a car. Which was dominant is hard to say—perhaps it were better to wager even money. But to do Gregory justice, he did not want the one without the other.

He rode home and went to bed; dreamed that Phyllis had accepted him and that he was the owner of a handsome touring-machine. Where the latter came from was not made quite clear in the dream. But, as dreams usually "go by contraries," he placed little reliance in the visions which had floated before his closed eyes upon opening them in the morning.

To the office and to work. His employer, old Andrew Henson, was possessed of his usual Monday morning grouch, and, as Gregory's mind was fully occupied, little but purely business matters passed between them.

"Write to Hayward Brothers. Order one hundred feet of white pine, sixteen-foot length, inch stuff."

Mechanically, Gregory noted the order down, paying little attention to old Henson's supplementary remarks that "the blacksmith-shop was leakin' and needed boardin' up."

What in the dickens did Gregory care whether the blacksmith-shop was leaking? Engrossing ninety-nine per cent of his thoughts were the problems of making Phyllis his wife and of where that car was coming from. He pounded the keys as though they were the cause of his misery.

Then came an idea, a really brilliant idea. He would ask the old man for a raise in salary. Perhaps, if he could crowd that ten a week up to fifteen, Phyllis's affection would increase correspondingly. He therefore entered the private office to open his touching scene.

"What do you want a raise for?" bawled Mr. Henson, chin on chest, beady eyes darting fiery glances over spectacle-rims.

"To get married," Gregory answered in as mature a tone as it was possible for a man of twenty-four to assume.

"Married!"

Followed a pause and a glance so full of contempt that the would-be-husband found it difficult to remain on the premises—the room felt so crowded.

"Why, you young simpleton, if I thought you were serious, I would reduce your wages to seven a week, instead of raising them! Go back to that typewriter where you belong, and don't let me hear you mention that word again as long as you are with me. Married! Humph!"

There wasn't a whole lot left for Gregory to do but to do as the old man said. So, like a dog that had been whipped for chasing a shadow, he resumed his stenographic chair and pounded out he knew not what. Neither did he care. Phyllis and his car were slowly but surely assuming the stability of a fading cloud.

But, away off in the distance, Fate kept a peeping eye over the horizon.

Three days later, the old man received an acknowledgment of his order for lumber from Hayward Bros. Ordinarily, an acknowledgment would cause no comment; but this particular letter was so full of "thanks" and "appreciations" and "promptest attentions" and "precedents" that old Henson read it twice before remarking that Hayward Bros. certainly went to extremes to keep their typewriters busy.

But their avalanche of courteous phrases seemed more apropos a week later, when the railroad company presented old Henson with ten bills of lading

for ten car-loads of lumber awaiting disposition on the siding at the foot of Spruce Street.

Ten car-loads! The old gentleman hit the ceiling. Freight charges amounting to more than one hundred dollars!

What did it all mean? Smelling-salts would have been bought by the bushel if peddled at Henson's office at this psychological moment. Where were his glasses? What ridiculous mistake was this?

To help matters along, another very courteous letter came to hand, instead of the desired smelling-salts. In it Hayward Bros. stated that ten car-loads had been shipped (which they trusted were received in good condition, satisfactory, etc., etc.), that fifteen more car-loads were going forward that same day, and that twenty additional car-loads would be despatched on the day following.

Which startling and inexplicable news made splendid material on which the old man could float his verbal outbursts. Words not commonly in use, physical stunts out-Sandowing Sandow, gestures which Booth might well have envied, combined to class old Henson with the lion that started in to prove to his fellows that *he* was the particular animal meant when reference was made to the king of beasts.

Inopportune entrance of Gregory, thrice refused of Phyllis, and still entertaining "car" hallucinations.

On the door-mat he paused and looked with no little degree of astonishment at his fuming employer, who, exhausted vocally, but still in the ring physically, shook Hayward Bros'. letter and the railroad's bills of lading, now a regular package of them, under the trembling nose of his employee.

For once, Gregory abandoned thought of his twin passions and gave his undivided attention to the documents. Pursed lips and shrugged shoulders brought no results. He failed to understand why Hayward Bros. had sent car-loads, instead of—

"Ah!"

That exclamation was a *faux pas*. It preceded an inspiration which Gregory should have smothered in its infancy. Hastily he opened the letter-book in which all outgoing correspondence was copied. Incidentally, he began to unravel his own undoing.

"What day did you dictate that order, Mr. Henson?"

"Umm-m-m-gr-r-r-unn-cr-cr-gr-r-r-m-m-m—"

The old man's wrath continued to blur his enunciation. Nor did he stop pacing the floor.

And then came the note climactic!

Gregory had found the copy, and when he had read it, turned as white as the sheet on which it stood out like the taunting finger of Fate. There it was, in black and white.

"Ship one hundred car-loads of white pine, sixteen-foot length, inch stuff."

Over his shoulder, and peering at the telltale copy, Gregory felt the old man towering above him like the Rock of Gibraltar. His hot, angry, scorching breath burned the young fellow's neck, while all about the room rattled the skeletons of despair.

Gregory would have sunk into a chair had not his employer seized him by the shoulders and hurled him across the room with such force that the lock on the safe left its imprint just below his shoulder-blade. Then rolled the thunders of a thousand storms; and, amid the crashing of the verbal bolts of lightning, the trembling and bruised youth thought of the most inapropos things: of Phyllis, his star that went irrevocably out in this dire development; of his car, which was ascending in the smoke of the old man's wrath—that car which, constantly in mind, had been the cause of his undoing.

Gregory felt himself to be the dust in the cracks beneath old Henson's feet.

Nor was his mental simile entirely figurative. Only agility of limb saved him bearing away from the office the imprint of his employer's boot.

Out into the open he sprang and started for home minus a job, Phyllis lost to him forever, his car—

"Ugh!" Had he been able, he would have torn the word into a thousand fragments. "One hundred *car-loads,* instead of one hundred *feet.* Ugh!"

Of course, Andrew Henson would not have to accept the forest of lumber shipped as per Gregory's inadvertence, but he would have to pay the freight charges, which amounted to as much al-

most as the old man was worth. To aggravate matters, worried to distraction, he forgot to wire Hayward Bros. to stop shipment on the remainder of the order, which, no doubt, was being hurried merrily along.

Meantime, Gregory reached home, saddled his old bay mare, and rode out of the village, out on to the plains, where he could be alone with his multitude of misfortunes. Life certainly seemed a very disappointing proposition at this particular moment.

The sun sank below the hills, but he rode on, with his eyes on the ground, his mind a blank, until he felt the mare stop short beneath him. Raising his gaze and scanning the horizon, he uttered a short exclamation of surprise.

For several minutes he sat like a statue, shading his eyes with his hand; then, clapping heels to the mare's ribs, he wheeled and galloped at full speed toward the town he had left an hour before.

Never before had his old horse been forced to such a pace. Behind him broke a mighty clap of thunder. He dropped on to the mare's neck and dashed on. He did not know that the noise was the applause of Fate.

He recognized it for what it really was —a menace to life and property, to Phyllis, and to everybody else in Carsonville.

When within a mile of the little group of houses which he called home, Gregory started yelling at the top of his voice. His mount seemed to scent the danger, and struggled bravely on.

Soon the citizens began to notice his approach and his excitement. They realized the cause, and warned each other, and by the time the modern Paul Revere galloped in among them, the entire population of Carsonville were running to shelter in the cyclone cellars.

That is, all but old Andrew Henson. Still wrapped up in his misfortune, he had locked himself in his private office, and was deaf to the excitement outside.

Nor did he ever quite realize what the matter was, because, when the cyclone struck Carsonville, he was carried away to no one knows where, office, anger, and all. He was never found, nor did a single frame house in Carsonville withstand the funnel of devastation which swept the little town clear off the map.

But where was Gregory?

Did he stay by Phyllis's side and dry her tears of fright after they had crawled out of the cyclone cellar and looked with unbelieving eyes on the site where half an hour before had stood their respective homes?

Nothing of the sort. He made hasty tracks to the siding at the foot of Spruce Street, where some twenty-odd car-loads of lumber remained intact.

On each car, with a piece of chalk, he posted the following notice:

GREGORY SANDERSON,
LUMBER-DEALER.

Best Pine Lumber for Building Purposes.
Prices Reasonable. Buy Early.
Avoid the Rush.

Gregory figured that inasmuch as he had ordered the lumber from Hayward Bros., it was rightfully his. Incidentally, he figured, also, that inasmuch as several hundred families in Carsonville must have roofs over their heads with little delay, those one hundred car-loads would be in great demand. And so they were.

Which again proves that it's an ill wind that doesn't blow somebody some good.

Gregory has a monopoly of the lumber trade in Carsonville to-day. He also monopolizes one Phyllis Sherwood "as was," and owns the only "car" in town.

TO A FLOWER.

FROM morning suns and evening dews
At first thy little being came;
If nothing once, you nothing lose,
For when you die you are the same;
The space between is but an hour,
The frail duration of a flower.

Philip Freneau.

A GLUT OF SUSPECTS.

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "A Blow to Liberty," "Done Brown," "Trouble in Bunches," etc.

A Murder Mystery that Was Further Deepened, Not by the Absence of Possible Perpetrators, But by the Preponderance of Them.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE STATION PLATFORM.

IT is not necessary to tell any person who reads the daily papers of the metropolis that the life of a New York detective is not always a merry one. And at the time the episode of which I am writing took place the air was so surcharged with mysterious murders, and the police were so overworked, and mercilessly criticized, that we had become a lot of sleepless individuals who had awakened to the fact that we, as well as more comfortably situated mortals, had nerves.

This, however, is not intended for an essay on the police force. It is merely the history of an interesting case that thrust itself into my own life almost, as I look upon it, by mere chance. Yet, as will be seen, the results were far-reaching and lasting.

It is an axiom that a detective is always on duty. I was on my way from my home in the Borough of the Bronx to the Central Office one afternoon, having obtained a rest of two days after a hard task that had deprived me of sleep for forty-eight hours. As a means of getting down-town as quickly as possible, I chose to go by the Subway from the West Farms Station.

There were few people on the east, or down-town, platform when I reached it, and there was no train in sight. I wandered along the platform to the northern end, casually glancing as I went slowly, to the east and west. The station at West Farms is out-of-doors, for, although it is the Subway, here the rails are high in the air, leaving the Subway proper to begin at Third Avenue and 149th Street.

I had a good view to the eastward of the road to Van Nest and Westchester, the newly opened Tremont Avenue, and the traffic and pedestrian bridge over the tracks of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad.

New houses were being built, new territory was being opened up for improvement.

To the west I could see an older portion of West Farms, now pretty thoroughly built up; a fine large school on a high terrace, churches, and dwellings of every description.

I had seen all this hundreds of times, and no particularly new impression was made on my mind as I looked again. But suddenly I stopped, and became, instead of the seeming idler to whom the headway of trains made no difference, a detective of Greater New York.

About seven hundred feet from where I stood on the platform was a frame building, erected before this portion of the city had been embraced by the ever-extending fire limits, which forbid the building of wooden houses.

It was a comfortable-looking place, evidently built for three families, and I was looking straight at the front.

In a room on the top, or third floor, I saw two men engaged in a fight. For a moment it appeared to be a friendly scuffle, and nothing that called for police intervention. Yet I stood, with my hands clasped loosely at my back, watching them.

A train rumbled in from the station at 180th Street, and I let it go on without me.

I could not see clearly the features of either of the combatants. The window through which I was looking was closed, and the light of the waning afternoon

was not sufficient for me to distinguish features.

I did see, however, that neither man wore a beard.

Suddenly I saw one of the two reach for his pocket, draw a pistol of some kind from it, and aim straight at his opponent. I heard no report, so had no idea how many shots were fired, but I did see the one at whom the pistol was aimed throw up his hands, then press them to his left breast, and fall backward.

I did not wait to look through the window any longer. I rushed from the platform, down the long stairway to the street, and found on post, at the corner of the Boston Road and Tremont Avenue, Officer Maline.

I knew him well as a conscientious and intelligent policeman.

"Come with me," I said hastily, not stopping in my run. "It's murder!"

I knew that the house where the shooting had taken place was well within Maline's post. He came after me, panting a little, as he was a heavy man and murders had not disturbed his equanimity for many years.

"Who owns that house?" I asked him, pointing to the three-story frame.

"William Meade," he answered. "Gosh! Meade isn't killed, is he?"

"Don't know. Somebody is."

I rushed up the front stoop, which was not very high, and tried the door. It was locked. I placed my thumb on the electric button. Nobody answered.

I could hear the bell on the first floor ringing, but nobody else seemed to hear it—at least nobody came to the door to admit me.

I turned and went to the rear. There was a door there, opening upon the back stoop, which led to a small garden, well kept, and filled with little patches of ordinary table vegetables.

This rear door was open.

Rushing inside, followed by Maline, I hurried through the narrow rear hall, which was evidently for the use of all three families, if there were three in the house, to the stairs that led up from a spot about eight feet from the inner front door. The house had a vestibule, and it was the outer door that had baffled me when I reached the place.

I paid no attention to the first floor, nor yet the second. I know Maline paid no attention to anything but his efforts to keep up with me, and to be of assistance if I needed any on the top floor.

We made little enough noise, but sufficient so that any one on the first or second floor could have heard. But not a person showed himself.

We reached the top hall, and rushing to the front room in which I had seen the tragedy enacted, I found the door not only unlocked but open. I threw it back to the full with my elbow as I rushed in.

On the floor, which was well carpeted with a new rug that came within an inch or two on each of the four sides of covering the entire floor, lay a young man. And bending over him, silent, yet with an anxious look on his face, was a younger man, scarcely more than a boy. This fellow held a revolver in his hand.

Both were well dressed and intelligent in appearance.

The one lying on the floor showed in the set lines of his face the agony of death. I pointed to the upright fellow with the pistol, and Maline placed his heavy hand on the young man's arm. I remember that he made no resistance to arrest.

I knelt at the side of the prostrate one. It took but a moment for me to determine that he was dead.

"How is it?" asked Maline.

"Dead."

"Plain case, don't you think? Want the irons on this fellow?"

"On me?" gasped the prisoner. "Irons on me? What for? I didn't shoot him."

"Who did?" I asked.

"Why—I don't know."

"Fudge," said Maline. "I guess it's the station-house for you. What do you say, Tuller?"

"Take him in," I replied, "and have one of the precinct detectives sent here at once. Wait a minute. What's your name, young man?"

"Fred Burnell."

"Let we warn you that anything you say may be used against you in court. Things look pretty bad for you, but we will go deeper into that later."

"But I didn't shoot this man," he reiterated. "I saw the fight and ran in here to stop it."

"*You* did. Where were you when you saw the fight?"

"On the street."

"And looked into a third-story window?"

"Yes, sir. I was on the opposite side of the street and they were close to the window."

"How did you get in?"

"Through the front door. It was open and I ran right up."

"What about that revolver?"

"I found this on the floor. I picked it up—I don't know why."

"What kind of looking man was the one you saw fire the shot?"

"A young looking man. He had a mustache, but no beard."

"Where did *he* go?"

"I don't know. I just got here a minute before you came."

"That's enough now," I said. "Go ahead with the prisoner."

Maline led him to the stairs, and I could hear him protesting his innocence as he went down.

CHAPTER II.

THEORIES AND FACTS.

I HAD taken the revolver away from the prisoner, Burnell, and upon examining it found it to be a popular modern pistol, five-shot, and two cartridges had been fired, leaving three unexploded in the cylinder.

I then began an investigation of the room. I knew that everything necessary to be done outside would be properly attended to by Maline.

I finished my search, then went to the other rooms on that floor. They were well furnished, and everything gave evidence of good taste, with sufficient means to gratify it.

I found no person there. I then went to the second floor and opened a door.

This floor was vacant. The floors and walls were bare, and it had been cleaned, repapered, thoroughly renovated for a future tenant.

I went to the first floor and tried the d ors leading from the hall. They were locked.

I was standing in the lower hall, looking dubiously at the front door that had so kindly, according to his story, admitted Burnell, and with equal unkindness kept Maline and me from entering, when the tramp of feet on the front stoop caused me to open the door. Maline had taken his prisoner out there, and had closed the two doors after him.

I found on the broad top platform a lieutenant from the Tremont station, with two officers in uniform beside Maline.

"Anything new?" asked the lieutenant after Maline left.

"Nothing that sheds any light. Did the prisoner give out anything?"

"No, he seems on the verge of collapse, but sticks to the story that he saw the fight from the opposite side of the street and went in to stop it."

"There is nobody here," I said. "Come up-stairs."

We had not reached the top when the clanging bell of an ambulance was heard. We waited till the young surgeon joined us. Together we ascended.

The surgeon knelt down, made a thorough examination, and rose to his feet again, shaking his head.

"There is nothing I can do," he reported. "This is not an ambulance nor a hospital case. It's a case for the coroner. The man is dead."

"I telephoned the coroner's office," said Maline. It's after hours, or I would have stopped on my way to the station. But there was a clerk there, who said he would telephone the coroner at once."

"We need not wait for him to do police work," I interposed. "I have here the revolver—*presumably*—the revolver with which the man was shot. Two shells are empty. Want to examine it?"

Only the lieutenant, Maline, myself and the dead man were in the room. The doctor had gone away in the ambulance, and the two policemen who accompanied the lieutenant were guarding the two entrances, front and rear.

The lieutenant took the pistol, examined it, nodded, and handed it to Maline.

"How many bullets went into him?" asked the lieutenant.

"I found only evidence of one. But there are two wounds. One in front, right over the heart, and the other toward the back, but to the left and just under the shoulder-blade. It would appear

either that one bullet killed him, having entered the chest, and, having pierced some portion of his heart, plowed itself out at the back, still retaining enough force for—this."

I stepped to the wall, and pointed to a small hole. In it, embedded in the plaster, was a leaden bullet.

"You spoke as though you had an alternative theory," said the lieutenant.

"Yes. You have already seen that two cartridges were fired. The other theory would be that the murderer fired one shot as the victim stood before him, and then fired another after he fell."

"Both bullets taking effect?"

"Yes, if that theory holds, which I doubt."

"Why! What makes you doubt?"

"Because I saw the shooting myself. I could not tell how many shots were fired, but I saw the man throw up his hands, then bring them down and press them against his breast, and fall backward. I found him lying on his back. It seems impossible that after the first shot took effect that the murderer could shoot the second one where the hole is in the back."

"Was there any scuffle? Did you see that?"

"Yes. There was a decided scuffle."

"Did they have their arms around each other, struggling?"

"Yes."

"Then could the murderer not have fired the first shot in the victim's back, and the second as he was falling?"

"No. He could not have done that, for I saw him draw the pistol from his pocket *after* the scuffle."

"That settles that, then. Have you found anything more?"

"Not pertaining to the crime itself. I have found some letters, all addressed to Gilbert Gainette, which I fancy is the victim's name."

"Anything to show a motive? Any letters from an enemy?"

"No, and no letters that give any idea of the man's family or friends."

The lieutenant looked at his watch.

"Who owns this house?" he asked.

"His name is William Meade, so Maline told me."

"That's correct," said Maline. "William Meade. I know him well."

"Is he out of town?"

"If he is he went since five o'clock last night. I saw him at that time."

"Do you know which floor he lives on?"

"No. I know he lives in the house, and owns it. As a rule the owner of this kind of house lives on the ground floor, if it's a man. If it is a woman alone, or with small children, she might live on an upper floor for safety."

"It is time the family were home for supper, if they are to have any here," observed the lieutenant.

The coroner and his physician arrived. The doctor made an examination, and the coroner viewed the body.

"To whom shall I issue a permit for burial?" he asked.

Nobody knew.

"We must wait till the Meades return," I said. "They may know who he is, or the people who live on this floor."

There was nothing more for us to do till somebody came who could give us information. I was growing impatient, as all this took time, and while everything pointed to Burnell as the murderer, it was not the best thing to rest on the evidence we had, with the prisoner's repeated assertions that he had not done the shooting, and the possibility that the real murderer was meanwhile putting miles between himself and the scene of his crime.

"You have a revolver there," said the coroner's physician. "Will you let me look at it?"

Maline still held the revolver. He handed it to the doctor.

"It is a .32," he said. "From what experience I have had with gunshot wounds of all kinds, I am inclined to believe, though bullet wounds are deceptive, that the wound that killed this man was made with a .22 caliber revolver. Let's dig that bullet from the wall."

CHAPTER III.

FRESH FACTORS IN THE CASE.

We all gasped a bit at this statement. There was so little in all I had seen to support any theory that Gainette, if

that was his name, was killed by any other weapon than the one we had taken from Burnell, that I looked at the physician incredulously.

"But," I said, "you have not heard how we found this pistol. The man now under arrest, who gives his name as Burnell, was standing over the victim with this revolver in his hand."

"That doesn't prove that he shot Gainette with it. He may own the pistol, his story may be true, and he may have drawn the pistol in his excitement when he came in."

There was enough possibility and even plausibility in this, granting that Burnell's story was true, and we remained silent. We were still silent when we heard footsteps on the stairs.

A man's voice was speaking.

"This is terrible," he said. "Gainette had no enemies. I wonder if he is shot?"

"Oh, don't speak like that! Gilbert had no enemies."

This was in the voice of a woman, and evidently a young one. "It must be some one else."

The door of the room was thrown wide open again and the two entered. The man was about forty, smooth-faced, with a slight mustache turning gray. He was well-dressed and well-groomed.

The wife was perhaps twenty-two or three, pretty, and showily dressed. Her eyes were large and expressive, and she certainly was of an emotional nature.

"What's all this trouble?" asked the man. "The officers at the door at first refused to permit us to come in. When I told them this was our home they said a murder had been committed. That man was our friend. He rented this room and the next one as a bedroom."

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Benjamin Willington."

We had been paying so much attention to the man, I in particular, that the woman had gone practically unnoticed, until we heard her sobbing. She had fallen to her knees beside the dead man and her face was covered by her hands. She was calling his name.

"Poor Gilbert! Poor Gilbert!" she cried in a low voice.

Then, springing to her feet, she pointed her finger, adorned with two diamond rings, at her husband.

"Arrest him!" she cried. "He killed Gilbert Gainette."

"Luella!" gasped the man.

His face was deadly white.

"I say you did, you did!" she insisted.

"Why—Luella! Gentlemen of the police," he continued, turning to us, "my wife is beside herself with the shock of this affair. I no more killed that man than I have killed all of you. Once in her right mind she will tell you the same thing."

"Where have you been?" asked the lieutenant. "Where did you come from just now?"

"From the West Farms Station of the Subway."

"What took you there? Had you come from down-town?"

"No. I have not been down-town today. About four o'clock I went for a stroll. My wife was down-town doing some shopping. I had walked in from Westchester, and knew about the time she would reach West Farms. I waited for her, and we walked home together."

"Is that true?" I asked the wife.

"It is true that he met me at the station and we walked home together," she answered. "I don't know what he did before that."

"Why—why—I had no reason to shoot the man?" stammered the accused husband. "And that pistol you have there—I never owned such a pistol."

The revolver was now in the coroner's hand. The wife leaped to him, and looked at it.

"Have you ever seen this pistol before?" asked the coroner.

"No—not that one."

The woman was evidently on the verge of hysterics. Her remark gave me an idea.

"You look out for him," I said. "Lieutenant, see if he has a revolver of any kind."

The lieutenant made a search.

"No, he is unarmed."

"I'll look around a little."

Rummaging through several drawers in a dresser, a washstand, and at the bottom of a wardrobe, an occupation that took about fifteen minutes, I brought out a revolver and a box of cartridges. They were lying in a conspicuous position, among some collars and cuffs. I took

weapon and ammunition to the front room.

Without speaking I handed them to the lieutenant.

"This is a .22 caliber revolver," he said after looking at it closely. "It has very recently been cleaned, oiled and polished. All the chambers in the cylinder are empty."

"I keep it cleaned, but not loaded," said the man.

"Let me see that pistol," interposed Maline.

He had dug the bullet from the plaster. It was misshapen from contact, but a mere glance showed that in its present condition at least it would not fit the cylinder of the polished little .22 revolver.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Benjamin Willington."

"Is this your wife?"

"She is my wife. Why she makes such a terrible charge against me is something I can't understand."

"When did you use this revolver last —to shoot, I mean?"

"Oh, I haven't used it for months. I took it to the country with me several months ago, but used it only a few times, and then I shot at rabbits."

I took the revolver from Maline, and rubbed my finger along its shining barrel. I smelled of it.

"It is not months since you oiled it."

"No. I oiled it two days ago."

The woman by this time was standing as if her mind had entirely given way. Her breath came in painful gasps, and her eyes were rolling, wildly bright and wide open. Her fingers twitched nervously.

"Do you insist on the charge that your husband killed this man?" I asked. "Was there any motive?"

"A motive—but no reason. He was jealous."

"Of this man?"

"Of every man I spoke to. He had ordered Gilbert Gainette to leave the house."

This fell with a chilling effect on us all. If it had been a simple case of robbery, or vengeance for something that had been done in business to ruin a man, we could have grappled the mystery like a hideous serpent and smiled as we crushed it. But this trouble in a family thrust upon us by a wife who was certainly suffering at that moment, accusing her husband, a handsome and intelligent man who bore no marks of criminality, grated on our nerves. Yet there was duty to be done.

"I'll be compelled to place you under arrest," said the lieutenant. "There is already a prisoner—"

"Arrested for this crime?" asked Willington eagerly.

"For *a* murder. This is the second today—" said the lieutenant, who caught himself before he gave anything away. "I'll be compelled to take you before we do anything more. Accompany me."

In another moment we heard the lieutenant and his prisoner tramping downstairs. The woman gave a shriek and swooned, and when we had got her laid on a bed the coroner's physician began working over her, while the rest of us stood looking blankly into one another's faces.

"Here comes somebody else," announced Maline. "I hope this won't mean another arrest."

The door was open, and from the head of the stairs a man walked in.

"The officers on the stoop told me about it," he said. "My name is Meade, and I own this house. If there are any questions to ask, I am ready to answer them. I am at your service."

CHAPTER IV.

THE AFFAIR BECOMES A MYSTERY.

MR. MEADE was a square-built man of middle age, having the appearance of one who had seen hard work, met with hard knocks, but who had conquered every obstacle by sheer will power and endurance. Yet he was not a rich man. Comfortably situated, perhaps, but that was all.

"We have here," I said, "a great mystery on our hands. I suppose you knew this Gilbert Gainette very well?"

"N—no, I can't truthfully say I did," was the reply. "He had his rooms here with the Willingtons. So far as I know he was a sober enough fellow, although I remember seeing him a few times when I thought he had taken a little too much —of something.

"The Willingtons have not been my tenants very long—about four months. Gainette came soon after they took the rooms."

"Was Willington poor, that they were compelled to rent rooms?" I inquired.

"I don't think so. Willington is a sales agent for several importing houses, and did, I had thought, a very good business. But you see, there were only two of them, and this is a large floor. There are seven large rooms. Mrs. Willington had a servant at first, but could not get along well with her, and then said she would do her own work.

"She did so for a short time, and then said there was too much room for two people. I don't know how they found Gainette, whether he had been an acquaintance or just came in answer to an advertisement. I never inquire into those things. I have enough to do in this world to mind my own business. I think we all have."

"If that is a fling at us—" began the lieutenant, but Meade interrupted.

"Not at all," he went on. "You misunderstood me. *It is* your business to ferret out wrong-doing. Without you we should be at the mercy of every rogue and cutthroat. But to get back to Gainette. As I said, I can tell you little about him."

"Well, how about Willington? His wife accuses him of the murder."

"His wife?"

"Yes. At least they claim to be man and wife."

"Oh, they are. I wasn't thinking of that. But it is so unusual a thing for a wife to accuse a husband of murder. I thought the law provided against that."

"Not exactly. A wife cannot be compelled to testify against her husband if she refuses to do so."

"Ah!"

Meade's face grew somber. He was evidently trying to understand things as they should be explained. There was no doubt that he was trying to help us.

"How did they act together—the man and wife?" asked the lieutenant.

"Why—in public they were always clearly attached to each other. Willington was very solicitous concerning his wife's health and comfort."

"Did they ever quarrel?"

"Sometimes I heard high words, but never knew the cause."

"Is Willington what you would call a jealous man?"

"He was an ordinary man. All ordinary men are jealous, and so are all ordinary women."

"Was there any evident cause for this jealousy?"

"None that I ever saw. Mrs. Willington is a little high-strung, and likes a good deal of gaiety. But as for flirting or anything like that I should say no, most decidedly."

At this juncture the physician came from Mrs. Willington's room.

"Here is the address of Gainette's brother," he said. "Mrs. Willington gave it to me, and I wrote it down. I can't quite make her out. She fainted when Willington was placed under arrest, and now remembers nothing about it. She wants to see him."

"Is she calm?"

"She seems calm and collected, but you'd better leave her to herself till tomorrow. She ought to have some one with her through the night. I suppose Willington will be kept locked up?"

"Over night, at least," replied the lieutenant.

"My own wife will attend her faithfully," said Mr. Meade.

We thanked him. The coroner wrote out a permit to have the body of the victim cared for by his brother, and said he would send a letter to him explaining the tragedy. He lived only a short distance from New York in the country, and I believed the letter would reach him as soon as a telegram at that hour.

There was nothing more to be done in the house, and placing the body of Gainette on the table, we left, with the two officers, one man, however, remaining there on duty.

I left the others to go their several ways, and proceeded on my interrupted trip to headquarters, where I reported what had occurred.

The captain at the head of the homicide bureau listened attentively while I went all over the ground.

"I was going to detail you on another case, Tuller," he said, "but since you saw the affair from the first, or almost the first, I shall leave the matter in your

hands. Of course, you will work in unison with the captain of the Tremont Station."

"Certainly, sir," I replied.

"Now, how good a look at the two faces did you get from the station at West Farms?"

"I didn't get a very good look at either face. It was growing dusk, and the distance was considerable."

"Well—you have seen Gainette's face. Could you identify it as one of the men who were fighting?"

"I could not."

"Would you be willing to stake your reputation—would you be willing to say under oath that he *was* one of the two who were fighting?"

This nearly made me gasp.

"Why—how can there be any doubt of it? There he lies, dead from a pistol-shot."

"True enough. But will you swear that it was the pistol you saw fired that killed him?"

"I would be willing to do that. What else could I do?"

"Well, I am not putting you to the test. I am merely speculating on the peculiar phases of the case. There is something very strange in the fact that Mrs. Willington accuses her husband, and then faints when he is arrested."

"We all thought that."

"What was her name before she married Willington?"

"I don't know. We gave her till to-morrow to rest."

"Learn that to-morrow. Go deep into this matter of the Willingtons. In a neighborhood like that, where everybody knows everybody else, it ought to be easy to learn something."

"I'll learn *something*."

"And go into the habits of the young man Burnell. Does he live in West Farms?"

"That I don't know. I didn't question him much. I wanted Maline to hurry to the station and report, and also telephone for the coroner and the ambulance. I'll see Burnell to-night."

"I will leave the matter with you. I will not hamper you with abstruse orders. Go ahead and ferret the thing out, and don't let it get written up as one of the unsolved murders of New York. We have enough of them already. Though God knows we are doing all that the human mind can think of."

This was about all the conversation I had with my chief. I left headquarters and boarded an Elevated train for Tremont.

CHAPTER V.

A STUBBORN PRISONER.

I HAD learned from experience that night was the most favorable time in which to question persons accused of crime. I am not a scientist to explain the psychology of the matter. But I know that in the dark hours a person kept awake by fear, or conscience, has a more active mind, is more impressionable, and more likely to tell the truth.

In the bright daylight the good resolves we make through a miserable night, rendered burdensome by insomnia, take wings. The hobgoblins of introspection and retrospection do not fly in daylight as they do at night.

I found a lieutenant at the desk in the Tremont Station, and at once asked about the two under arrest.

"You've got two prisoners so far apart in character, or at least in temperament," he said, "that it seems strange they are both accused of the same crime. Burnell, who is nothing but a boy, for he gave his age as eighteen, has almost had strokes that would carry him off. He is inclined to brace up; and then, when he seems calm, he will go to pieces again, break down, and cry. Cries like a baby, and mumbles somebody's name.

"The other prisoner, Willington, seems puzzled. He wrinkles his brow, tries evidently to think of something, but refuses to admit that he shot Gainette. Which do you want to interrogate first?"

"Burnell. He was arrested first, and there is more against him at the present time than against Willington. Willington was accused by his wife, who was, according to both of them, down-town shopping, and did not see the shooting at all. On the other hand, it would seem that we caught Burnell almost in the very act.

"He was standing with a revolver in his hand, and the bullet we extracted

from the wall was about the caliber for that revolver. I'll have a talk with Burnell first."

"Want to talk to him in his cell?"

"Place does not matter. You'd better be in at the interrogation."

"We'll have him in the captain's room. He told me to use it if it was needed."

Burnell, walking between two officers on reserve, was pale and trembling when he was brought before the lieutenant and myself. He looked at me particularly in a frightened way, because I was the one he feared most, having discovered him in the position that would prove so prejudicial to his case.

Still, the house uniform of the lieutenant had the effect of inspiring in him an awe that also weakened his tongue.

"Burnell," I said, "what animosity had you against Gilbert Gainette?"

"By Heaven, sir! I swear that I never saw the man before."

"Ever hear of him before?"

"Never."

"Where do you live?"

"On East Fifty-Third Street."

"Where were you bound for when you saw the struggle — as you claim you did?"

"I was on my way to the Subway station at the corner of Boston Road and Tremont Avenue."

"From where? Where had you been this afternoon?"

If it was possible, he seemed to turn even paler than he had been before.

"You don't answer. Where were you this afternoon?"

"In the park."

"What park?"

"Bronx Park."

"What part of it?"

"Why — all parts of it. I went through most of the zoological gardens, then a little way in the botanical gardens, and then took a row on the Bronx River in a boat."

"Where did you get the boat?"

"At the lower end of the park—the boat-house opposite the West Farms gate."

"Were you alone in all this rambling?"

He kept his lips resolutely closed.

"I am asking, Burnell, if you went through the several portions of the park and on the river alone."

Still the white lips were pressed together, and no reply came from them.

"Let me assist your memory," I went on. "You and Gainette were together. It doesn't matter much whether you and he had been acquainted before or not. But you and he might have met by chance, and then he asked you to his rooms. You quarreled, and he got the worst of it. How's that?"

"It is all wrong. It's a lie!"

"You use harsh language, but we won't quarrel about it. What did you and Gainette quarrel about?"

"Nothing. I had never seen him till I reached his room. I saw him lying on the floor just as you found him. Near the door at the head of the stairs I saw the revolver. I was frightened and excited. I picked up the revolver, and stood with it in my hand, wondering what I ought to do, when you came in."

"Now, let us get back to the little roaming you did in the park. Calm yourself, and tell us all about it."

"Why, there isn't so much to tell. I did just what hundreds of others were doing."

"Did you enter the park by way of the lower gate on Boston Road?"

"No. I entered the park by way of the Crotona gate on the Southern Boulevard."

"How did you reach the Bronx? Come on the Subway?"

"Yes."

"Then what induced you to go to the Crotona gate, quite a distance, when in little more than a stone's throw you could enter the gate on the Boston Road?"

"I—I took a walk that way."

"Burnell, you were not alone at that time. With whom did you enter the park?"

Again that tightening of the lips, and silence.

"Was it Gainette?"

"No."

"Was it anybody?"

"Look here. I don't know much about law. I don't know much about anything. I'm only a student in college. But I know this. I am under arrest for committing a murder because you found me with the man who was killed, and a re-

volver in my hand. All right. If I am to be convicted of a murder I had no thought of committing, then I'll try to stand it. But I can't see what difference it makes who was with me in the park. It's a free park—five days a week, anyway. And I won't tell you now or any other time who was with me."

"You admit some one was with you?"

"I admit nothing."

The color was returning to his cheeks. His face, when not so unnaturally white, was handsome and manly. His eyes were blue, and looked steadily at me in the utmost frankness. There was no stubbornness nor any seeming effort at concealment, except on that one subject, his companion in the park.

"That's enough now," I said. "Has he had his supper?"

"Yes," answered the lieutenant. "We don't starve people up here."

The two officers led the prisoner away.

"Now we are up against a totally different proposition," I said. "Let's have out Willington. Between you and me, I don't blame the boy for not wanting to drag the girl into this thing."

"The girl? What girl?"

"The girl he had with him in the park. Of course, it was a girl if it wasn't Gainette. And I don't believe it *was* Gainette."

"Neither do I," replied the lieutenant. "Here comes Willington. See what you can make out of him."

CHAPTER VI.

LIGHT BEGINS TO FILTER IN.

WILLINGTON wore a gloomy, downcast look when they led him in. He seemed to be a man who had drunk the dregs of the cup of bitterness, and felt that nothing else would count. He squared his shoulders a little, and then fell away again and slumped down into the chair we indicated.

"Willington," I began, "you have had an opportunity to think over things. Is there anything you want to tell us?"

"No, unless you can lead up to it by questions, which I am willing to answer. But I'd like to have somebody tell *me* something."

"Well, *you* lead up to it with a question to start with. What do you want to be told?"

"Who killed Gilbert Gainette?"

"That's what we are going to learn. According to your wife, it was you."

"And that's another thing I'd like to have explained to me. Why did my wife accuse me?"

"Probably because she knew or believed you were guilty. Now, let me ask a few questions. What was your wife's name before her marriage?"

"Bengby."

"Live in New York?"

"No, her family lived in New Rochelle."

"New Rochelle, eh? Did you know the family well?"

"No, and I don't yet. They are not my kind. My wife did not always live at home, and I never went to see her there. She boarded on West Thirty-Fourth Street, and I met her there. We spent our time going to theaters, roof-gardens, and such places."

"Were you married without her parents' consent?"

"I've never seen her parents. Never have seen any of her people. Once in a great while she went to see them, but only for a day. There seemed to be a gulf of some kind between them. I never asked much about it, because I didn't care."

"How long have you been married?"

"About a year. A year and a month, to be accurate."

"Now tell us all you know about Gainette."

"That's it. I don't know anything about Gainette. When we first moved up from Manhattan and took the top floor in Mr. Meade's house, we were both delighted with the rooms. They were large, airy, comfortable. I furnished them well, as you have seen. I make plenty of money, and we had a servant. Then, suddenly, my wife took a dislike to this servant and began to find fault with little things that before had passed unnoticed.

"This culminated in a downright quarrel, and the servant was dismissed. Then my wife vowed she would have no more servants, but would do the work herself. This only lasted a couple of weeks, when she discovered that we had

too many rooms for us two. She insisted on renting out a furnished room, and somehow Gainette showed up as our tenant. I don't know whether my wife advertised or not. Anyway, he had the best room in the flat, and a small bedroom."

"What was Gainette's business?"

"Well, for a time he worked for a surface-car company in Manhattan, and then got a job as checking-clerk in a big wholesale house."

"Was he industrious? Pay his rent promptly?"

"I suppose so. That was a matter between him and my wife. It was her money—pin-money."

"Had you any cause to be jealous of Gainette? Was he paying attentions to your wife?"

"Oh, I don't know that I had any good reason. But I am so deeply in love with my wife that any attention paid to her by an outsider does make me feel queer, I'll admit. You see, I'm a sober old fudge, almost twice as old as she is, and like to take my ease. She scarcely more than a girl, likes fun, frolic, the lighter side of life."

"And so, I suppose, did Gainette."

"Oh, yes! He was inclined to music, and so is my wife; and they used to play and sing together. Their voices seemed to harmonize somehow extraordinarily well, and they knew about the same songs."

"Anything worse than that?"

"Well, they were out together a good deal. I don't mean mysteriously, but going about among the stores around where we lived. And, after a few weeks, Gainette began bringing in things he liked to eat—for the table. This, of course, galled me, because he was supposed only to have the rooms. But he complained of the restaurants, and liked to have dinner with us on Sunday; and in the afternoon we would all three go somewhere for a little outing."

"Did you ever make any threat against the life of Gainette?"

"Not that I remember. Toward the last my wife and I quarreled a good deal about it, and I finally told Gainette his presence was making my home life very unpleasant, and suggested he'd better go."

"What did Gainette say to that?"

"Why, he laughed."

"That is, he laughed—derisively?"

"Just that."

"Did he refuse to go?"

"He gave me to understand he would remain till my wife told him to go. He had rented the rooms from her."

"Then what took place?"

"I said I would pitch him out if he wasn't out by Saturday."

"Next Saturday?"

"No, last Saturday. And he wasn't out."

"Did you pitch him out?"

"No. I wish I had. He wouldn't have been killed in my home then."

"Was it your intention *to* pitch him out?"

"I wanted to have a good talk with my wife first. But she had become excitable of late, and wept when I spoke about it."

"And yet — you say that there was nothing but the merest friendship between them?"

"There was something — not friendship—some mystery that my wife knew about. I never could get it from her. I did not shoot Gainette. I never had any reason even to think of such a thing. The only trouble was that whatever they knew between them was causing my wife to lose her health. And I wanted her more to myself. The fellow was pleasant enough, but was always around evenings. We played cards a good deal in bad weather, and that was pleasant enough. But it didn't suit me—exactly."

"Now, how much of what you told us this afternoon about your own actions was true?"

"All of it."

"Then you claim you left your house at about four o'clock and took a walk."

"I can readily prove that. At five I was talking with a friend in Van Nest."

"Can you produce this friend if you are held for trial?"

"Yes."

"That's all now."

Willington was led back to his cell.

"What do you think of that one?" I asked the lieutenant.

"More complicated than the other case. There *is* something here to work on. I knew he was puzzled. And he is puzzled yet. There is evidently some-

thing about Gainette he can't get through his head."

"I'll see Mrs. Willington to-morrow. She may give us a little light."

We walked out to the desk, and I sat with the lieutenant while he disposed of one or two minor cases brought in. Then—it was almost midnight—a tall, thin, anxious-looking man came in.

"I—beg your pardon—for disturbing you," he said haltingly. "But my daughter—she hasn't been home for supper—she was never out so late before—I fear something has happened."

"What could happen?" asked the lieutenant.

"She—she may have eloped. Or she may have been drowned in the Bronx. She was there—with a young man—rowing this afternoon."

"What was the young man's name?"

"Fred Burnell."

The lieutenant and I looked at each other with narrowing eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

ENTER THE GIRL IN THE CASE.

"WHAT is your name?" asked the lieutenant, dipping a pen in ink and drawing the blotter before him.

"David Carne."

"Where do you reside?"

"On One Hundred and Eighty-First Street, near the Southern Boulevard."

I caught a quick, intelligent glance from the lieutenant's eyes. Burnell had told us that he had entered the park by way of the Crotona gate, which faces the Southern Boulevard a little north of the street Carne said he lived on.

"What is your daughter's name?"

"Winnie—Winifred Carne."

"When did you see her last?"

"Early this morning at breakfast. My wife is out of town, and Winnie gets the meals. We have no servant."

"Were you away all day?"

"I am away almost every day. I am a bricklayer."

"How was she dressed at breakfast?"

"In a simple morning frock, such as any poor man's girl would put on for work around the house."

"Not what she would wear outside?"

"No. She has good clothes."

"How old is she?"

"Almost seventeen."

"Have you examined her wardrobe?"

"Yes. There are several things missing. The places where she kept her clothes seem to be all tumbled up. You know what I mean—as if somebody had gone through the drawers and closets in a hurry and picked out what was wanted."

"Anything missing that you can describe?"

"Of course, I don't know much about a girl's clothes. Her mother could tell you better than I. I shall telegraph for her."

"But you would know if such things as dresses and shoes were missing."

"I couldn't find a new gray suit, with a coat to match, nor a light blue one."

"How about shirt-waists?"

"Oh, the house is full of them. I wouldn't miss a few."

"And you think she has eloped with this Burnell. What makes you think so?"

"Because I know she thinks a lot of him, and I had forbidden her to have anything to do with him."

"Bad lot, eh?"

"Well—"

The man's hesitation was so evident that the lieutenant looked up from the blotter and keenly studied him.

"Do you know this Burnell?"

"Slightly."

"What do you know about him? Tell us everything."

"Well, I know he lives on East Fifty-Third Street, just a little way from Fifth Avenue. And I know he is a college student. I know his father is rich. I don't know his father's business."

"Now, you say you forbade your daughter to have anything to do with Burnell. Yet what you say about him, as far as it goes, seems to portray a young chap whom almost any father and mother would be glad to have pay attention to a daughter. You must know something worse about him than the mere fact that his father is rich."

"As a young man there is nothing to be said against him," replied Mr. Carne earnestly. "So far as I know, he has no very bad habits. I never saw any signs of intoxication about him, although at times he has taken a glass of beer when I happened to have it in the house."

"You treated? You drank with him?"

"Certainly."

"Well, why did you forbid your daughter to have anything to do with him?"

"In the first place, I considered them both too young to be seriously in love. He can't be more than eighteen, or perhaps nineteen. He is still a student in college, and has not made up his mind what work he is going to do in the world. Naturally, he will take up a profession, or go with his father into business. The other reason was—"

"Go on," said the lieutenant.

"He is too rich. A young man like that, with plenty of money, even before he earns it, would hardly want the daughter of a bricklayer for a wife."

The lieutenant looked me in the face, but I knew he was not thinking of me. His face was blank. He was thinking deeply.

"Young fellows like girls who are pretty, know how to dress neatly and prettily, and are lively — good company," he said, returning to Mr. Carne. "And my experience has been that young men of that age, if they are healthy-minded, unspoiled boys, don't care much what the father of the girl does for a living. Has he ever *said* he wanted your daughter for a wife?"

"Yes."

"To you?"

"Oh, yes, to me and to Winnie, both."

"M-m! Did you tell Burnell you didn't want him to call on your daughter?"

"I explained the difference in their stations in life, and said it was not wise."

"In other words, you did just the thing to cause them to meet clandestinely."

"I fear they have."

"Is your daughter pretty? Blonde or brunette?"

"She is called pretty. She is rather blonde, but not the straw-colored, bleached kind. Brown, I always called her hair, and she has brown eyes. She is rather tall."

"Is she lively? Entertaining?"

"She plays the piano and sings."

The lieutenant stretched himself.

"You have no idea what time she left the house?"

"No."

The lieutenant nodded to me and shot a glance toward the door that led toward the cells.

"Come with me, Mr. Carne," I said.

The man followed me.

"Is that Burnell?" I asked, pointing to the prisoner.

He had been sitting on the edge of the steel slat with his head buried in his hands. When I spoke he started to his feet.

"Mr. Carne!" he gasped.

For a moment the father of the missing girl could not speak. He glanced in a helpless way at me, and then again at the prisoner. He swayed on his legs as if he would fall.

"It *is* Burnell, is it?" I said.

He did not answer me. He began to wring his hands.

"Fred Burnell," he cried, "what have you done with Winnie? Where is she?"

"How do I know where she is? I've been locked up here since about half past five."

"Where was she when you saw her last?"

"On the front stoop of your house."

"Are you telling the truth, Burnell?"

"As God is my judge."

"Then—then—" queried Carne tremulously, turning to me, "where is she now? And what is he locked up for?"

CHAPTER VIII.

AN IMPORTANT REVELATION.

I EXPLAINED the charge on which Burnell was there, and led Mr. Carne back to the desk.

"He identifies Burnell," I announced.

"What does Burnell say about the girl?"

"Says he left her on her own front stoop. That must have been about ten minutes before he was found in the house owned by Meade."

The lieutenant swung again toward Carne.

"Did you know anybody by the name of Gilbert Gainette?"

"I—have seen him."

"Where?"

"At my house?"

"What took him there?"

"Winnie had a little party once, a few weeks ago. He was there."

"Was he there alone?"

"No, Mrs. Willington was with him."

"And Mr. Willington?"

"Mr. Willington was not there. It was a young people's party, and I understand Mr. Willington is a middle-aged man."

"Did you notice anything like a flirtation between Gainette and Mrs. Willington at the party?"

"No. Whatever attempt at flirting there was seemed to be on the part of Gainette."

"He tried to flirt. With whom?"

"My Winnie."

I saw the lieutenant draw in a quick, sharp breath. I confess the answer given by Carne sent a chill through me, though I was accustomed to painful scenes and disclosures. This led directly up to a motive Burnell might have had for shooting Gainette.

"Mr. Carne, you may be called upon as a witness in this case. I advise you to say nothing to any person about the matter until you hear from the district attorney's office."

"But about my girl—Winnie! Can't I search for her?"

"Certainly, and we shall do our utmost to find her. We may want her as a material witness. You may be of assistance to us in the matter. Try to ascertain from neighbors if any one saw her leave home after Burnell went away, and what dress she wore."

"I will, and let you know in the morning," said the grief-stricken father, who had walked into a murder mystery so unexpectedly.

The lieutenant told him he was not needed further, and he left.

"Tuller," said the lieutenant, "the plot thickens. What do you think now?"

"I think I'm sleepy," I answered. "This needs a clear head, and not a tired one. I'll see Mrs. Willington early in the morning and show up here immediately after."

"Very well."

I did not go back to headquarters, but left the general alarm I knew would be sent out with the lieutenant. I went home and to bed.

Early in the morning I hurried through breakfast, and then went to see Mrs. Willington.

I found no trace of the tragedy of the day before. Mrs. Willington was busying herself about the flat. She was neatly dressed, pale, and when she saw me, she became greatly agitated.

"How is he?" she asked abruptly.

"How is who?"

"My husband."

"Why, the last time I saw him he was well, and probably is now. Somewhat upset, of course."

"I suppose so. I know you have come to question me, or perhaps arrest me. Which is it?"

"I have come to ask some questions. Whether the other follows depends on your statements."

"Well, sit down. You may ask me all the questions you like, and I promise to give you truthful answers."

"Mrs. Willington," I began, "last night you made a very serious charge against your husband. Were you quite in possession of your senses when you accused him of shooting Gainette?"

"I was excited. I hardly knew what I was saying."

"Yet, even in your excitement, there must have been some foundation for your accusation. What was it? Was he jealous of Gainette?"

"He may have been. Or, he may not have been exactly what you would call jealous. But my husband is much older than I am, and as Mr. Gainette and I liked to sing and play together, my husband thought I gave too much of my time to his company."

"Did you know Gainette before he came to hire rooms here?"

She looked at me full in the face and opened her lips as if to answer my question. Then her glance fell and she said nothing.

"You answer my question almost as well as though you had spoken," I said.

Her face, though, did not show what a woman's face does under such a line of questioning. Instead of flushing and looking confused, she turned deathly white and seemed about to faint.

"I knew him—years ago," she said falteringly.

"Remember, you promised to tell me

the truth. I do not wish to alarm you, nor ask unpleasant questions. But when a man's life depends on our knowing the truth we have to learn all we can. Just how long have you known Gainette?"

"Since—since the day he was born."

"Then his people must have been neighbors and friends of your people."

She shut her eyes and faintly nodded.

"I fear you are getting dangerously near the edge of not telling quite all the truth. Now—I am going to put a question that I *must* ask. Unpleasant though it may be, I am compelled to ask because we must know the truth. Was there any reason for your husband being jealous of Gainette?"

"Possibly there was an apparent reason. No real one."

"You were together a great deal?"

"Yes."

"You went to parties together without your husband?"

"Only one, Miss Carne's."

"You sang and played the same songs and tunes."

"Yes."

"Wouldn't that make a husband jealous?"

A gasp caught her breath. She put her hand to her throat.

"Not—not if he knew the truth."

"The truth? Was there more?"

"I had not told—I had not told my husband the truth."

Even a detective, though he sees so much of the seamy side of life in a city like New York, has a heart in him. And mine just then felt deeply for Mr. Willington. I fear I became a little sterner in my manner toward his wife.

"You do not, then," I said, "love your husband."

"I love my husband as no other woman that I know loves hers."

I grew puzzled.

"I don't think," I said, "I quite follow you. You say you love your husband?"

"Dearly. He has been wonderfully good to me."

"Yet, in almost the same breath you admit that a strong attachment existed beween you and Gilbert Gainette, and only yesterday you accused your husband of murdering your—Gainette."

She leaped to her feet.

"I *must* tell you the truth to save myself. I will not live with false interpretations on my words or actions. I do love my husband. Yet there was a long and natural affection between Gilbert and me. And the reason of this I never told—I never *dared* tell my husband."

"Dare you tell me?" I asked.

"Yes—now, or my husband. The reason for secrecy has been swept away by the hand of a murderer. Nothing that can be said now will hurt Gilbert."

"Go ahead," I said.

"Gilbert Gainette was not Gilbert Gainette. He was Gilbert Bengby, my brother."

Having said this, she gasped again and fell back weakly in her chair.

CHAPTER IX.

A VISION IN GRAY.

I RUSHED to help the woman. With water handy I soon had her back in condition so that she could continue.

"It must all come out," she said, "and there is no use keeping anything back from you. My brother was a fugitive from justice. My own parents and I have quarreled and separated about it. Gilbert was always wild. He went from the farm to Boston, where he had a fair position, but his salary was not sufficient to give him the gay life he craved, and he committed a forgery. He got away, however, but his money was gone, and I was the only one who would help him.

"He went home and my father and mother, who are very rigid church people, turned him out. I received a letter from him telling me all about it, and I got up the furnished-room idea just to have him under my care. I did not dare tell my husband. Of course, I did not expect that the presence of my own brother was going to wreck the happiness of my home.

"You see what a fool I am. *I* knew he was my brother. I never thought so far as to realize my husband would look upon our friendship as that of his wife and an outsider. Things grew black. My husband and I quarreled, and then I dared not tell him the truth."

"And that was why you accused him of killing your brother?"

"I am sorry I said so. I do not now think he did. Mr. Willington would never do any person harm."

After hearing her story I understood the puzzled expression the lieutenant and I had noticed in Willington's face. And he had reason enough to be puzzled. It was one of those matters that would probably have been amicably settled had the wife and husband sat down to a good confidential chat about it. But deceit having poked its head in, nothing could be done to shut the door and keep the entire hideous body out.

I thanked Mrs. Willington, and went back to the station where I found the lieutenant, relieved from duty, but waiting for me. I told him what I had learned.

"Worse and worse," he said. "This is getting to be a regular labyrinth. We'll find the way out, though."

It was still early. At nine o'clock both Willington and Burnell would be taken in the prisoners' van or "Black Maria" to the Morrisania court, where the charges would be laid before the magistrate, who would conduct a preliminary examination. Before that hour arrived, an automobile honked up to the curb and a well-dressed man came hurriedly into the station-house.

He carried a morning paper in his hand. I had not yet seen one.

"My son!" he exclaimed in an excited manner. "My name is Burnell. I read in this morning's paper that a Fred Burnell was arrested late yesterday afternoon on the charge of murder. Is he here?"

"He is, sir," said the officer at the desk.

"May I see him, to ascertain if it is my son? He was not at home last night."

"Certainly. Lieutenant, will you attend to this identification? And Tuller?"

We accompanied the agitated man to Burnell's cell.

"Fred!" he cried. "How did you get into such a terrible scrape? Your mother is prostrated, and I am almost crazy."

"It's all right, *pater*," replied the young fellow. "I am innocent. Circumstances look black against me now, but when the detectives dig up the facts I'll walk out without a stain on my good name."

"I hope to God you are telling the truth," said the agonized father.

"I am, dear old dad. Tell mother so."

The father swung round to the lieutenant and me.

"I am unacquainted with the procedure in such a case," he said. "Is there not such a thing as bail?"

"In a murder case we could not accept bail here," replied the lieutenant. "Anyway, when we asked him last night if he wished to communicate with any one the prisoner said he did not."

"That's like Fred. But now what will be done?"

"There are two arrested on the same charge," I explained. "They will be taken to court at nine, and the question of bail will come up before a magistrate."

"What court?"

We told him how to reach the place.

"I will be there, and give bail if I am permitted to do so," he said.

"Don't look like the father of a murderer," remarked the lieutenant.

"I haven't seen anybody in the affair yet who looks like a murderer," I answered.

"That's right, too," he said. "But—duty is duty—I have heard that somewhere, I think."

"You and I, lieutenant, and several thousands of us in this complicated machinery of a big city, are not supposed to have hearts or sentiment. We are here—well—because we're here."

He nodded, took a few strides round the room, and came back to me.

"Tuller," he said, "what sort of evidence would you call this?"

"Circumstantial—all of it."

"So do I. What about finding Burnell with the revolver, a bullet in the wall of the same caliber as that revolver, .32, and the murdered man on the floor?"

"Circumstantial evidence, but mighty strong. If I could identify Burnell as the man I had seen point the pistol and *shoot* Bengby, it would be direct. But I can't."

"And of course the evidence against Willington is all circumstantial."

"Certainly."

"There's a good deal of mystery to be solved yet. Is there a third party?"

"You mean—somebody besides these two who shot the man?"

"Yes. That's what I mean."

"Why, how could there be?" I asked. "Where would he be? What could have been the motive?"

"We don't know the motive if it was a third party. If it was Burnell, the motive was jealousy. Gainette—or Bengby—had flirted with his girl, Winnie Carne. If it was Willington, the motive assuredly was jealousy. A third one might have had the same or a totally different motive."

"But how could there be a third one?"

"I don't know. You were first on the ground, you and Maline. I haven't been there except when I went over at your call. Now, about how long was it from the time you saw the man in the room aim the pistol till you and Maline entered the room?"

"I should say—three minutes, perhaps four."

"Bengby was dead when you got there?"

"Dead as a door-nail."

"And Burnell, who was there with the the .32 revolver, claimed that in his excitement he had picked it up from the floor?"

"He said that. but it doesn't cut any ice," I answered. "If he did the shooting he could have thrown the revolver into another room, or out the window, and claimed he knew nothing about it."

"But he didn't do either of these things."

"He didn't."

"My belief is there's a third party. The coroner's physician said the wound was probably made by a .22 caliber revolver."

"He said the wound looked like it. But he also said bullet wounds were deceptive. And I found a revolver—Willington's."

We fell silent as the Black Maria rattled up to the door. We were both going to court.

At that moment there tripped up the stoop of the front entrance a vision. A tall, extremely pretty girl, dressed in excellent taste in a light gray suit, with coat to match. Her hair was a sandy-brown. and there was lots of it, clearly all her own.

Her great brown eyes were like the eyes of a frightened fawn as she stood irresolutely looking at the various officers. Then she stepped quickly to the lieutenant with whom I had been talking. I suppose she thought the man at the desk, to whom she should have gone, was too busy.

"Mr. Policeman," she began, trying to keep her voice steady, "was there a Fred Burnell arrested last evening for murder?"

"Yes, there was."

"I saw it in the paper and hurried here as fast as I could. Set him free at once. It was *I* who killed Gilbert Gainette. And here is the pistol I did it with."

She handed him a revolver. With a peculiar face the officer accepted it, looked at it, and handed it to me with a stare, but no words.

I took it, looked at it and thrust it into my pocket.

It was a neat little silver-mounted weapon, and its caliber was .22

CHAPTER X.

HOW SHE CAME TO DO IT.

I was fairly knocked off my feet. The lieutenant let out a gasp that ended in a peculiar gurgling sound. Every man in the room turned to gaze at us.

The girl with the brown eyes looked about as dangerous as a frightened kitten. I tried to speak. The lieutenant's lips moved, but what he was trying to let loose I couldn't tell. He made no sound.

"Don't you want to arrest me and let Fred Burnell go?" asked the girl.

She was looking straight at me. I suppose the act of the lieutenant in passing her silver-mounted revolver to me, and my own act of slipping it into my pocket made her look upon me as the police authority in the case. It clearly was up to me to answer, and I had a queer feeling dancing round my heart.

"Because," added the girl after waiting a moment, "I did it, you know."

I glanced at the lieutenant at the desk. He motioned with his thumb toward the door of the captain's room.

"Come in here and sit down, Miss Carne," I said.

Led by me, and followed by the still wondering lieutenant, the girl walked steadily into the room.

"Please sit down, Miss Carne," I said.

"Why—how did you know I was ever a Miss Carne?" asked the girl.

"Why, your father was here last night and reported your absence from home. His description of you, and the fact that you want to set Fred Burnell at liberty both prove that you *are* Miss Carne."

"Yes, but I am not."

There was the faintest suspicion of a smile on her face.

"Then what is your name?" I asked.

"Mrs. Fred Burnell."

I gasped again. The case was beginning to be a succession of gasps for the lieutenant and me.

"Then—you were with Fred Burnell in the park yesterday."

"Of course."

"But he told your father and me that he left you on your own front stoop."

"So he did. That is, he left me on my father's front stoop. It isn't my front stoop any more."

"Well—where were you married?"

"*Must* I tell that? I have the certificate, you know."

"I don't know, not having been a witness or a guest at the wedding. You haven't produced any certificate."

"It's here."

She opened a little black bag, such as women carry nowadays, containing purse, and—well—if you're married you know, and if you don't you are just as well off. Anyway, she opened the bag and produced a certificate. I examined it. It was regular enough, and the name of the officiating clergyman was one who was well known.

"That's all to the good," I said, passing it to the lieutenant. He looked it over, nodded, and returned it to the girl.

"Now, tell us all about it," I went on. "You claim that you actually shot Gilbert Bengby?"

"Why, no! I don't know any Gilbert Bengby. I shot Gilbert Gainette."

"Same man," I said. "Bengby was his right name. He was Mrs. Willington's brother"

"What! Her *brother!* Oh, but I'm glad."

"Glad you shot him?"

"No. I had to do that. But I'm glad he was her brother."

"Why?"

"Oh, because—because I am."

"So are we. Now, go ahead and tell us why you shot him. You were acquainted with him, I suppose."

"Slightly acquainted with him, but better acquainted with Mrs. Willington. I gave a party a short time ago and invited her and Mr. Willington, and she spoke to me about her—no, she didn't say brother, but Mr. Gainette. I extended the invitation to him."

"And he tried to flirt with you."

"How did you know that? Oh, you police!"

"Your father told us."

"Well! But it wasn't anything like that that made me shoot him. I'll tell you all about what Fred and I did yesterday. You know—maybe you do, papa has told you the whole family history, I suppose—that Fred was forbidden by my father ever to see me again. Fudge! That only made us cling to each other the more. Nobody can say a word against Fred.

"But papa has funny ideas, and thought I was too young and Fred ought to have a business. He doesn't need any business. And mama was only about as old as I am when she was married. Well, Fred and I *did* meet. And yesterday he came to the house because he knew mama was away and papa would be at work.

"I went with him to the park. We wandered around in the Zoo till we got tired of that. Then we went a little farther to the Botanical Garden. Then we went back to the boat-house, at the lower end of the park, and Fred hired a boat. We spent about an hour on the river. And oh, it was a lovely afternoon, and he did look just fine—so handsome—and we talked—we talked about things and ourselves and—oh, you know. We talked about love.

"And Fred said he had told his father all about me, and showed my picture, and his father smoked two big cigars while he studied it. He knows a lot, Fred's father does, and he asked some questions about me. He wanted to know if I was rich and if we kept servants. Fred said no to both. Then Mr. Burnell asked if I

could bake and cook, and Fred said he'd bring down one of my loaves of home-made bread and one of my pies for his father to test for himself. Then his father said: 'Well, if she can keep house, and cook, and sing and play, and she's nice looking, go ahead and marry her. If you employ a cook she'll have to be a good one.'

"Of course, what Fred's father had said made us happy, but I knew *my* father wouldn't consent. So we made it up to get married anyway. We went to that minister—you saw his name—and after a lot of questions he consented to marry us.

"Then Fred walked home with me. He said he'd wait for me at the West Farms Station of the Subway. I went in the house. I wanted to get my suit-case and some clothes for a change. We were going to Niagara Falls. I was to write my father when our train had reached Albany.

"Well, I got the suit-case all packed, and was just putting my revolver in the top—Fred gave me that revolver—when I heard a noise. I knew papa wasn't home, so I crept softly to the door of the dining-room and there was the man I had known as Mr. Gainette packing up some of my mother's old silver wedding presents. I gave a yell. He jumped, but instead of running away as I thought he would, he came straight for me.

"'You'll never give me away, my beauty,' he said, and he took something from his pocket. I think it was a bottle—perhaps chloroform.

"I was dreadfully excited, and I still had my pistol in my hand. I didn't know whether it was loaded or not, and aimed straight at him. It *was* loaded, and went off. Mr. Gainette clapped his two hands over his breast—where the pistol was aimed—and then he yelled, 'You have killed me!'

"Then he ran from the house. I was awfully nervous thinking I had shot him, but he could run, so I couldn't have killed him then. I went to the Subway Station, and waited. Fred didn't show up. I was worried, and a little angry. I went to a friend's house and stayed there all night. Then this morning I saw the account of Mr. Gainette's death and Fred's arrest for the murder. I knew I had been the one who killed him, and came straight here to tell you."

The lieutenant and I stared straight into each other's eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

PRISONERS GALORE.

"Got any thinking machinery left, Tuller?" remarked the lieutenant. "I confess this thing has got me tangled."

"Me too," I assented.

"But why?" asked the pretty girl with the brown eyes. "Didn't I make everything clear?"

"You—you told a remarkably straight story," I said. "But—it needs investigating."

"But why? Oughtn't I to have shot a man I saw stealing mama's things, especially when he was going to attack me?"

"You ought, you ought," I assured her. "The only question is, did you? Are you sure you didn't invent this pretty little fairy tale to save your husband?"

"I? Invent a fairy tale? What nonsense!"

"But look here! There is more to be explained. You say Fred had left you on the front stoop. How long a time elapsed between the parting with Fred and the discovery of Gainette, or Bengby, taking the silverware?"

"Oh, about fifteen minutes."

"And Bengby reached his room before Fred? Fred claims he saw Bengby and another man fighting and went inside to stop it."

"If Fred said that, it's true."

"But how could Bengby pass Fred if Fred had fifteen minutes headway?"

"Oh, Fred isn't in a hurry always. He was in a hurry to marry me, but he wouldn't rush to the station when he knew I would take the same route a little later."

"But Bengby must have taken the same route."

"Not necessarily. There are other streets."

"Another thing, Fred had a pistol in his hand when we found him."

"But Fred never carries a pistol."

"Why did he give you one?"

"Oh, it was a joke. We had a little

spat once, and then we made up. And he said he wanted to give me something. And I said if we ever quarreled again I'd shoot myself. He asked what with. I said papa's old army carbine. He said I'd get blood poisoning if I shot myself through the heart with that, so he gave me the silver pistol. And he has one just like it, only he doesn't carry it. Sometimes we shot at a target."

"Is his pistol just like that?"

"Exactly. They are twins."

"The pistol he had was a .32."

"No, the only one he owns is a .22 like mine."

"Didn't the coroner's doctor say the lower part of the heart was pierced?" I asked the lieutenant.

"That's what he said."

"Now the question is, could a man run from One Hundred and Eighty-First Street and the Southern Boulevard, to Meade's house in West Farms, with a heart like that?"

"I shouldn't think so."

"But he did," insisted the pretty girl with the brown eyes. "Or else he got a ride with somebody. That would account for Fred not seeing him."

"Well, we'll have to let the magistrate thrash it out," I announced. "We'll let Burnell and Willington go in the wagon and we'll take Mrs. Burnell down in the car."

This was done. The program suited her very well, and we took good care she did not see her young husband getting into the Black Maria.

The magistrate was disposing of some common drunks and a few cases of domestic trouble, and we waited. The district attorney's office had been notified, and two officers were out with subpœnas to round up the witnesses whose names had been given. Soon there was an assembling of the talent in the case, and among them all Mrs. Fred Burnell sat calm, collected, determined.

As Burnell had been first arrested he was examined in the preliminary proceedings first. I told the entire story as I have told it here. Maline told his, and corroborated me.

Then Mrs. Willington was examined by the magistrate and gave a straight story, but fainted when it was over. Mr. Meade had his little say. Burnell swore he had done just what he told Maline and me.

Willington stuck to his story of a walk to Westchester and a chat with a friend in Van Nest, and the friend was present and swore that Willington had told the truth. Mr. Burnell was there and testified to the good character of his son, and then Mrs. Fred took the thread of the mystery in her own hands.

"Mr. Judge, I've told the truth," she said. "I shot that man."

Then she went over the story again and didn't vary a hairbreadth from what she told the lieutenant and me. In a clear, sweet voice she had that magistrate hypnotized in no time. He looked into her brown eyes, and he drank in every word she fired at him.

"The only thing that seems irrefutable," he declared, when she finished, "is that the man is really dead. Burnell, how long did it take you to reach Mr. Meade's house after leaving your wife—there on the front stoop?"

"About fifteen or twenty minutes," answered Burnell. "I knew she would come along later, and I walked around several blocks on the way."

"What was your idea in that? To kill time?"

"N—no, not entirely," answered Burnell, turning red. "I knew Winnie and I would have to live somewhere, and we wanted a place by ourselves, and I was looking at—"

"What?"

"Houses for sale."

"Had you and Bengby ever quarreled?"

"Never. I had seen him but once."

"At the party where he tried to flirt with your sweetheart? Were you angry?"

"Not at all. Judge, I go fishing. If I had the finest trout on my hook, good and hard, would I care if the other fellows cast their green, artificial flies at it?"

The magistrate put his hand over his mouth.

The coroner's physician testified that in his opinion the wound was made by a .22, but it was impossible to be certain. In the case of a strong and muscular man there would be a contraction of the muscular tissue around the wound.

"This is no ordinary case," said the magistrate. "It is one in which I feel reluctant to use any other authority than to hold all the parties to the crime thus far arrested, without bail. I confess, in view of the fact that two reliable officers of police actually *saw* a fight in Bengby's room, I place little credence in the young wife's story. You see that she makes out a case which would, even if accepted, set her free, as what she says she did would be justifiable homicide.

"I shall accept no bail, but hold all three for the result of the coroner's inquest, and the action of the grand jury."

The scene that followed was pathetic. Mrs. Willington threw her arms around her husband's neck and wept bitterly.

"Oh, can you ever forgive me?" she moaned.

"Oh, cheer up, kiddie," he said. "This will all come out straight. You were doing what you thought was right."

Anyway the testimony of Mrs. Fred Burnell had reunited two hearts that seemed bound to split asunder.

Then Mrs. Fred Burnell hugged and kissed her husband, and she said that she told nothing but the truth.

Fred looked puzzled. Everybody looked puzzled. There was still the .32 revolver to be accounted for.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WAY OF IT.

I WAS still on the job, and just as much puzzled as ever. In fact, I was more puzzled than I had been at any time since I had witnessed the fight between the two men on the third floor of Meade's house.

I was also keenly eager to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion, and no conclusion then in sight could possibly be satisfactory.

I pondered over the mysterious case all the way back to the Tremont police station. The lieutenant had a few other matters to claim his attention. Then he must return to his own home and get some sleep. I knew I would not see him until he took the desk for the night.

I went through the street in which Meade's house was situated, made inquiries here and there—in grocery-stores, liquor-stores, butcher-shops, every place I found where information could be possibly expected concerning people who had lived in the neighborhood only a few months.

And I gained little information. Had I made the same inquiries before the tragedy occurred in Meade's house I probably would have learned that none of the persons involved were known at all. But the newspaper reports had stirred public interest, and everybody was anxious to have it known that he was acquainted with Willington, Gainette, or Bengby, and had seen Fred Burnell and Winnie Carne together many times.

I was accustomed to this universal brushing up of memories. It takes place invariably after a tragedy, no matter where it may happen.

I had learned that seventy-five per cent of the information thus obtained can be thrown away as the result of stimulated imagination, and the other twenty-five per cent is not worth talking about. I learned that Willington was a quiet gentleman, always took a train on the Subway at West Farms at about the same time each morning, and arrived there at about the same moment each afternoon. He was not a drinking man as a rule, but he had been known to stop in and have a glass of beer.

Mrs. Willington was well known at a grocery-store and a butcher-shop. She was a shrewd purchaser, always wanted the best and knew when she got it, and always paid cash. The tradesmen with whom she dealt were unanimous in describing her as a nice, quiet, modest little lady.

The man known as Gainette drank more than Willington. They had never been seen together, and there seemed to be a great difference in the mental caliber of the two men. It was evident that Gainette was no favorite.

"He seldom spoke to anybody," said one man behind a bar. "He seemed to have no friend except Mrs. Willington. Some of us thought it was rather queer, but now, of course, that is no mystery."

Nobody knew anything about Fred Burnell except that he was a fine-looking young fellow, always well-dressed, and evidently much in love with "Carne's pretty girl."

All this not only failed to assist me in fastening the crime on any of the three now in custody, but weakened every argument that could be brought to bear showing any of the three to be the murderer.

I was glad when I saw the lieutenant behind the desk.

"Anything new, Tuller?" he asked.

"No. Taking the few words I have heard regarding Willington and his wife and Fred Burnell I might have been hunting for a lost scarf-pin in a Sunday-school. There isn't the slightest taint of wrong living attached to anybody in the case except Bengby, and he's dead."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going here in the retiring-room and make a summary."

"Sit down here and make it."

I sat down with him at his desk.

After writing for a time I leaned back in the chair with a grunt.

"Got it finished?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes."

"Get a line on anything?"

"Worse and worse."

"Read it."

Anybody who reads the accounts in the daily papers of great mysteries in New York knows what a summary is. In a paper it is usually headed "What is really known in the ——— case."

"Well," I said, "to begin.

"Gilbert Bengby, alias Gilbert Gainette, is known to have had a fight with a man in his own room. Undeniable."

The lieutenant nodded.

"Bengby's opponent was seen to draw a pistol and shoot. Officer Maline and Detective Tuller rush to scene and find Fred Burnell with .32 caliber revolver, in dead man's room."

The lieutenant nodded again.

"Mrs. Willington confesses that Bengby was her brother and she was protecting him from the law for a crime committed in Boston. She accuses Willington. Willington and Burnell arrested. Burnell had married Winnie Carne, who claims she shot Bengby as he was committing burglary in her house. Question whether the wound from which Bengby died was inflicted by a .22 or .32 caliber revolver. Two .22's and one .32 now in the hands of the district attorney. Bullet from a .32 found embedded in the plaster of wall. Bullet of .22 admittedly fired by Winnie Carne not found."

"Did you search?" asked the lieutenant.

"Yes. I have just come from Carne's house. The shooting was done in the dining-room. There is a good deal of glass there. The sideboard or buffet has a large mirror. Then there is considerable glassware on a shelf above it. There is also a fine glass and china closet, the sides bowed glass, the front a large, flat glass door. The shelves are glass. In this there is some fine china and a few cut-glass dishes.

"There is also a wall mirror at one side of the room. There are three windows—two on the west side of the house opening into a narrow yard, and the third at the rear of the room facing the back, in the angle formed by the dining-room and the kitchen extension which is on the east side of the house.

"There is not a crack nor a small puncture in any of this easily broken glass or chinaware. There is not a trace of any bullet in the woodwork or walls. The ceiling is perfectly clear, being newly decorated.

"The floor is covered by a rug. I felt over every inch of this with my hands, but found no bullet. I took it up and moved all the furniture in the room. The floor is of hardwood and shows no scratch or hole made by a bullet."

"What is your deduction, then?"

"That Mrs. Fred Burnell has made up a neat story to protect her husband, or—"

"Or what?"

"She told the truth and if she did fire at Bengby she hit him.'

"Any blood?"

"No."

We sat there, the two most perplexed police officers in New York at that time. The captain called me into his room where I rehearsed all I had done. He was making out a report.

When I came from his room there was a thin, clerkly looking man standing at the desk.

"Here's a man wants to have a talk with you, Tuller," said the lieutenant. I turned to the stranger.

"My name," he began, "is Martin

Grattan. I live next door to William Meade. I wish you would come with me to my house."

"Discovered something?"

"I don't know. I'll let you decide that."

I accompanied Mr. Grattan. He led me through the side yard to the garden in the rear.

"Now, you see," said Grattan, "there is Meade's house. Between his yard and mine there is that high, tight board fence.

"It was an ordinary tight board fence, the boards running perpendicularly, and needing paint.

"Now, come here."

He pointed with his finger.

Along the fence, about two feet from the top, was a row of old nails driven but a short distance into the fence. These he told me had been put in the fence the previous summer to tie strings on as a support to some vegetable-vines. On one of these nails was a fresh piece of cloth such as is used for men's clothing. It was a piece of Scotch plaid with a gold-colored thread running through it.

"And that," said Grattan.

Under the piece of cloth, about two feet from the fence, was a fresh indentation in the soil. It was the mark of the heel of a man's shoe, showing that he wore a well-known make of rubber heel in which the punctures for screws shows plainly.

"This is a valuable clue," I exclaimed, taking the piece of cloth. "It seems now I want to find a man who wears rubber heels and lacks this piece of cloth from his coat or trousers."

But time had given the fellow ample chance to get away from New York if he wished. And, after all, an exchange of shoes and clothes would make the clue I possessed perfectly useless.

I took a trip through parts of New York where thieves congregate, and about two o'clock turned up at headquarters.

"Where's the chief?" I asked one of the detectives present.

"Private room. Consultation. Somebody from Boston."

"Boston!"

Somehow the name struck me with force. Yet almost every day there were consultations with people from Boston. But Bengby had come to New York from Boston.

The private telephone rang. The lieutenant who had relieved the chief took up the receiver. The captain was speaking from his private room. I was near enough to catch the words.

"Telephone to the Tremont station and have Tuller come down here."

"He is here now."

"Send him in."

I walked into the private room. A police officer in one large city can usually tell a police officer from another large city. I knew the man with the captain was a Boston detective.

He was introduced by the chief.

"I am after a man named Bill Henter," he said. "He was at one time a pal of Bengby, who was known in Boston as Bengby, his right name, but who took the name Gainette when he came to New York.

"This Henter is a bad egg all the way through. He is wanted on several charges, and now I think you can add murder to it."

"You think he killed Bengby?"

"I am almost sure of it. The police department in Boston is now in possession of a letter from Bengby. It was in its way a confession, but the leadership in several crimes the two committed together was laid on Henter. In some way the crooks got wind of this letter and Henter left Boston. I traced him far enough to be sure he came to New York. His probable motive was to silence Bengby. Bengby promised to turn State's evidence if we promised him immunity for his sister's sake."

"Do you know what sort of clothing Henter wore?" I asked.

"Yes. He wore when he left Boston a Scotch plaid suit, rather showy, and with a gold thread running through it, these threads being about an inch apart. He also was addicted to rubber heels."

"There's a piece of his coat," I said, handing over the piece I had taken from Grattan's nail. "And the imprint of the rubber heel is in the ground near the fence this hung on, next door to the house in which Bengby was killed."

"That's the man," cried the Boston detective. "He has punished Bengby at last."

The chief now got busy, and a general alarm was sent out with a full description of Henter obtained from the Boston officer.

New York never had such a scouring. The beauty of Winnie, the reconciliation of the Willingtons, Winnie's confession, and Burnell's love and romantic marriage had made the whole city deeply interested in the outcome.

At eight o'clock the next morning—or that morning rather—a crestfallen, down-cast fellow was hauled before the chief. It was Henter.

"You've got me, Rotter," he said to the Boston detective, "but I guess they want me worse in New York. The jig's up. I shot Gainette or Gil Bengby. No use denying that now."

"Tell us all about it."

"I knew you had a letter from him. I knew he was going to turn on me, and my rage got the best of me. I came here and lay around a day or so watching before I had a chance. I saw Meade leave his house and I saw the woman—Mrs. Willington, leave in the morning. But Willington didn't leave until four o'clock. I noticed that he absent-mindedly left the front door ajar. I crept inside, but the inner doors were locked. I knew Bengby was out. I had left the front door ajar just as I had found it. I waited in a dark hallway, and heard him come in. I went in his room almost as soon as he did.

"The meeting wasn't very friendly, you can bet. We quarreled, then we clinched, and I pulled my gun and fired. It was a .32. Just as I fired I heard somebody yell in the lower hall and a man came rushing up-stairs. Bengby fell, and I hid in the back. Then when a young fellow came in I went down-stairs, out the back door, and jumped a fence. I got away. I don't know how you found me."

"You left part of your clothing. Here it is. And you also dropped your revolver."

"I did that when I ran, and couldn't go back after it. I only fired once. I had used one bullet before. There were three good cartridges."

Everything tallied so well. This cleared Willington, and Burnell, who, of course, was the fellow Henter had heard rushing up-stairs. Burnell's story was completely corroborated.

But what about that yarn Winnie had told? She certainly was a fine romancer.

I went at once to the district attorney's office. After I had reported the confession of Henter, the assistant district attorney in charge said that the three persons previously arrested would be set free at once.

"The man was shot with a .32," I said. Let me see the .22 I gave you—the one I got from Winnie Burnell."

He took it from some receptacle, devoted to the exhibits in the case. I had not given it a thorough examination.

The cylinder held four good cartridges. One of the five bullets had been discharged.

I "broke" the pistol, and in an effort to judge if the little weapon had been fired since it had been cleaned and oiled, I made an attempt to look through the barrel.

I couldn't. It was plugged. I seized a long lead-pencil and rammed it. Out came the bullet.

"See that?" I said. "Winnie Burnell *did* fire at Bengby. The bullet jammed. Bengby's own excitement must have frightened him into thinking he was shot. So that lets *her* out."

"What's the use fussing any more?" remarked the assistant district attorney. "Bengby was shot by a .32. It was Henter's .32. Bengby is dead, and you've got Henter. The others will be at liberty in half an hour."

And they were.

To me the most satisfactory part of the whole thing was that Willington and his wife were completely reconciled, and are now happy. Winnie and her father got together. Fred's father shoveled money as a stoker does coal, and now Mr. and Mrs. Fred Burnell are happy in their own home.

As I said in the beginning, the life of a New York detective is not a merry one. But in such cases as the Bengby mystery we do see shining among the black clouds of crime and mystery once in a while the bright sunshine of innocence and beauty resplendent after a temporary shadow.

THE END.

Algernon, of the Kind Heart.

BY FORREST HALSEY.

A Sunday Experience that Began with Sympathy for Misfortune and Led to the Station-House.

HE was a kind-hearted young man. That was his trouble.

As a boy, when the Italian's apple-cart had upset, he, with the rest of the fellows, had grabbed some of the rolling fruit and hastened away.

But, as he ran, the thought came to him how hard it was for the poor Italian to lose his apples, and how mean he was to take advantage of the man's misfortune.

So he had turned back, nobly intending to restore the fruit, but before he could do so the Italian had taken it from him and given him an awful kick.

When he grew up and went to parties, he felt sorry for the homely, deserted girls with whom nobody would dance, so he danced with them because he was kind-hearted.

The homely girls would hasten home, make chocolate with whipped cream, and, putting on their best clothes, sit in the parlor waiting for him to call; because they were sure he was in love with them.

He did not call, and the homely girls shed tears, and their little brothers ate the whipped cream, and their mothers said nasty things about him at sewing societies, and he got the reputation of being a callous brute; but he went on being kind-hearted.

His name was Algernon. His mother had given him that name because his father wanted him to be called Peter, and she thought his Uncle Algernon might leave him some money. But his Uncle Algernon, who was extremely proud of this name, heard how young Algernon had treated poor Eliza Bitter, and not only cut him out of his will, but would not speak to him when they chanced to meet.

"Because a girl is homely," wrote Uncle Algernon, "is all the more reason why a gentleman should treat her with kindness. Her mother informs me that you have behaved like a heartless scoundrel; so never speak to me again. You are not worthy of the name of Algernon G. Betts."

When Algernon G. Betts, Jr., received this letter, he was very much cut up about it. He was kind-hearted, and he loved his uncle. It hurt him to learn that his uncle thought badly of him. Also, he had counted on his uncle's help in getting a new cleaner he had invented patented.

He had called this invention the Algernon G. Betts Cleaner, because he hoped that his uncle's pride would be touched, and that he would loan him the hundred dollars he needed to complete and patent his invention. But now that hope was gone.

Algernon received only eighteen dollars a week, and it takes a long time to save a hundred dollars out of that small salary, especially as the firm for which he worked took pride in employing only elegantly dressed clerks.

Long before he could save that amount other cleaners would be upon the market, and all hopes for the Algernon G. Betts Cleaner would be gone. The invention was the pride of Algernon's heart, and thoughts sad and bitter thronged his mind as he paced through the deserted park on his early Sunday morning walk.

It was bitterly cold. The river shone like steel through the bare trees. The walks were empty and wind-swept.

Where could he get that hundred?

And what, oh, what, had made Eliza Bitter imagine that he was paying her serious attention just because he had taken her out for every dance at the church sociable? If he had not done so, the girl would have remained a wall-flower.

Oh, how could he get that money?

Call on Uncle Algernon? He shivered at the mere thought.

Were there any others he could go to for a loan? The cleaner was sure to make money for him.

Men on small salaries could keep their clothes nice and fresh by just a few minutes' work at night with it. It was just the thing for the hall-room man.

But how could he convince any one of this if he could not show the cleaner? And how could he show the cleaner without the hundred dollars to pay for its patenting?

Algernon groaned and walked faster.

Suddenly the cry of a child arrested him. A little boy, very nicely dressed, was sobbing bitterly a few steps away.

Algernon's kind heart prompted him to hasten to the child.

"What's the matter, little man?" he asked.

The youngster looked up, and, seeing the benevolent beam in the other's eye, stifled his sobs.

"A feller came along and stole my dog," he explained.

"Where is he?" demanded the young man.

"Went that way." The child pointed down a side-path.

The kind-hearted one was off in an instant. He dashed around a turn in the path, and saw a rough-looking fellow leading a wire-haired terrier.

At the sound of pursuing steps, the fellow began to run. Algernon ran also. He was athletic, and soon came alongside of the tough, who looked at him in surprise.

"Give me that dog, you scoundrel!" cried Algernon, grasping the other's arm.

"Nix on that!" returned the tough.

They paused and faced each other.

"What do you mean by stealing that dog from the little boy?" demanded the angry Algernon.

"It's a lie!" shouted the other. "It's my dog."

Algernon cast a glance over the other's torn clothes and dirty face, then looked at the aristocratic terrier with its carved silver collar.

"Give up that dog! You're caught!" he cried.

"I tell you, it's my dog, yuh mutt!" exclaimed the other.

"You thief!" returned Algernon, glaring through his glasses.

All his troubles had driven away his accustomed good nature, and he was mad clear through at being called a "mutt" by a thief who stole dogs from children.

"Yuh can't work dat bluff wit' me!" shouted the thief. "Gwan, or I'll break every pane of glass in yer head!"

Algernon had lived a quiet life; but that life had included boxing at the Young Men's Christian Association. With one hand he removed his glasses; with the other he smote the thief. That fight was his first; but the tremendous exhilaration of finding that he could handle himself and hurt some one raised the every-day Algernon into another being. At last, when he saw the tough running from him, he could not realize that he had conquered.

Then, with the realization, came the most perfect moment of his life. He felt himself a god. He tasted the battle joy—and then—

A fierce pain shot through his leg.

He uttered a loud yell and jumped, but the terrier still clung to him. A second jump, and another yell. The terrier hung on.

Then Algernon bent down and tore the dog loose. The terrier struggled and growled. Algernon was afraid to release him. but held on tightly by the scruff of the dog's neck. The growls and yelps grew terrific.

"Let go that dog at once, brute!" cried an indignant voice.

And a portly woman, evidently on her way home from church, advanced toward him.

"How dare you treat a poor animal like that? Release him at once, you scoundrel!" she insisted.

Other churchgoers came up. Algernon became the center of an indignant crowd, who drowned his protests in angry cries.

"Are you going to release that dog?" repeated the woman.

"No!" cried the kind-hearted youth furiously.

The dog struggled, yelped, and growled some more.

A huge matron pushed forward, waving her umbrella.

"Let that dog go, or I'll hit you," she threatened.

"Why, he'll bite me if I do," protested Algernon.

"It would serve you right for abusing the poor creature," said the first woman.

"I wish all animals would bite when brutes abuse them," put in another.

"Listen a minute, can't you?" begged Algernon pitifully.

There came a louder yelp from the dog.

Whack! came the umbrella over the kind-hearted man's shoulders. *Whack! Whack!*

"Quit! Stop! I tell you, he'll bite me if I let him go!" cried Algernon, whirling about.

The dog yelped, the women screamed, and the umbrella descended resoundingly.

"He stole my dog," bawled a shrill voice, as the child came crying up to the group. "I want my dog."

"Give the child his dog," shouted the crowd.

The dog was torn rudely from him and handed over to the child.

The huge woman ceased to beat Algernon, but she still threatened him, while the angry crowd hedged him in.

"You sha'n't escape," she said angrily. "My husband has gone for a policeman."

And the thin woman added: "The idea of stealing a dog from a little child!"

Just then a familiar voice cried out hoarsely:

"Dere's de crook dat stole my dog. I want him pinched."

Algernon stood in dazed amazement as the thief who had robbed the child shouldered his way through the crowd, followed by a policeman.

The officer grasped the arm of the kind-hearted one in an iron clutch.

"Here, you—come on down to the station-house," he commanded.

Algernon turned to him in relief.

"I am glad you have come," he said. "I took the dog from this man, who had stolen it from this child here."

"Come on." The officer began to shake and drag him. "A likely story, that," he went on. "He's brought that dog into the park every day for three months. His business is exercising dogs for the swells on the avenue. Come with me, or I'll let daylight into your brain."

"He knocked me out and swiped de dog," explained the dog-exerciser. "It's Mr. Mason Willings's two-t'ousand-dollar turrier dat's been stole fer de last week. De pup knowed me and run up to me de minit he see me. Dere was a kid pattin' it, but I tuk it along. Den dis guy ran after me and soaked me and tuk it away."

"And abused the poor animal shamefully, officer," added the large woman. "Here is my card. I will appear against him in court if necessary. I am a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals."

"But the child told me that the dog was stolen from him," protested Algernon. "Where is the child?" He looked wildly about him, but there was no small boy to be seen.

"Trying to implicate a little child," sneered another woman in the crowd contemptuously.

Without a word the officer dragged Algernon away, followed by a mob, to whom the dog-exerciser explained the crime as they proceeded.

To the suffering youth in the grasp of the law it seemed that he walked miles through walls of eyes—curious eyes, cynical eyes, cruelly amused eyes, contemptuous eyes—but never a glance of kindness for the dust-covered, blood-stained criminal who was being pushed along to his doom.

The doors of the station-house were a welcome relief, for they shut out the battery of stares.

But inside, locked in his cell, the full horror of his situation grew and grew upon him until it was only by clenching his fists and pacing the narrow path between the board couch and the stone wall that he could prevent himself from crying aloud.

He had refused to give his name—the sacred name of Algernon G. Betts must be saved from disgrace — so a heartless sergeant had entered him on the book as Mike Moke.

His best clothes were all soiled and blood-stained from his fight; his new derby was crushed and mashed by the umbrella of the friend of the animals; he looked as if his name might well be Mike Moke.

What could he do? If his name got in the papers, farewell to his job; farewell to all hopes of relenting on the part of Algernon G. Betts, Sr. What could he do?

He asked himself this question through all the long, slow hours of Sunday. The guttering gas-jets in the dim corridor

were lit, and still he asked himself what could he do.

He swore never to be kind-hearted again.

Some faint comfort came with the fall of night—the hope that the dog-exerciser would not appear against him. He clung to this hope as he joined the motley crowd that waited for the patrol-wagon: he nursed it as, crammed between a bibulous gentleman and a pedler who had peddled without a license, he was jolted through the coldly lighted streets; he nursed it as he stood, jammed in by policemen and prisoners, in the hot, gas-lit corridor which led to the night court.

A particularly severe magistrate was sitting that night, and a continuous line of sullen prisoners trickled back from the court through the unsentenced throng toward the waiting patrol-wagons. At last, with the slowly advancing stream of victims, Algernon entered the court-room.

Oh, if only the dog-exerciser would not appear!

He scanned the wire netting which separated the prisoners from the witnesses, and his heart sank.

Right in the front row against the netting, one eye swathed in bandages, the other fixed viciously upon him, stood the dog-exerciser.

Algernon's heart sank into his boots, then leaped into his throat and stayed there.

He was pushed forward like a sheep to the slaughter.

He had not heard the white-mustached court officer shout "Mike Moke!" In fact, he did not know his name had been called until he heard the dog-exerciser begin to testify.

"Yes, yer honor," began that individual, "about a week ago I was exercisin' Mr. Mason Willings's wire-haired prize-winner, Gentle Joy, when this young feller come along and asked me about him."

"It's a lie!" cried the astounded Algernon.

The judge rapped sharply.

"Hold your tongue, prisoner!" he commanded.

The witness grinned broadly and continued:

"Anudder dog I had wid me slipped his leash and run away. I asked de prisoner here to hold Gentle Joy until I got de pup.

"He said he would. When I got back he had beat it, and dat was de last I seen of Gentle Joy until I see a kid pattin' him dis mornin' in de park.

"When I takes de dog and begins to run to give him exercise, up comes dis mutt—I means dis prisoner—and bums me lamp.

"Den he takes de dog away from me. I goes and gets a cop, and, when I come back, he was chokin' de life outen de poor pup, and a lady was handin' it to 'im fer doin' it."

Algernon was so staggered by this testimony that, for a moment, he almost believed he was the desperate criminal who had really stolen Gentle Joy. Then something in the one venomous eye that the dog-exerciser turned on him convinced him that the man had determined to make him pay dearly for his victory over him in the morning.

"It's a lie, judge!" he cried.

"Is that all you have to remark?" inquired the magistrate.

His tone froze Algernon's marrow.

He stammered a few words, but the judge turned a black-silk covered shoulder toward him, and Algernon believed that his doom was sealed.

"Who is the owner of the dog?" inquired the judge. "That must be proved here."

A gentleman stood up.

"I am the owner," he said. "My name is Mason Willings."

The judge smiled at him and bowed.

Mr. Willings was known the city over.

"Do you hear, prisoner?" said the judge.

"One moment, your honor! May I speak?"

A man of middle age advanced to the bar.

"Are you a witness?" queried the magistrate.

"Yes, sir," replied the man. "It was my little boy who was with the dog this morning. When he returned home without him, I went to the park and made inquiries of a policeman, who told me that a young man had been arrested for stealing the dog.

"This man" he pointed to the dog-exerciser—"says that the prisoner stole

the dog a week ago. One week ago I was in the park with my little boy, and I saw a man come along with several dogs.

"He was such a rough-looking character that I thought he had the dogs for sale; so I stopped him and asked him if it were so. He said it was, and I bought the dog they call Gentle Joy from him for twenty dollars.

"I gave the dog to my little boy, and"—he again pointed to the dog-exerciser—"that was the man who sold it to me."

Ten minutes later, as Algernon stood outside the court-house, shaking the hand of his rescuer, a gentleman accosted them.

"I am Mr. Mason Willings," he said, "and it is through you, gentlemen, that I recovered my dog. I have offered a reward. To whom am I to pay it?"

Algernon's friend drew himself up haughtily.

"Sir," he said, "I did not restore your dog to you. It was this young man who, out of the kindness of his heart, tried to recover it for my little boy."

"In that case," said Mr. Mason Willings, turning to Algernon, "I must pay the reward to you, young man. Come to my office to-morrow and I will give you a check for one hundred dollars."

IN THE WRONG SHOES.*

BY GARRET SMITH,

Author of "On the Brink of 2000," "Riches Thrust Upon Him," "A Peck of Trouble," etc.

What Came of a Friendly Attempt to Smooth the Path for a Railway Seat-Mate Temporarily Incapable of Looking Out Satisfactorily for Himself.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Morris Appleby, just appointed head-chemist for the United Wood Pulp Company, is starting out to spend a two weeks' vacation with his friends, the Powells, at Hampton Lake, before entering on his new duties. The only vacant seat in the train is next to a young man rather the worse for liquor, who becomes unpleasantly chummy with Appleby, tells him that he is David Grant, from Horton, on his way to teach school in Milton Center. He even shows him the picture of a pretty girl, explaining that she is Eloise Donnell, to whom he has been engaged for a long time. He is about to tell more, when the brakeman calls out "Milton." Appleby precedes Grant with his bag, thrusting the photograph into his own pocket. But Grant, too fuddled to care, remains on the cars, leaving Morris, with Grant's luggage and the picture, on the platform. There is no other train that night.

Pitying the girl, and eager to save her the humiliation of having her fiancé's condition exposed, Appleby resolves not to correct at once the mistake of being taken for the new school principal when the stage-driver deposits him at David Graham's house in Milton Center, where he is evidently expected. Here there is a sort of reception, and, half for the adventure of the thing, Morris suffers the masquerade to continue, feeling that it will give the real David Grant time to sober up, although he is made rather uncomfortable by the piercing black eyes of a Miss Mercer, who is introduced as one of his assistant teachers.

He gets up early the next morning and starts to walk to the station, thinking to escape from the predicament. He is reflecting what fun he will have telling of his experience at the Powells', when he falls in with Miss Mercer, under whose guidance his walk is continued, bringing him at last, not to the station, but to the school building, where he finds Mr. Kennedy, the school commissioner for the district, also Mr. Graham, by whom he is half dragged, with shaking knees, out upon the platform before the assembled pupils.

CHAPTER V.

BURNING BRIDGES BEHIND HIM.

THE Milton Center school was large out of all proportion to the size of that modest little town. It was the only high school within a radius of ten miles. It had established a reputation for itself, and drew pupils from a half dozen small towns around.

There were some three hundred scholars in the school; and to Morris, as he

* *Began March* Argosy. *Single copies,* 10 *cents.*

looked at them through swimming eyes, there seemed to be at least three thousand. There were little youngsters from the primary, girls with beribboned pigtails, and barefoot boys. There were big country boys who had driven in from the farm; young village dandies, who viewed the whole affair with an air of condescension, and high-school girls of the senior class, many of the pupils nearly as old as their supposed principal.

They were singing their morning hymn under the leadership of the preceptress as Morris and his two inquisitors entered the room. A moment later the singing ceased, and Mr. Graham arose and looked expectantly at the helpless Appleby.

He realized then that his time had come. It seemed to him, as he was pushed forward on the platform, before that sea of upturned, curious faces, that he was looking down into the infernal pit, from which grinned the countenances of thousands upon thousands of little imps.

As in a dream, he heard a burst of eloquent introduction from Mr. Graham. He dimly noted phrases of eulogy, quoted by the speaker from the unknown Bronson, in recommendation of the absent but much-longed-for David Grant.

"Some of the board seemed to think we was a little hasty about hiring a man we'd never seen," wound up the introduction; "but now we've seen him, and we're satisfied. I leave it to you boys and girls to find out we ain't made any mistake."

The sound of Graham's droning, nasal tone died away, and Morris rather felt than heard or saw that the president had resumed his seat and that he was standing there alone.

A speech was expected from him. He found himself trying to make some preliminary sound, tuning up as it were. His throat felt as if an ancient spider had been industriously spinning webs therein since the days of Cheops.

He remembered the tale he had once read—a merry little bit of literature—entitled, "Confessions of an Executed Criminal." Morris now seemed to be standing on the death-trap, with the eager populace waiting for him to be strung up.

The sensation of having a rope about his neck was so real that he involuntarily ran his fingers within his collar, which was rapidly wilting under an outpouring of nervous perspiration.

In the story, the hoof-beats of a horseman bearing a pardon from the Governor were heard coming down the road just before the trap was sprung. In the present instance, after the strenuous handclapping of the three hundred pupils had died away, the condemned criminal stood rigidly on the platform in tense silence, listening for the footsteps of his expected rescuer, who could be no other than the belated David Grant.

He pictured the possibility of that person arriving at this dramatic moment, and he came to the conclusion that the only thing he could do in such an event would be to make a grand dash down the stairway and break all previous Marathon records for Milton Station.

But no footsteps of a rescuer smote the quiet air. The low rumble of the flour-mill in the distance came through the open windows. From a tree in the school-yard sang the dreamy, monotonous rasp of a locust.

Appleby felt as if he had been standing there already for at least an hour. Why not confess before he got in any deeper, and have it over with?

But how could he excuse himself now? He had just told the school commissioner that he was David Grant. Then think of the excitement it would cause in the school! Besides, he'd keep on the lookout for the real Grant, who might still arrive some time during the forenoon, and there was still a chance to see him and fix up their mutual story.

Besides, to confess now would mean a public avowal of the fact that the man who was really their principal had been delayed by a drunken spree. Appleby had gone through all this trouble to prevent the village finding that out. He'd stick it out a little longer.

Then, as if some good fairy had taken possession of his senses and guided his tongue, Morris suddenly found himself talking he hardly knew what, but he could see that his words were being well received; and, apparently, he was not making too much of a mess of it.

He could only recall afterward telling

an utterly irrelevant story supposed to be funny, at which everybody laughed kindly. Then he had assured them three or four times how glad he was to be there, told them what a fine fellow his predecessor was, and wound up by saying he hoped they'd find him just as satisfactory.

At length the apparently interminable exercises were over, and the involuntary masquerader watched the pupils file out. Through every one of those painful moments he kept rolling his eyes incessantly toward the hall door, expecting to see his seat-mate of the train step in and claim his own.

He wondered how Grant would look when sober. But so firmly had the face of Grant drunk been seared into his memory that to picture him otherwise proved too much for his imagination.

Horrors! What if the fellow should come back still intoxicated! Morris determined that he must get out, at all hazards, and meet that stage which was due about ten o'clock.

After a few well-meant compliments, the miller returned to his flour, and Appleby was left with the commissioner and preceptress. Now was the time to act.

"Miss Mercer," he began, "I'll let you manage things to-day just as you did yesterday, and I'll spend the time getting my bearings, watching the glasses, and running over the records. Commissioner Kennedy, I'll leave you in Miss Mercer's care for a few minutes, if you'll excuse me. I must meet the stage, as I expect it has some of my belated baggage aboard."

"Don't you mind me," roared the commissioner. "I'm a lot more at home here than you are."

A few minutes later, Morris was in his room at his boarding-house, which happened to face on the street, watching eagerly for the stage. Soon it came rattling along. There were two men aboard who looked as though they might be commercial travelers. There was no one, though, who, by the wildest stretch of imagination, appeared in the least like David Grant, either drunk or sober.

What could have become of Grant? That was the question that now began to harry Appleby's soul. Could he still be immersed in that splendidly developed case of intoxication? Perhaps that was only the beginning of a protracted spree.

Then, possibly, the man had arrived, and was coming by livery, instead of by stage. Morris waited for some time on this possibility, but at length gave it up.

Then he stood and debated a few moments longer whether to return to the schoolhouse and make an effort to bluff out the day, or simply disappear through the back lots, leaving as little trail behind him as possible. The dilemma which confronted him summed up as follows:

If he should flee without any explanation of his conduct, there would be a hue and cry. He would be caught, his imposture discovered, and he would undoubtedly suffer arrest and possible imprisonment.

On the other hand, suppose he did make a clean breast of it, he had irrevocably committed himself to the sham. His explanation would sound very feeble. In the end, he would probably be arrested anyhow. There was but one solution, and that based on a hope, which now, to Morris, began to look like a dubious one.

If Grant were still intoxicated, it might be some time yet before he would come to a realizing sense of the situation. Then he might be afraid to come back to Milton Center. If he should return within the day, and Appleby had an opportunity to see him in time, then the involuntary practical joker could escape quietly, leaving Grant to give an explanation and Milton Center to make the best of it.

So, on this dwindling hope the miserable Morris returned to the school building. He found Commissioner Kennedy just beginning a tour of the various departments, and he accompanied him.

He was rather relieved than otherwise that this was so. It freed him from immediately getting down to business, and demonstrating that he knew nothing about teaching, and also gave him an opportunity to ask the commissioner a great many questions about past conditions in the school, incidentally getting much information about the school business which might be of great help in case he had to act as a professional for a few hours longer.

He flattered himself that he had been very clever in these questions; and by the time he had gone the rounds of the various rooms, he thought that he was pretty well coached for action.

As they returned to the office, the commissioner, in the course of a dissertation on primary methods of teaching, made some uncomplimentary remarks about the present State system of public instruction. Morris, knowing as little of that particular State system as the average polar bear does about raising grapefruit, began to ask what he thought guarded questions.

In a moment he discovered that the commissioner was eying him with astonishment. Whereat Mr. Appleby became confused, and rapidly changed the subject. He did not realize until some weeks afterward that he was asking questions which had been thoroughly thrashed out by every teacher in the State for the last two years.

At the dinner-hour, Morris had expected to escape from his unwelcome guest, but as he left the building and turned to say a polite good-by to the commissioner, he found that functionary prepared to follow along with him. Mr. Kennedy did not stop at the village hotel, as Morris rather expected he would.

"Where are you boarding, Professor Grant?" he asked as they neared the Grahams'.

"Ah," he remarked, when Morris told him, "you have a very pleasant place. I congratulate you. I can testify that the meals are very good, for I went there several times to dinner with Professor Green, who was here two years ago."

That was sufficient notice for Appleby that Commissioner Kennedy expected, as a matter of course, to be invited to dinner. Morris acted accordingly, and endured another very unhappy hour.

The conversation turned upon personal topics during the meal, and several times Appleby found himself skating on a very narrow margin of safety in trying to remember what had already been told around town about the real Grant. They had nearly finished, and Morris was beginning to feel easy in his mind, when, in the course of an anecdote he was relating, he let slip the expression, "When I was at Yale."

"At Yale?" exclaimed Mr. Graham. "I thought you were a Colgate man."

Morris felt the blood rush to his face, and for a moment he could only choke and look at his inquisitor in speechless helplessness. Then he collected himself.

"Oh, to be sure!" he hurriedly exclaimed. "I am a Colgate man. I meant when I was visiting Yale I have a cousin who graduated in Yale, and I used to visit him frequently."

That closed the incident; but Morris had the feeling through the rest of the meal that his explanation had not been entirely satisfactory. Just as the board president was about to leave, he made a remark which thoroughly frightened Appleby, and made him more than ever regret his unfortunate slip of the tongue.

"By the way," said Mr. Graham, "we have a board meeting to-night at seven o'clock. It's customary for the principal to attend; and some of the board seem to think, just as a matter of form, that you ought to show us your diploma and other credentials. You know, you wrote you'd bring them along."

As Morris returned to the school, he couldn't help wondering whether it was "just a matter of form," or if there was lurking in the mind of the board president a vague suspicion. Could it be possible that his "enemy" the preceptress did, as he feared, harbor malicious suspicions, and perhaps mysterious knowledge? She might have dropped a hint in the ear of Mr. Graham.

Perhaps, however, Morris thought, with a return to optimism, the whole thing was merely his own overwrought imagination. A people gullible enough to take him on sight as principal of their school would not be overkeen in detecting such slight slips as had yet occurred in his conversation. Nevertheless, he could not help feeling that he was walking farther and farther into a trap, and, if he might be allowed to mix his figures of speech a little, burning his bridges behind him as he went.

CHAPTER VI.

BY SHEER NERVE.

THAT afternoon was one of supreme nervous strain for Appleby. Every mo-

ment a new problem had to be met, and each one complicated by Morris's absolute ignorance of his unwonted "profession" and the necessity of concealing that ignorance at any cost.

At each step he burned another bridge. Each small lie, some of them white, but most of them of the blackest sort, begot another lie, and he could see no end to the chain he was weaving about himself.

Appleby found a small mob of young ideas waiting in and around his office when he entered after dinner. His appearance was the signal for an onslaught.

"Professor Grant," announced a youngster from one of the rooms below, "Miss La Monte wants an order for some new boxes of chalk."

Morris picked up a piece of paper and pencil, willing to comply, but a little in doubt as to whether there was some particular formula that a well-trained pedagogue should use in such an emergency. He proceeded to write, however, boldly enough.

Then, suddenly, there came an awful thought. David Grant had written to the board of education probably in his own hand. Suppose he, Morris Appleby, should write in a hand that as little resembled the real David Grant's chirography as did the track of a common garden American hen the cuneiform inscriptions of the ancient Phœnicians? Mr. Grant's particular style of fist might have been seen already by several people in town.

Here was a bridge Appleby had seen just in time; and he not only would not burn it, but would not even cross it. He tore the page from the pad, and tossed it into the waste-basket.

"Why, of course," he said, "there must be blank forms here in the desk for orders. Just wait till Miss Mercer comes in; she will attend to that."

Morris turned resolutely to the next applicant, paying no attention to the small-voiced declaration of the chalk applicant that "there weren't no order-blanks. They just writes it on paper."

Then followed a bewildering whirl of requests. The real juvenile grievance, however, seemed to be that of a half-dozen girls of the senior class who felt that serious indignities and oppressions had been thrust upon them by the former principal in the assignment of study-room seats.

They were venturing to hope that the new principal was not possessed of the fiendish desire to torture his most prominent pupils unnecessarily.

The more Morris questioned them, the more he became convinced that, however he might settle the question, he would make a mortal enemy of at least one of the fair applicants.

At that moment the preceptress appeared upon the scene. Appleby looked up just in time to see a flickering gleam of amusement dying out of her eyes.

"I see you have already attacked the problem you suggested this morning when we went over the seating arrangements," she remarked lightly as she removed her hat before the little mirror.

The girls exchanged surprised glances. Was this new principal so quick, then, at observing evils and so ready to remedy them that he planned to give them relief before they asked it? They were no more surprised at this exhibition of foresight than its supposed author.

But the various shocks he had met in the last few hours had taught him to control his features. He only stared stupidly for an instant. Then it became apparent that he was being helped out of a hole.

"Yes," he assented, "it's a rather tough proposition, but—ah—"

"Yes, Professor Killup couldn't settle it; but your solution seems excellent. How do you like Professor Grant's library scheme, Lydia?" Miss Mercer inquired, turning to the most aggressive of the girls, who had insisted on sitting alone, and claimed a seat eagerly sought by two others.

"Library scheme!" repeated the girl blankly.

Morris wondered what his library scheme was.

"Oh! Haven't you told her yet, Professor Grant? Or maybe you have changed your mind. Don't mind me. I merely thought when you suggested it that I could help you more with the records if, as you propose, you made Miss Porter assistant in the library.

"You see, Lydia," she continued to the girl, "Professor Grant, when he looked

over your class record and saw your standing in literature, at once suggested your being made a sort of assistant librarian. He thought I had to spend too much time in there. You can study there alone during all your vacant periods, and help me a great deal besides. That will settle the seat problem, too."

During this explanation, Morris recovered his equanimity, and prepared to claim the brilliant scheme that had been thrust upon him.

"Yes," he said with an air of finality, "I think, after talking with the young ladies, that will be the best plan. Will you attend to the details, Miss Mercer?"

Morris, outwardly nonchalant, but really filled with conflicting emotions, turned to other petitioners. No sooner had he come to the conclusion that his preceptress was his mortal enemy than she turned around and did him a service.

"And she lied like a lady to do it, too," he told himself.

Then it occurred to him that perhaps the preceptress had been helping herself primarily rather than him, and merely using his need as a tool to attain her own ends. However much or little she knew or suspected of his real position, it was evident that as long as he stayed there, he would be under the thumb of the lady with the black eyes.

He had a feeling, too, that as long as he did her will there was a chance that she would use her resourcefulness to protect him. Yet, he could not help feeling more and more like the small end of a cat-and-mouse game. Nevertheless, his attractive preceptress was beginning to have a fascination for Morris Appleby which tended to some extent to temper the unpleasantness and lend zeal to his adventure.

At that moment the bell for the afternoon session rang, and he was left alone in the office. He immediately fell to planning how he could arrange his afternoon so as best to keep watch for Grant. He had about made up his mind to use the threadbare excuse of sudden illness. Then a better scheme occurred to him.

He scribbled off the following note:

> MY DEAR GRANT:
>
> I am the man you met on the train the other night. I am here holding your job down for you, and nobody is wise yet to what has happened. For some reason they take me for you. I am telling the bearer of this note that you are a cousin of mine by the same name.
>
> As soon as you get this, call up "Professor David Grant" at the high school in Milton Center. Do as I tell you, and we can fix it up all right, otherwise there will be an unholy muss. Yours,
>
> THE OTHER "D. G."

Morris placed this note in an envelope addressed to Mr. Grant, then around it he wrapped a note for the ticket-agent at Milton Station, describing the real David Grant, explaining that he was a cousin coming to visit him, and asking the agent to watch the train and give the note to the person described. Morris promised the agent a box of the best "city" cigars for his trouble.

He went down to the post-office where the stage started and delivered the note into the keeping of the old driver. He then returned to the schoolhouse breathing more freely, in the belief that all immediate danger had been headed off.

The "principal" spent the fore part of the afternoon watching the other teachers hear classes, as Miss Mercer suggested, "getting a line on his own work," which teachers in the high-school department had temporarily divided among themselves. He learned that the real Grant had specified by letter the subjects he would teach, and it had involved some shifting in the work of the preceptress and her associates.

To his amusement, Morris observed that the very subjects about which he knew absolutely nothing were the ones Grant had particularly selected. Chemistry, his own specialty, had been handed over by Grant to another teacher.

Appleby's amusement ceased suddenly, however, when Miss Mercer, in running over the program, just before the afternoon session, remarked:

"Here's Greek, the last division—Miss Carter, the assistant preceptress, was teaching that; but you specified it was your specialty, so she, of course, has given it up. I said you'd take that this afternoon, as there is no other work you will be interested in, and the poor girl was nearly scared to death at the idea of teaching the class before an expert."

The real Grant might be an expert in

Greek, but his unfortunate understudy, a scientific student, didn't so much as know the Greek alphabet, outside of the three letters that stood for his college fraternity.

"Why, I don't want to be insistent," he hastily exclaimed. "Maybe Miss Carter dotes on teaching Greek; I'll let her teach it. By all means, have her take it to-day. I won't even visit the class, if she is embarrassed."

"Oh," laughed the preceptress, "it's not so serious as that. I felt so sure you'd want that class this afternoon, after what you wrote the board about it, that I arranged with Miss Carter yesterday to take up elocution at that hour."

"Professor Grant," in a cold perspiration, was about to speak, when it occurred to him that he didn't know what he "wrote the board." So, to avoid further complications, he let it go at that, and began to wonder what he would do with the confounded class when he stood before it.

He would have enjoyed a nice, convenient shock of paralysis or apoplexy—anything violent and sudden that would remove him from the building. Unfortunately that relief was cut off now by the necessity of being on hand in case Grant should telephone from the station, as he had directed in his note.

Meantime he watched the different recitation-room clocks tick off the fatal minutes pending the arrival of that dreaded Greek-class hour, hoping against hope that he would get a call from Grant first.

He spent as little time as possible inspecting classes in unfamiliar subjects. He sat through the whole session in chemistry, however, and fancied he had made himself quite solid as a man of learning by practically taking the class out of the teacher's hands and leading it forthwith into a maze of formulas that made it gasp.

As he turned to the teacher afterward, however, his little bubble of vanity was suddenly pricked.

"Why, Professor Grant," she said, "the board told us you wrote them that you had never studied the sciences at all!"

"Why," gasped Morris, "why—I—I—didn't mean to imply that! I have a smattering of laboratory knowledge. I meant I had never taken it up from a pedagogical standpoint."

Then he tore himself away in confusion, and before he recovered he was surrounded by the terrors of that Greek class.

No call from Grant. What in the name of sense could he do? Suppose they asked questions? He had completely lost his presence of mind and helplessly watched the class file down to the front of the main room, where the recitation was to be heard.

He found himself utterly unable to devise a scheme to escape. Well, at the first embarrassing incident he simply would have to indulge in a coughing spell or nose-bleed or something equally hackneyed.

Then Miss Mercer, who had a vacant period, deliberately entered the study-room and stayed there, ostensibly assisting some of her old pupils with their work. Perhaps she was. Appleby could not help wondering, however, if she was not particularly interested in his method of teaching Greek.

"Where's the lesson to-day?" he began bravely, taking up the copy of "Anabasis"—the first time he had ever recalled having had the book in his hands. "I'm glad the confounded pages are numbered in good old United States," he reflected. "You may begin," he announced, indicating what he thought was the brightest-looking boy in the class.

"'And Cyrus—'" Then the boy stopped, helpless. "I couldn't find that word," he explained.

Alas! "Professor Grant," the "Greek expert," had never looked for the word in question; wouldn't have recognized it if he'd met it on the street in broad daylight.

"Who can tell him?" asked Appleby in despair.

A dozen hands rose.

"Well, you," he nodded to a girl in the front seat.

At her answer only half the hands dropped. There were dissenting groans. Here was a difference of opinion at the outset.

The "expert" must decide it.

Miss Mercer, in the back of the room, suddenly stood erect and looked at him.

Morris laughed hysterically.

"You remind me of a story they used to tell in college," he ran on, desperately wondering what the deuce the story was. Then, by special favor of his guardian spirit, he recalled some merry old college jest, and told it with elaborations that captured half the division. It had no connection with the matter in hand, but it proved highly entertaining to the class.

Then he recalled other incidents, and told them, and at length the period gradually wore away, till there were only some ten minutes left. His ingenuity was failing him, when suddenly there came a knock.

One of the pupils on the front seat, apparently a habitual monitor, went to the door and returned in a moment, saying:

"A young man wants to see you, Professor Grant."

As Morris rose, his blood ran cold at the thought that this might be Grant, who had arrived from the station in some way without getting his note. He felt himself almost reeling as he went out and closed the door behind him.

It turned out, however, to be only a messenger from the village store, with some school supplies. But Morris was so overcome with his reaction that he was forced to sink in a chair in the office and remain there for some moments, utterly unable to control himself sufficiently to reappear in the class-room. He stayed there till it was time for school to close, then returned and dismissed the class.

After the pupils had filed out of the building, Miss Mercer entered the office where Appleby had retreated, and found him making a pretense of going over the records.

He was wondering whether she had discovered what a thoroughgoing Greek humbug he was. Her first remark did not reassure him.

"The class and you seemed to enjoy the Greek recitation greatly," she observed.

He dared not look her in the eye to see if she was making game of him. She stooped and opened a drawer in the bottom of the desk.

"By the way, here is a book that Professor Killup took away from one of the pupils. You may be interested to know that such things are around. Of course, you can have no use for it yourself."

Morris took the book, and discovered that it was a literal translation of the Anabasis.

He was saved from further remarks on this embarrassing subject by the entrance of Miss Lydia, the girl whom he had appointed assistant librarian that afternoon. In her hand was an old-fashioned autograph album—a thing that was still in vogue in some of the country villages.

"Miss Mercer," she asked shyly, "you haven't written in my album yet, have you?"

"No, I haven't," replied the preceptress, taking the book from her, and, after a moment's thought, writing one of the customary bits of verse used on such occasions and signing her name. "I think Professor Grant ought to be invited, too," she said.

Morris started visibly. It looked as though he were going to be committed to an exhibition of penmanship, after all.

There seemed to be no way out of it, however, so he took the book. Miss Mercer had picked up another volume from the desk and stood by his side, apparently paying no attention to what he was doing.

After some fumbling in his brain, he recalled another line of verse, wrote it on one of the pages, and then, swallowing hard, deliberately forged the name of David Grant.

At that instant Miss Mercer reached out to lay the book she was reading back on the desk, and in so doing jarred his elbow. The result was a large blot of ink in the middle of the page. The preceptress apologized profusely, seized the album, and tried to erase the blot, while Morris looked on helplessly.

"I'll fix that so nobody would ever know it," Miss Mercer exclaimed. Taking a penknife from the desk, she neatly cut out the page and threw it in the waste-basket.

"Now, Professor Grant," she added, "if you will please write that all over again, and charge it to my account, it will be all right."

So Morris did as he was bidden, and again forged the name of the absent Grant.

At that moment he was called to an-

other part of the building, and by the time he returned to the office he had almost forgotten the incident. After all, forgery was only another step to which his rapidly searing conscience had been gradually led.

As he opened the door, however, Miss Mercer suddenly sprang up from the chair where she had been bending over the waste-basket. She seemed greatly confused.

In her hands were two scraps of paper. Morris could not help noticing that one of them was the page she had herself cut out of the autograph album, and that the other was a bit of note-paper on which he had started to write the order for chalk that afternoon.

The woman, in her confusion, seemed for a moment to lose her wonted self-poise. Hastily crumpling up the two scraps in her hand, she slipped them into a book on the desk, then, tucking it under her arm, bade him good night and started out.

Then she stopped an instant and looked at him closely, as though she expected an accusation. Morris appeared, however, to have seen nothing. As if satisfied, the preceptress seemed to have recovered her calm, and departed, taking the book with her.

Morris watched her go in silence, convinced now, if never before, that his chief source of danger lay in the mysterious mind of this young woman with the black eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

IMPENDING DISASTER.

JUST as Morris Appleby had come to the conclusion that this first day of arch-humbug had been brought to a safe close, without any particular harm being done, aside from the singeing he had given his own conscience, new disasters began to loom up ahead.

In fact, he found himself facing an entire bundle of climaxes, each armed with a sharp point. Miss Mercer's little juggling at handwriting was merely a curtain-raiser.

"What the deuce is her game, anyway?" Appleby muttered, as from the office window he watched his preceptress disappear up the street. "If she knows the truth, why doesn't she expose me? Also, why has she been so kind? If she doesn't at least suspect something, why is she stealing my handwriting? Where in the name of sense is that man Grant? There is my own lost baggage, too, and I don't dare to make a move to trace it. Suppose somebody should identify it, and send it home. Father and mother will think I have been lost for sure."

With that, it occurred that he must write at once to his parents, and to the Powells, explaining his failure to appear at the lake on time. He picked up pen and paper to carry out this idea, when the question arose, what explanation could he give that wouldn't make things look worse than they really were? At length, however, he completed two letters to his satisfaction, explaining that he had been unexpectedly detained on a little business out in the country. One more lie to his credit, but Morris saw no way now to avoid stretching the truth at various points in order to save himself and others from yet more serious evils.

"That girl's certainly fascinating," he exclaimed aloud, after a few moments of cogitation—and it wasn't of the girl in the photograph he was thinking, either.

The black eyes of Miss Mercer were dancing before him at that moment.

"By Jove, I think I see it! She's been just foolish enough to be attracted by a new man, meaning me. That accounts for her getting mixed, and thinking she told me the right-hand road when she led me back to town this morning. That's why she pinched that signature, too. I fumbled around so much to-day, she's suspected I am not quite up to snuff, but if I keep on the right side of her she'll help me through, I'm sure. Well, I'm sorry if the poor girl's deluded, but I'll take advantage of it by giving Grant a chance to the end of the week."

So once more did the fatuous vanity of the male animal arouse in his breast a feeling of false security. This quality of vanity, by the way, had hitherto been little manifested in a normally modest Morris Appleby.

He was by no means in love with his preceptress, as yet, but there is no doubt that, all unconsciously, he was manifesting dangerous symptoms; and that was

the real reason why, when he left the building an hour later, he was whistling gaily.

He had put in that hour in the office coaching himself, a sort of "How to be a School-Teacher in One Easy Lesson." There was a copy of the school laws of New York State in the school-desk, and he had skimmed it over eagerly, gathering up points where he had been made painfully aware of ignorance during the day.

He noted also a lot of topics it would be well for him to avoid till after further study. He coached himself on the different grades of teachers' certificates, and prepared to talk glibly about it when he should discover which particular one he was supposed to hold.

Consequently he now felt that if the real professor did not show up that evening, he could not only appear at the board meeting with confidence, but continue the work of the school for a day or two without being discovered.

"Hallo, professor, did you get your message?" came a hail from across the street as he turned the corner.

He was being called by the village barber—a portly veteran whom, arrayed in frock coat the night of the social, Morris had supposed must be a local capitalist or statesman at least.

"Phone message from the station," he explained, as the other crossed over to him. "Sent a boy to find you. They rang off, and said for you to call them when you came back."

"Grant, at last!" thought Morris, as he followed the man into the shop, which was also the long-distance-telephone station.

He nodded to the little group of loungers about the tiny room, many of whom he had met the night before. Then he waited anxiously while the barber-operator struggled with the switchboard.

"Line's busy now," he reported, after a moment, turning back to a half-sheared countryman who was craning his neck at the newcomer from the barber's chair.

There was nothing for Morris to do but wait, though the suspense was extremely nerve-wearing under the scrutiny to which he was being subjected.

He selected a vacant chair, and, tilting back against the wall according to the approved fashion, remarked to his neighbor that it was a "fairly pleasant day, after all."

"What part of the country do you come from, young man?" queried an old fellow, whose long, ragged gray beard trailed over the top of the hickory stick on which his chin was resting. He looked much like the proverbial oldest inhabitant.

"I'm from Horton, this State," replied Appleby, recalling hastily his supposed origin.

"Well, I want to know!" rejoined the old man. "I used to visit in Horton when I was a young fellow. You ain't old Dave Grant's son, be you? Used to know a Dave Grant in Horton when I was visiting there. He was a young fellow then, and his dad was sort o' queer. Remember your granddad, do you?"

The old man had taken it for granted at once, without waiting for an answer, that any one named David Grant, hailing from the village of Horton, must be the son of the David Grant he knew. So Morris let it go at that.

"Oh, you know my old town, do you?" he answered. "Tell me something about the old days there when grandfather was alive," he hurried on, anxious to avoid further questions directed at himself.

"I remember your old granddad well. His name was Dave, too, wa'n't it? Queer old chap; had a lot of money, they said. I seen some one from Horton, spell ago—I forget now who it was; some traveling man through here, I think. He was telling me about the old fellow. I hadn't heard nothing about him in years—hadn't been in Horton nigh on twenty years.

"This feller tells me your granddad left a queer will, and your father's dead, too, now, he says. Guess if you got any considerable slice of old Dave Grant's money, ain't no need of your being a school-teacher for a living, less you're doing it for your health."

Just as Morris was becoming decidedly interested in this unexpected sidelight on the family history of the man whose name he was using, the telephone-bell rang, and he found the wire was clear to the station at last.

"Hallo! This you, Professor Grant?" came the voice over the line. "This is the agent at Milton Station. Mr. Bronson was in here to-day. Just stopped long

enough to get a rig to go over to the Indian school. He tried to get you on the phone, but you wa'n't around, so he left the message with me. He'll be back this way Friday, and asked me to tell you he expected to be up to the Center Friday forenoon and spend the day with you. I ain't seen no sign of that cousin of your'n, I'll keep my eye peeled for him, though."

Morris turned away from the telephone with his heart beating violently. He had no inclination to remain under the gaze of the curious villagers, so, announcing that he would have to hurry over to the house to attend to some business, he left the group, promising to continue later the history of the Grant family and Horton.

"The mysterious Bronson! Well, now I am up against it!" he said to himself. "If Grant doesn't show up before Friday morning, here's where Willie takes to himself wings for sure! Now, who the deuce is Bronson, anyway? He's the man who has such a high impression of my ability as teacher, founded, no doubt, on years of intimate friendship, that he's got me this job here. When he looms up in town and gets one look at yours truly I fancy there will be some little trouble in this burg. I don't think I care to meet my old friend Bronson, on the whole."

Well, it was lucky, anyway, that the fellow hadn't appeared without any warning. Appleby would remain until Thursday night or early Friday morning, still hoping that Grant would show up, and then if worse came to worse he would have to be afflicted with a sudden illness and depart forthwith.

They were finishing supper, when Mr. Graham remarked:

"Well, professor, if you'll just dig up your diplomas and come over to the building with me, we'll have that little board meeting; then I guess you'll be duly installed and ready for business."

Morris pushed away from the table, thinking hard. Grant's suit-case, which he had brought along with him, he had kept carefully inviolate. He might take liberties with another man's name, but to open his baggage seemed as dishonorable as tampering with his mail. That diploma was probably in the satchel. Could he in any way justify himself in taking it out?

It involved a further deception, of course, in that, once having presented the diploma to the board, he would have laid false claim to Grant's name and property more openly than ever before.

No! That would never do! He went into his room ostensibly to do as Mr. Graham had requested, really to think the thing out and frame up a good excuse for not having the diploma with him.

As his eye caught the suit-case in the corner, however, it suddenly occurred to him that the tipsy Mr. Grant had not relocked it on the train that fatal evening, and that to open it now involved no breakage or anything that could constitute burglary.

Acting on a sudden impulse, more to prove that the valise was unlocked than anything else, he lifted one side of it.

The first thing his eye caught was a neatly rolled sheepskin tied with a ribbon. Why not, after all, go only a very little step farther than he had already gone? Wasn't it justifiable in Grant's behalf?

Without stopping to debate further, he took the sheepskin, examined it, and found in the roll there was not only David Grant's diploma from Colgate University, but a life teacher's certificate. Morris Appleby put on his hat and walked out. In his hand were the credentials of David Grant, and one more bridge had been burned behind him.

The board meeting was a perfunctory affair. David Grant's diplomas were passed around and inspected, and seemed eminently satisfactory. Then Morris, to head off the questioning he feared might follow, decided to take the whiphand himself.

Accordingly he plunged into a discussion of school topics based on the hour of "cramming" to which he had subjected himself that afternoon. He asked countless questions which completely "stumped" the board members, and seemed to impress them profoundly with his knowledge. Then he branched into the subject of a change of the class-work as he had found it.

"When I wrote you about the work I would like to take," he said, "I was unacquainted with conditions here. I suppose you'll have no objection to my arranging with the teachers to take a little

different line myself. For instance, I'd like to keep an eye on science at present. By the way, what did I write in that letter to you which gave the idea that I had never made a study of the sciences? I didn't mean to imply quite as much as that?"

"Why, I have that letter right here in my pocket," said Mr. Graham. "Seemed clear enough to us."

As he spoke he drew out a bunch of letters and selected the one in question. That was exactly what Morris had wanted. Here was a chance to see some of the real Grant's handwriting and secure some valuable points as to the kind of scrawl he was expected to adopt.

Morris took the letter, studying it carefully as he pretended to read it over twice. It was just as he feared. His own handwriting was absolutely unlike that of David Grant's in every particular.

"I see," he said slowly, "'I am not familiar with the sciences.' I meant by that, I had not taught them before; but on looking over the work I find that what is particularly needed now is some one familiar with practical laboratory experiments. I did quite a little in college."

There seemed to be no objection to Appleby's proposal to change the subjects, and after a few profound remarks by one member of the board, who was a horse-doctor by profession, and another who was a cooper, it was voted that Professor Grant use his own judgment as to the subjects he should teach.

Morris was about to return the letter to Mr. Graham, when a Mr. Porter, the town's only lawyer, spoke up.

"Let me see that letter, please," he requested. "I wasn't in town when Professor Grant was hired, and would like to look it over now."

Morris scented trouble. The man, however, after glancing at the letter, made no comment, but passed it back to the board president.

Appleby breathed freely again. Just after the meeting adjourned, however, Mr. Porter, walking beside Morris on their way down-stairs, remarked:

"My daughter Lydia was very much pleased to-day at the chance to assist Miss Mercer in the library. She also told me with great glee she'd got you to write in her autograph album."

Again the heart of Appleby stopped beating. He looked sharply into Mr. Porter's face, but was unable to decide whether any guile lurked therein. He walked home with Mr. Graham, answering that affable gentleman only in monosyllables. This second handwriting incident worried him. Then, as he was bidding Mr. Graham good night, it suddenly occurred to him that he hadn't found out who the mysterious Bronson was.

"By the way," he remarked, "I meant to tell you, Mr. Graham, Mr. Bronson sent up word that he'd be here Friday."

"Good!" exclaimed the other. "Of course, you'll have him here to dinner. We're always glad to see Bronson—one of our old town boys—and we're mighty proud of the record he's made for himself. They say he's the best regents' inspector in the State now. I suppose you know more about his record than I do, being such an old friend of his and knowing more about him in late years than I have."

"Well," said Morris to himself, "I may have to leave Grant to his fate unless he shows up before Friday. It will be dangerous to leave before he arrives to back up an explanation, but it's a cinch I can't face my friend, the regents' inspector."

CHAPTER VIII.

A BLOW IN THE DARK.

"ESCAPED at last!"

This exclamation came from behind a conspicuous and distressing face bandage and mingled itself with the swelling rattle of the departing way-train. Outside of the open car window was the retreating landscape of the Canasaugua Valley, with Milton Station in the foreground.

As the train settled down to a steady rumble, a pair of hands reached up, untied, and removed the bandage. The features thus unswathed were those of our friend, Morris Appleby.

It was the early train for Brandenburg on Friday morning. Morris had worried through two more days as principal of Milton Center school, each moment watching in vain for the appearance of David Grant, and lacking the nerve to

break away and run the chance of being followed by the town constable. He had rearranged the classes as suggested to the board, and flattered himself that he had made a fairly good showing as a teacher. No more difficulties had presented themselves.

His little false steps with the handwriting had as yet produced no results, and the old visitor from Horton had had no further opportunity to interrogate the supposed native of that town. But now had come the morning when Mr. Bronson was to arrive, and Appleby must at last desert the field of battle, and retreat defeated but fortunately undiscovered. The furor that would follow soon would have to spend itself on the open air, as far as Morris Appleby was concerned.

At six o'clock that morning Morris had emerged from his room and greeted his astonished landlord and employer.

"I'm afraid I'm in for it, Mr. Graham," he groaned. "This tooth's been grumbling for two weeks; gave me a little siege over Sunday, but I thought I was getting better. I am certainly feeling down and out to-day and unfit to teach. I'll have to leave things with Miss Mercer and run in to a dentist in Brandenburg. He can fix me up so I'll probably be back by to-morrow night."

The bandaged face, what showed of it, was so haggard from a sleepless night of worry that there was no doubt in the mind of the board president that the professor was in a bad way.

"That's tough," he exclaimed sympathetically. "You'll just have time to eat a little and catch the stage. I'll break the news to Miss Mercer."

Now, Morris, whatever his words and cumbersome bandage implied, comforted himself with the thought that he was technically telling the truth. He did have a bad filling that had needed dentistry for a month, and he'd have it attended to as soon as he reached the city, though it might have gone for thirty days longer without bothering him particularly. He certainly did feel "down and out," and was undoubtedly "unfit to teach."

As soon as the train was clear of the station, and he had made sure no one else from the Center was aboard, he took off his bandage and became Morris Appleby once more. It was only three days since he had been temporarily bereft of the right to use his own name, but so congested had been the happenings of that brief period that it seemed an age to him.

Looking ahead down the car, he casually noted two young women in animated conversation. One turned her head at that moment, and Morris recognized her as Alice Forsythe, of Brandenburg, whom he knew was a member of the Powell house-party.

He and Alice had been playfellows as children, and now belonged to the same social set. He rose eagerly, and stepping forward, exclaimed:

"Why, Alice Forsythe! This *is* a pleasure. You're not deserting the lake just as I am going out there, though? I hope you are going back this afternoon, as I am."

To his amazement, Miss Forsythe at first looked startled, then embarrassed.

She bowed most distantly, and, after a painful moment, turned again to her seatmate, who was a stranger to Appleby, and continued her conversation. Morris was amazed, then enraged. He stupidly stared for an instant, then, raising his hat with an attempt at reciprocal coldness, returned to his seat.

All the rest of the way he racked his memory to recall any possible reason for such coldness on the part of an old friend. Their last meeting and parting had been most cordial.

Had the girl been alone, he would have asked for an explanation; the presence of the stranger, however, forbade a scene.

As soon as he left the train in Brandenburg he looked up a telephone, and called up the Powell cottage at the lake. A servant answered, and summoned Tom.

"Hallo, Tom," exclaimed Morris, delighted once more to talk to some one under his true colors. "Did you get my letter? I'm mighty sorry to have lost all this time, but I'll be out there to-night, and I've got a bully good story to tell you, too. I didn't make my reasons for delay very clear in that letter, because they wouldn't bear general circulation."

"I can well imagine they wouldn't, old man," came back the voice of Tom. It had a cold ring to it which struck a chill to the heart of Morris at once.

"You needn't have bothered about avoiding circulation, however," went on the voice over the wire. "You couldn't

circulate it more thoroughly if you'd been your own press-agent with orders to go the limit. Don't think I'm uncharitable. I've been in scrapes myself: but this is a case where you were caught. I wouldn't mind so much myself, but you know what my father and mother think of such things, also what a deuce of a fuss girls make over an affair of that kind. I'm mighty sorry, but I think you'll agree with me that it would be best for you not to come out here this week. Maybe the thing will blow over. I don't see as you can make much of an explanation, though."

Morris tried to reply, but could only stammer and sputter. He wanted to ask just what had got out and how it got there; but, in his surprise and embarrassment, he succeeded in saying nothing till suddenly the receiver was hung up at the other end.

He walked away from the telephone in a daze. Evidently his escapade had been discovered. That accounted for the coolness of Miss Forsythe. But the marvelous thing about it was that he had escaped from Milton Center without any one accusing him.

The suspicion arose that some one in the Center had found it out, and for unknown reasons had not given him away to the school board, but for equally mysterious motives had informed Appleby's own friends.

The whole thing was most mystifying. Moreover, whatever trend the report of his performance had taken, it must have been a garbled one, for if the exact truth were known he would have been given a chance to explain so remarkable a happening.

With great misgivings, Appleby went up to his father's house. The letter he had written the family that week would not have explained very clearly why his plans had been changed, and in view of this apparently widely circulated story it would seem to his strait-laced father and mother most glaringly mendacious. He found his father in his study. The old gentleman turned as he entered, then rose and stood before him in a towering rage.

"You have brought disgrace on your old parents, after all these years," he roared. "This thing will be the death of us both. I shall start out now and get a new church, if possible, and spend my few remaining years at work. I will not be supported by such a son. Your mother is absolutely ill with grief. You leave the house at once and do not go near her."

Morris stared at his father helplessly. He had not supposed that this affair would have such an effect, even were the truth presented in its worst light. Yet he realized that the motives, sentimental as they were, which had impelled him to remain in Milton Center and keep up the deception would hardly appear valid excuses to such a rigid moralist of the old school as his reverend father. Any attempt at explanation seemed doubly cut off.

His father at that moment was too "righteously indignant" to listen, and, moreover, the truth was so decidedly bad—stated in cold terms to another—that the culprit could see no way at that moment of glossing it over. He must simply wait until the reaction had set in, then return and try to make his position clear to his parents.

So, genuinely grief-stricken at the pain he had caused, he turned on his heel and left the house. On his way out he passed their old maid of all work in the hallway, who turned to him and said:

"There's a letter for you, Mr. Morris."

Morris took the letter she brought in a moment later, and at one glance instinctively knew what it contained. It was from the United Wood Pulp Company, by which he was employed. With trembling fingers he opened it, and read as follows:

MR. MORRIS APPLEBY,
111 TRENTON ST.,
BRANDENBURG, N. Y.

DEAR SIR:

We beg to inform you that your services will no longer be required with the United Wood Pulp Company. We have just learned of the unfortunate affair with which you have been connected, and, in view of that, it will be obvious to you that it will be impossible to retain your services. We can only employ those who can be trusted.

Yours,
THOMAS B. ZORNOW,
Secretary.

This was the last blow. Morris Appleby walked down the street, realizing dully that all his life-work up to date, by one fell blow of circumstances, had been put at naught.

He had toiled for years, acquiring a reputation as a chemist and trustworthy man of business. All this had been lost in a moment. Again there recurred to him the strangeness of these sudden and irrevocable accusations that were being hurled at his character from every direction. It was more than ever apparent that they were based on some misrepresentation of the facts.

Could it be possible that the whole affair had been likewise exposed in Milton Center? Mr. Bronson had arrived there by now and undoubtedly discovered that he had been tricked. At any rate, the unknown person who had circulated the report, finding that Morris had escaped, would probably give the alarm at once. Finally, if the story had such general circulation outside, it would inevitably get back to Milton Center, anyway.

Then there suddenly occurred to him a dark suspicion that his preceptress had been the one who had discovered and betrayed him. In some way she had known of his true identity, and perhaps had written to his friends to find out more about him before betraying him to the board.

Her motives were still dark to Morris, however. He suddenly resolved to call up Milton Center and find out just what had happened there. He waited, however, till early in the evening, then got Mr. Graham's home on the phone, and was answered by that gentleman in person.

"This is James Grant," said Morris, disguising his voice. "I am a cousin of your principal. Is Mr. David Grant there?"

"No," replied Mr. Graham, "he went into town this morning to have an ulcerated tooth attended to. We expect him back to-morrow, though."

There was no hint of distrust or suspicion in the voice that came over the wire.

"How is David getting on down there?" inquired Morris, as another feeler.

"Fine," replied the board president heartily. "We couldn't have done better. Everybody likes him. If you see him, though, tell him he wants to look out and not fall in love with the preceptress."

Mr. Graham broke out in a loud laugh at his own merry jest, whereupon "James Grant" bade him good-by and hung up the receiver.

"Well," thought Morris, "apparently I haven't been very generally exposed as yet. Guess I'll try that aforesaid preceptress on the wire and see what she has to say."

In a few moments Miss Mercer's voice came over the telephone, and he told her that he was Professor Grant.

"Oh, hallo, Professor Grant! How is that miserable tooth? You certainly have my sympathy. Will you be back to-morrow?"

The voice hardly sounded like the voice of a traitoress. Morris replied that he expected to be back the next day, and said he'd called up to see if Mr. Bronson was still there.

"Oh, Mr. Bronson didn't come, after all," replied Miss Mercer. "He telephoned up that he had been unexpectedly called back to Albany and could not be around our way again for two weeks. Everything went all right to-day, so don't worry about school."

Morris could make nothing out of things, except that whoever was wearing the mask in Milton Center had not seen fit as yet to remove it. Then another idea suddenly struck him.

Some other story must have got out in some mysterious way. It was possible that his baggage, wandering about the country in the hands of the irresponsible Grant, had been the real cause. It could not be the tale of his Milton Center duplicity.

Anyhow, his reputation was damaged, and he had lost his position thereby. The only way to clear matters up, recover his position and standing with his friends, was to return to Milton Center, and hope to get trace of the missing principal. He spent two hours and considerable money telegraphing to every point down the railroad over which Grant had traveled that fateful night, trying in vain to get some trace of the young man. Then he gave it

up. He feared he should never see the real Grant again.

Then there came the insidious temptation to go back and resume Grant's name, and, in case the fellow did not appear, draw his salary until he could secure employment more legitimately. At any rate, the only way to recover his reputation and honorable standing was to return to Milton Center and for the time being resume his false position in the Milton Center school and community.

(To be continued.)

SELBY'S SWAP.

BY E. V. PRESTON.

A Matter of Four Hours, a Rickety Siding, a Bunch of Hoboes, and a Daring Hazard.

WHEN Herbert Selby's father died, and left his son sole heir and residuary legatee to all that he possessed, the administrator's report showed the young man to be worth in the neighborhood of fifty thousand dollars.

So is there water under the Desert of Sahara; but one finds more or less difficulty in getting to it.

As a matter of fact, the estate amounted to just nothing at all; for practically the whole of it was comprised in a judgment against one Amminadab Green, and although this was perfectly valid within the confines of Pennsylvania, Green took precious good care to keep himself and all his attachable belongings well outside the Keystone State.

The transaction from which the claim arose had taken place some twenty years before when Green, an oily and specious individual, had induced the elder Selby to award him the contract for clearing off a tract of timber land.

The agreement expressly stipulated that nothing was to be touched save only the standing pine; but once he got to work, Green promptly developed a convenient astigmatism which caused all trees to look alike to him, and when old man Selby came to look over his property, he found it scalped clean as a tennis-court in July. Its wealth of valuable lumber had been ruthlessly reaped, and all that was left to the owner was a stump-dotted expanse of rocky mountainside.

Mr. Selby, wrathful and indignant, carried his grievance to the courts, and was duly awarded damages; but there the matter ended. Green, his pockets bulging with his ill-gotten gains, stayed on the other side of the State line, and laughed at any attempt to make him disgorge.

Nevertheless, the defrauded creditor, cherishing a vain hope that in some way he might be able to realize upon it, kept the judgment alive; and when he died, it descended to his son as about the only tangible asset left from what had once been a comfortable fortune.

"Don't count on ever getting anything out of it, though, Herbert," counseled the attorney who had settled up the dead man's affairs. "As a matter of proper precaution, I have had the judgment reentered in your name; but I tell you frankly that I do not see the faintest possibility of ever being able to enforce it. Your father exhausted every legal avenue, and practically beggared himself in the attempt, but without avail; so, if you take my advice, you'll simply regard this claim as a dead issue, and start in with a clean slate."

Very excellent reasoning, no doubt; but Herbert Selby had his own ideas in regard to his legacy, and he was by no means content to abandon pretensions to so considerable a sum simply because there were a few barriers in the road.

The lawyer could speak quite calmly of throwing the problematical fifty thousand overboard as so much waste luggage; but when one is holding a job at thirty-five dollars a month as night operator at a lonely little railroad junction, with prospects of only a slow promotion, and when one, moreover, is ardently eager to get married to "the dearest girl in the world," one is apt to be a trifle chary

about giving up even a dream of comparative affluence.

Herbert, from his connection with the railroad, knew something, too, of which the other was ignorant; and this was, that Green, grown less circumspect since the death of his victim, was occasionally shipping supplies of lumber to his mills in western New York over the very line on which young Selby was employed.

True, these shipments were always made in the name of another party, and were surrounded with such safeguards in the way of legal technicalities that the Pennsylvania officers were powerless to levy upon them in transit; but Herbert had traced several of them out to their destination, and despite the subterfuges employed, was more than certain to whom they really belonged.

To put it in his own words, it was a "cinch" that Green, and nobody else, was the "colored gentleman in that woodpile."

Still, rack his brains as he might, he had as yet been able to evolve no plan whereby he could benefit from this knowledge; for he was well aware that the law could render him no assistance—as the lawyer told him his father had tried every avenue of legal recourse only to fail—and any attempt at extra-judicial methods would simply result in landing him behind the bars.

Yet it certainly made his blood boil every time one of those long lumber trains went through, billed to "Parvin, James & Co.," the name under which Green masked his identity; for the shipments were of first-grade Georgia pine, and were being rushed forward to fill a special contract upon which, so Herbert had learned, his enemy was certain to make many thousands of dollars.

Any one of those trains was worth enough to cover his claim with all the accrued interest, and the money which they represented was justly and honestly his by every law of morality; yet he had to stand impotently by, and keep hands off—nay, even assist in hurrying them to their destination. It was surely enough to make a chap occasionally grow somewhat warm under the collar.

Especially resentful did he find himself one night when he came to work after an interview with his sweetheart.

She had just been through a stormy session with her parents, who were using every argument in their power to persuade Blanche into giving him up for a more prosperous suitor; and although the girl tearfully protested that she would be true, and that she would wait for him years if need be, nevertheless Herbert could not but feel that the parental objections were well founded. What right had he, he asked himself, to hold her to a promise of which there was so slight a prospect of fulfilment?

Nor did the weather tend to lighten his feeling of depression. The evening had closed in raw, and wet, and dreary; and when he reached the junction after his two-mile walk, his thick boot-soles were soaked through, and his garments soggy and uncomfortable.

Beside the platform on a siding lay a string of lumber-cars which the engineer of the switch-engine informed him was to be sent east with the second section of No. 14, passing the junction at midnight; and as Herbert walked by, he noted that the cars were all loaded with Georgia pine and billed to "Parvin, James & Co."

The day agent, moreover, confirmed this when he entered the station.

"Nothing special to look out for, Selby," he remarked, handing over his bunch of orders, "except to make sure that second 14 gets away on time. It's another consignment of that Georgia pine they've been making us hustle through so fast; and, thank Heaven, the last of it. We'll have no more worrying on that score at least."

Herbert made no comment at the time; but after he was left alone to himself, he indulged in some pretty bitter reflection.

Right outside there, on the tracks, lay in concrete form the legacy of which he had been defrauded. This was his last chance to recover, too; for it was an open secret that after the conclusion of this contract, Green intended to retire from business, and then, good-by to any hope of ever bringing him to terms.

In his desperation, Herbert felt capable of risking almost any hazard: but what could he do?

For the moment, a wild project suggested itself of hooking up to the loaded lumber-cars with the switcher—it was idle

for the time being, and he could easily get rid of its engineer and fireman by some sort of a ruse—and then speeding away with his prize into the night. But that he knew was sheer insanity.

The wires are faster than steam, and he would be derailed or stopped in some way before he had progressed a dozen miles. Or even granting a clear track and no interference, for that matter, where was he to take his booty, or what do with it after he got away? Forty car-loads of logs is hardly something to be hid in a pocket.

No, ponder the situation as he might, it seemed hopeless from any view-point; and yet somehow he could not resign himself to the inevitable, and settle down to work. The tantalizing possibilities of that train of Georgia pine outside upon the tracks kept conjuring up all sorts of freakish fancies in his brain.

While he sat knitting his brows over the problem and scowling at the floor, his uncle, who had formerly run a little sawmill back in the woods, but was now engaged chiefly in the lumber-cutting business, stumped in, and with a wave of his broad-brimmed hat sent a spatter of raindrops flying about the place.

"Hey, Bert," he demanded querulously; "ain't I ever going to get them cars you promised me? I've been waitin' a week for 'em now, and—"

But with a silencing gesture, Selby turned back to his key; for the sounder was madly clattering the junction call, and "headquarters," as he discovered, was earnestly desiring to know whether for the love of Mike he couldn't scare them up some "empties."

This was the third call for "empties" in the past two days, so Selby judged that the railroad's need of them was imperative; but since there was nothing on his sidings save the forty cars of Georgia pine, he could only answer that he was unable to oblige.

Accordingly, the appeal went clicking on to the next station, and the agent, shutting off the circuit, turned once more to his expectant visitor.

"You want cars, eh?" he snapped. "Well, that was your answer," with a wave of his hand toward the instrument.

"My answer?" stammered his uncle uncomprehendingly.

"Yes. Headquarters happens to be in the same fix. They want cars, too, and are raking the line with a fine-tooth comb for them. You'll be lucky, if you get any inside of a month."

The old gentleman stared at him aghast.

"But, Bert," he quavered, "what am I going to do? I've got fifty car-loads of poplar stacked up out there by the old mill, and—"

Selby, who had paused impatiently to listen, wheeled sharply about, and bent a glance of quick, excited inquiry upon his uncle.

"Do you mean to say that you have fifty car-loads of lumber ready for shipment?" he demanded.

"Certainly I have, right up at the head of the switch running to the old mill. Not that it's anything very much—mostly culls, and seconds, and such like. I bought it up cheap for a little speculation.

"But," he added mournfully, "if I can't get cars to carry it to market, even the little profit I've been hoping to make 'll be wiped out, and the deal 'll stand me a loss."

Herbert, however, seemed scarcely to be listening. He was evidently not so deeply impressed by his uncle's plight as he was with some other thought which had suggested itself to him in connection therewith.

"Right at the head of the switch running to the old mill," he repeated.

"And how is the old mill?" he questioned sharply, his ideas beginning to take form. "In any kind of shape for work? I haven't been over it for two years."

"Oh, the machinery's all there yet. I s'pose it could be made to run. But I couldn't make nothing sawing this poplar, Bert; labor's too high around here. I want to sell it, I tell you, as it lays."

Again Herbert paused to consider the inspiration to which his mind had awaked. Thoughtfully he stroked his chin; then nodded his head in quick decision.

The plan was feasible. Risky? Yes, beyond question so. But, nevertheless, offering at least a chance of success.

Waxing suddenly enthusiastic, he laid an eagerly persuasive hand upon his uncle's shoulder.

"Look here," he said, "how would you like to make a fortune—a fortune, I say, instead of the few measly dollars

that you might wring out of this poplar deal? If you are game to take the risk, there's a way you can do it, and at the same time help me to get what's owing to me from old Amminadab Green."

The lumber-cutter, it must be confessed, did not appear particularly impressed, and when he had heard the full details of the scheme, showed manifest reluctance to give it his sanction; but by dint of decrying the hazard involved and laying especial stress upon the richness of the stake, Herbert at last aroused his cupidity to the point where he yielded a grudging assent.

"Back to the mill with you, then," commanded his energetic nephew, giving him no time to relent, "and get together every man you can lay your hands on. I'll look out for the business at this end of the line; but if we're to pull off the job without a mishap, you must be equally prepared over there. And, Heaven knows, we've little enough time at our disposal."

Little enough time, indeed, he reflected as he watched the other hurrying off through the rain. Already it was eight o'clock, and the train of Georgia pine was due to leave at midnight. Only four hours to work in. Was it humanly possible in that brief space to accomplish all that was necessary to insure the success of his project?

For a moment his heart almost failed him; then the thought of Blanche came surging up to restore his courage, and bring the fire of determination to his eye.

Luck was with him, he told himself; for he had won his uncle over to the enterprise much more speedily than he had anticipated, and this thought brought him a measure of comfort, although he well realized that he had crossed but one very small fence of the many which yet remained to be surmounted.

For, before he could consider himself even fairly safe, the forty cars of Georgia pine had to be run out on the switch to the old mill, unloaded, loaded up again with poplar, and run back to the station—and all this, too, inside of four hours, and without the assistance, or even the knowledge of any of the regular employees of the road.

Fortunately, however, for the success of his maneuver, the only employees likely to be around on such a night and during the dull period between then and midnight were the engineer and fireman of the switcher, and Herbert did not regard it as a particularly difficult task to rid himself of them; for the engineer's home was not more than a half mile from the junction, and it was not an infrequent custom with him when there was nothing doing in the yards, to take his mate and drop over there, trusting to Selby to call them back with a blast of the whistle, if at any time their services were about to be required.

Assuming, therefore, an air of nonchalance, the agent strolled down the platform, and clambered up into the cab where the two men sat lounging over their pipes.

"Nasty night, isn't it?" he yawned. "Promises to be as dull as ditchwater. By Jove, I wish I was like you fellows, able to get away for a spell when things turn quiet, and to toast my shins at a warm fireside, instead of having to stay here listening to the click of that old key whether it has any interest for me or not. I don't mind being on duty, if I have something to occupy my mind; but this job of loafing with folded hands fairly gets on my nerves."

"Well, I don't know," rejoined the engineer. "Bill and me were talking a few minutes ago about whether it would be worth while to go over to the house for a bit, or not; and we kind of decided against it. As Bill says, it'd be all right after we got there; but it's sure to be sloppy walking over and back."

"Nonsense," protested Selby stoutly. "It's hardly raining at all now. Why, I shouldn't be surprised if the stars were out inside of another half-hour."

"Well, maybe so," and the engineer doubtfully surveyed the unabated downpour. "But, outside of that, I'm getting a shade leary on slipping off this way. Supposing somebody should find it out and report us; then there'd be trouble not only for us, but for you as well."

"Oh, don't mind about me," eagerly. "And as for danger?" with a scornful snap of the fingers. "Pooh! There isn't one chance in a million of anybody at headquarters ever dropping to the game. Or, even if somebody did, what harm would be done? You've always been here when you were needed. The worst that

we would get would be a stiff reprimand, and a warning not to do it again.

"No, you take my advice, and hike," Selby urged. "I'll guarantee that it turns out all right."

They still hung back, however, keeping him on tenter-hooks of anxiety; but at last, to his great relief, his insistent persuasions prevailed and the pair duly started off. And scarcely were they out of sight before Herbert dropped his affectation of bored languor, and grabbing up a lantern from the abandoned engine ran swiftly down the tracks.

Under and into several of the cars of lumber he peered without finding what he wanted; but at last he routed out of their slumbers a party of eight or ten hoboes who had sought shelter from the rain, hoping that on such a night they might be overlooked by the trainmen and carried on for a distance without being disturbed.

Blinking and tousel-headed, they emerged into the lantern-light, muttering curses at being aroused, and expecting nothing except to be chased from the yards. Consequently, Selby's business-like, but rather kindly, manner took them by surprise.

"Where are you all bound for?" he queried, after he had passed them a fairly cordial good evening.

The answers were varied. One was headed for Rochester, another for Boston, a third for New York, and so on.

"Well," said Herbert, "suppose I manage to slip you into a car through to Buffalo with the assurance that you'll not be bothered, and pay each of you a dollar apiece besides, are you willing to do a couple of hours' hard work for me in return?

"I need these cars emptied and loaded again," he explained, "and as I am short of men, I've got to make a call for volunteers."

Now the hobo, from so much traveling about on freights, is in most cases an expert at railroad work, and strangely enough, he does not exhibit the disinclination for labor of this class which he manifests toward other kinds of toil. Frequently, one or more of them will be found assisting a regular train crew at a pinch, without even knowing whether or not they will afterward be permitted to ride, or, the need for them over, be incontinently kicked from the cars.

Therefore, Selby found not a single man hanging back in the face of his proposal. All accepted without demur, and to his joy he discovered furthermore that one of them was capable of acting as his fireman.

This was a point which had been troubling him not a little; for although he himself was fully competent to handle the throttle of the little switcher, he needed a man equally proficient on the other side of the cab.

Having assembled his forces accordingly, he lost no time in putting his projected enterprise into execution. It was now after nine o'clock, and every moment of delay meant the possibility of some contingency arising which would balk him of his purpose.

Hastily he leaped aboard the switch-engine, and backing her down the rails, hooked on to the forty lumber-cars; then, with his hobo host scrambling aboard, threw on full steam and dashed down the rusty line of rails leading to the old mill.

The switch was an old and almost abandoned one. Ordinary caution required that it be traversed with care and circumspection; but Herbert could not afford to include caution of any kind in his calculations. Time was all he could think of; so he spun his heavy burden along with almost the speed of an express-train.

The unwieldy cars bumped and jolted, the little switcher swayed and lurched like a ship in distress; the hoboes, fearful each moment would be their last, clung desperately to any hold they could find; but he never slackened a hairbreadth until the old mill hove in sight and the hazardous journey was over.

Then, with a low whistle for brakes, he brought his charge to a standstill, and was instantly down on the ground giving orders for the rest of his program.

Luckily, the poplar was piled along a bank next the switch, while on the other side of the track extended a deep gully or ravine; so it was practically no trick to dump the pine out on the gully side, and roll the poplar down into the emptied cars, especially as his uncle had gathered a force of twelve or fifteen hands to co-operate with the band of hoboes.

Still, even with all the fortuitous aid of the situation, and the number of men engaged upon the job, the loading and unloading of forty lumber-cas is no holiday occupation, and to Herbert it seemed as though the work would never come to an end.

Time was rapidly passing, the station was being left with no one in charge, a dozen things might happen at any moment which would result in the detection of his enterprise.

He walked up and down the line of cars in a perfect fever of impatience, urging, exhorting, almost praying the men to double their exertions.

At last, though, the pine was all off and the poplar aboard; so, leaving his uncle's men to cover up the logs down in the gully with ashes, and conceal the further traces of the night's work, he once more gathered up his hoboes and started on the return trip.

And, if the journey out on the switch had been at a lively pace, the one back was simply a runaway. Selby had somewhat of a down-grade to help him going this way, and he received an impetus from this which sent him fairly whizzing into the yards.

Indeed, if it had not been for the alertness of his hobo crew, the run would have come to an end in overwhelming disaster. Their frantic tugging at the brakes was all that kept the cars from crashing right into the station.

All's well that ends well, however, and Selby, indifferent to the tramps' clamor of disparaging criticism, leaped from the cab, and ran into the office to hold a conversation over the key with the operator at the next station.

Then, for the first time in three hours and a half, he was able to draw a full breath. No calls, he learned, had come for the junction during his absence. So far, at least, his undertaking was free from discovery, and it still lacked half an hour of midnight.

His heart restored to something like its normal beating, he returned to the yards, shunted the lumber-cars along the siding to the position from which he had taken them, ran the switcher back to its station, and with a blast from its whistle summoned back her truant engineer and fireman.

Then there was nothing to do except to wait with such equanimity as he could muster for the arrival and departure of "second 14."

Would the conductor in making up his train note the exchange of poplar for pine? Had he done anything to the cars, or left something undone, which might call attention to his daring escapade?

Such conjectures were idle, Selby knew, and yet he could not keep them out of his mind. He stammered and stuttered, and betrayed such guilty confusion when the expected train at last arrived and the crew came to him for orders, that if they had had an ounce of suspicion in their souls, they must have seen that something was wrong.

The conductor especially he followed about like a dog, dreading each moment to hear from him an exclamation of surprise and a demand to know how the contents of the forty cars had been so miraculously transformed.

But naturally nothing of the kind occurred. All that interested the conductor was to see that the car numbers agreed with those upon his running cards, and on such a night, as may well be imagined, he did not waste much time in the process of checking up.

It seemed hours and centuries to Selby, but it was really only a brief few minutes until the cars of poplar were duly shifted out on the main track, attached to the rest of the train, and the conductor gave a "go ahead" swing of his lantern to the engineer.

The big driving-wheels up ahead began to revolve, the train moved forward, gathering momentum with every foot, and at last the tail-lights of second 14 whisked past the station and twinkled away into the darkness.

The trick was turned.

II.

NEXT day began a scene of activity at the old sawmill out in the woods the like of which had not been seen in that mill for years.

The old engines were coughing and panting under the unaccustomed pressure of steam until it seemed as though they would shake themselves to pieces. The old saws were shrieking and groaning in

complaint at being disturbed from their long repose.

To any chance questioner, Uncle Selby carefully explained that in despair of obtaining any cars from the railroad, he had decided to saw up, himself, the poplar which he had purchased, and color was given to his statement by the ten or twelve car-loads of that wood which still remained piled on the bank in open view.

But, as a matter of fact, tried and trusted men were all the time rushing in through a concealed runway, which had been improvised, the big logs of Georgia pine hidden under a mass of wet leaves and ashes in the gully.

For about a week this state of affairs continued, and then Herbert, obtaining a leave of absence, took a train for Buffalo. An hour after his arrival, he presented himself at the offices of Amminadab Green, and announcing that he had a quantity of Georgia pine to sell, asked for an interview.

No time was lost in granting him the desired audience; for that past week had been a period of storm and stress to the great lumber merchant. He could gain no trace of his missing pine, nor could he get hold of any to take its place, and unless he could make a deal of some sort within the next three days, he stood to forfeit an immense contract, and lose double the value of his lost lumber. Consequently, he was ready to snatch at almost any chance.

"You say you have Georgia pine to sell?" he questioned eagerly, when his visitor—a stranger to him—was shown into his private office. "How much is there of it?"

"About forty car-loads cut and ready for delivery."

Green could hardly believe his ears. Was it possible that he had struck such amazing luck?

"Is it first-class?" he demanded cautiously.

"You can send your inspectors over to look at it. I have it on cars down here in the yards."

"And what are your terms?"

"Fifty thousand dollars for the lumber, and fifteen thousand for mill work and transportation expenses. Say, $65,000 in all."

Amminadab could not afford to haggle.

"Very well," he responded quietly. "I'll have my men go over the stuff at once, and if it is as represented, you can call in at three o'clock this afternoon, and we'll close the deal."

And, accordingly, at three o'clock that afternoon a certified check for $65,000 was duly made out to Herbert Selby, and handed over.

"Selby?" observed old man Green reminiscently. "Selby? I used to know some lumber people of that name out in Pennsylvania. Any relatives of yours, may I inquire?"

"Only my father. I guess you knew him about fifty thousand dollars' worth, didn't you, Mr. Green?" laughing pleasantly. "At least, I fell heir to a judgment against you for that amount. Here it is, if you'd like to have it. We discovered long ago that there was no legal way of collecting it."

Amminadab glanced up at him sharply from under his grizzled eyebrows. There was something about the other's tone which aroused his suspicions.

"No, there was no legal way to collect"—his visitor answered the unspoken question—"but sometimes there are methods of doing things just a shade outside of the law. The judgment is fully satisfied, Mr. Green; for the lumber which you just bought is nothing more nor less than your own identical Georgia pine."

For a second, the victim almost reeled from his chair, so unexpected was the blow; then, wily old rascal that he was, the cleverness with which he had been "done" awoke in him a sense of admiration.

"By Jove," he exclaimed, "I must see more of you, young man. There are mighty few people in this world who can boast that they ever got the better of me. Suppose you come over to my club with me to dinner to-night, and explain to me just how you went about to accomplish the trick?"

"Sorry," replied Herbert; "but that will be impossible, as I am taking the first train back to where I came from. If it were anything less important, I should stay over to accept your invitation; but you see—" he paused a moment, "er—the fact is, I am to be married to-morrow noon."

THE ESCORT.*

BY MARIE B. SCHRADER,

Author of "On a Secret Mission," etc.

The Strange Fashion in Which Fenton Came to Meet the Young Woman at the Hotel, and the Remarkable Experience They Went Through Together.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ISABEL GRAYSON, walking out with her fiancé, George Tracy, remarks upon the broad shoulders of a young man in front of them, whom she presently recognizes as stopping at the same hotel as herself. It is Jack Fenton, for whom this same stroll is destined to be most eventful, for, happening to pass through a side street, he sees a well-dressed small boy crying on the stone base of an iron railing. He appears to be lost, doesn't answer to any name except "Bobbie," but Fenton finds a piece of paper on which an address is scribbled. He hires a cab, takes the boy there, and leaves him with a woman who opens the door in response to his ring.

Meanwhile, that same evening at the hotel, Miss Grayson suddenly manifests a desire to go to the theater, but, being without an escort, asks the clerk whether he can suggest a way of supplying the deficiency. Fenton happens to be standing by, is introduced, and the two have a pleasant three hours at the play. On the way out, they hear a newsboy crying an extra in regard to a kidnaping. Miss Grayson asks Fenton to buy a paper for her, and, on opening it, holds up the picture of the stolen boy, and asks: "Didn't I see you riding in a taxicab to-day with this child?"

Fenton explains the circumstance. Miss Grayson seems almost incredulous, and finally requests that he take her to the house in question. To this he readily agrees, but they have considerable difficulty in finding the place. Finally he locates the dwelling by a cut in the steps, but it is tightly closed. A night-watchman is called, and he tells them that the house belongs to the Vandergrists, who are now in Europe, and are offering the place for rent, unfurnished. The name of the kidnaped boy is given as Bobbie Holt. "Well, Mr. Fenton," remarks Miss Grayson, "evidently there is something wrong with your story."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FACTS AGAINST HIM.

AS the watchman disappeared down the street, Fenton and Miss Grayson stood still, each looking at the other as if in the hope of receiving some suggestion which would clear up the mystery of the empty house.

The footsteps of the private policeman became fainter and fainter. At last they were heard no more.

"Evidently, he doesn't consider us suspicious characters," remarked Isabel lightly, in an effort to break the spell.

To tell the truth, Fenton was stupefied by what the watchman had told him.

The chauffeur was becoming impatient.

Isabel noticed this, and called Fenton's attention to the fact.

"Tell him to wait on Fifth Avenue," she said. "It will be less conspicuous."

"Thank you," said Fenton. "But what about you?"

"I will stay here for a little while."

"Wait around the corner," he ordered, handing the chauffeur some money.

"All right, sir," responded the driver, who thought the whole proceeding queer, but decided it was none of his business.

Why a young man and a young woman should choose eleven o'clock at night to settle an innocent dispute over the number of a house was more than he cared to investigate. Besides, he was well paid.

"I don't know what to say," began Fenton as the last sound of the taxicab died away.

Isabel said nothing.

"I never was so completely mystified in my whole life," Fenton went on. "It's the biggest puzzle I ever tried to figure out. I never was very good at puzzles, anyhow. But this affair—"

He paused for lack of words.

"I can swear to you, Miss Grayson," he continued then, "that all I have told you is the truth. I found the child as I said. The poor little chap was quite alone—there wasn't a soul in sight. I couldn't leave him on the street there all by himself. Heaven only knows what would have happened to him! He cried so pitifully that he touched my heart."

"And you had no idea of his identity?" queried Miss Grayson.

"Absolutely none."

"I thought perhaps the boy might have told you his name."

"Oh, no. He is only three years old, and could furnish me with no information concerning himself except that he was 'Bobbie.'"

"Then he didn't tell you that he was Bobbie Holt, the sole heir to the Holt millions?"

"I assure you he did not."

"And you merely thought that you were befriending an ordinary, every-day child? The question of whose child he might be never entered your mind?"

"Not for an instant," asserted Fenton. "Why, there was nothing else for me to do but to look out for him. I didn't want to take him to the police station, and I didn't want to leave him there in the street. So I just searched him, and was fortunate enough to find his address."

"And you are positive that this is the house at which you delivered him?" asked Miss Grayson.

"I will take an oath to that effect," answered Fenton. "Look! Here is the cut on the steps to prove it. I told you about this peculiar mark before we came here."

"Yes, I remember you did," said Miss Grayson, who was evidently thinking hard as she examined the steps.

"There is no mistake about the house," went on Fenton. "You see, there is no other just like it on the block. I couldn't have picked out the wrong place."

"How do you account for the number being different from the one you originally gave the chauffeur?"

"I must confess I can't account for that at all," said Fenton frankly. "I remember distinctly the number was fifty-two. This number is ninety-four. It's confusing, I will admit. Nevertheless, this is the house."

"What about the information the watchman gave in regard to the house having been unoccupied for several months?" persisted Miss Grayson.

"That only makes matters look worse," rejoined Fenton. "Nevertheless, Miss Grayson, I am telling you just what happened. There is something about this whole affair which I don't pretend to understand. I brought the child here, to this house. A gray-haired lady received me at the door in answer to my ring. She seemed glad to get the child back, and said that she had been worried about him."

"Was she in tears?" inquired Isabel.

"Oh, no. But she seemed nervous and upset. In fact, she was so ill at ease that I didn't bother to prolong the conversation."

"Did she say anything else?"

"Now that you speak of it, I believe she did ask me if I had had any trouble, or some trouble. I don't exactly recall the words. I didn't pay very much attention, for the reason that—"

He paused, and apparently wished to terminate his explanation.

"But why? Why didn't you pay attention," interrupted Isabel. "Why don't you remember things that may prove so vital in this affair?"

"Do you insist upon knowing why?" answered Fenton.

"I most certainly do," emphatically replied Miss Grayson.

"Then I will tell you. Remember that you insisted upon knowing."

"Yes, yes; I insist," declared Isabel.

"Well, then," went on Fenton, "the real reason why I paid so little attention to the conversation, and all the rest of it concerning the child, was because my mind was full of a woman."

"A woman," began Miss Grayson innocently; but she stopped short as a faint suspicion of the identity of the lady in question began to dawn upon her.

"Yes," said Fenton. "You didn't know it, but I walked several blocks behind you down the avenue this afternoon. I tried to keep up with you, but somehow you disappeared in the crowd. When I lost you, I turned into a side street and came across Bobbie."

"Yes," assented Miss Grayson.

"Then, naturally, after I saw him safely home, I began thinking of you again—and, and—that's the whole story."

"Mr. Fenton," said Isabel, holding out her hand, "I believe every word you have just said."

"Then you did doubt me?"

"I must be truthful. Yes, I did doubt you. I can't tell you all I thought about you and your connection with this kidnaping case. I did believe, however, that it was *you* who had abducted the child?"

"Do you mean that?" said Fenton.

"Yes, I do. I hate to say it, but I acknowledge my mistake. Since you have told me the whole story, I am completely convinced that you know nothing in regard to this crime—that you were an innocent party in the matter. What you did, you did purely from kindness."

"Thank you, Miss Grayson."

"Many an innocent man has been convicted on circumstantial evidence," she went on. "One shouldn't put too much faith in such stuff."

"I admit that there seems to be nothing to prove the truth of my statements," said Fenton. "You are forced to accept my word, which is that of a stranger."

"I understand all that," replied Isabel. "Nevertheless I do believe you."

Once more she held out her hand to him. He pressed it gratefully.

"I trust you will never have occasion to regret your confidence in me," he said.

"Don't worry about that," was the answer.

She stood for a moment looking at the big house in front of them. Not a soul was in sight.

"Now," she exclaimed impulsively, "I propose that we clear up this mystery. Come! I will help you."

Before Fenton could recover from his astonishment, she had picked up her skirts and started toward the house.

"First," she answered, "we will examine all the windows and doors. Maybe we can gain admission somewhere."

CHAPTER VIII.

BY MATCH-LIGHT.

Fenton needed no further urging. Without stopping to argue with Miss Grayson regarding the discretion of her sudden plan, he followed.

The lithe, graceful figure tripped daintily up the white marble steps. Just as she reached the top she turned and stood there for an instant silhouetted against the imposing background of the deserted house.

She waited there until Fenton could join her, for she had gone quite rapidly, and was out of breath with the effort of the climb.

"Listen," she said, holding her finger to her lip.

The two stood silent for an instant.

"I think it best to be on the safe side," said the young woman.

By this time Fenton had had an opportunity in which to consider the dangers of their adventure.

"Now, Miss Grayson—" he began.

"Did you hear anything?" she asked, without noticing his protest.

"Not a sound," he answered.

"Look at that shadow over there," she continued. "Do you think it is some one?"

Fenton followed the direction of her glance.

"No," he said. "It's only caused by that ornamental figure which supports the door."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I see now. Let's be sure that the policeman is nowhere around. The chauffeur is out of the way, so we needn't worry about him. You don't see any of the neighbors looking out of the windows, do you?"

"Not a soul to be seen," Fenton assured her. "Besides, most of the people that live around here are out of town at this season of the year."

"Of course," said Miss Grayson. "How stupid of me. The coast seems absolutely clear. Now, hurry!"

With these words she ran quickly around to the side of the house.

"It would look pretty black for us if we were caught here," suggested Fenton.

"Yes, I know that; but we can't afford to worry about it. We must take a chance. Nothing ventured, nothing won, you know. And we have a great deal to win just now."

Fenton could not controvert this argument. He was lost in admiration at her courage.

Isabel by this time had reached a small

side door, which she tried to open, but it resisted all her coaxing.

The two then went around to the back and tested the various doors, but they were all firmly fastened.

"Not much hope of gaining an entrance here, I am afraid," Miss Grayson said. "We must get in, however. We must."

She stood looking up at the house.

Fenton looked, too, but he had little hope of getting in; and, worse than that, he had no idea if they did succeed in gaining admittance that the result of their investigation would be worth the risks they ran.

"See here, Miss Grayson," he said finally, "if anything happened to you tonight I would never forgive myself."

"Rubbish!" she exclaimed, taking a still firmer grip on her dainty skirts, as if getting ready to start forward again. "What could happen to me?"

"Why, if that detective should return?"

"But he won't," she said. "Luck is bound to be on our side now. There it is," she exclaimed, with a tone of delight in her voice. "I thought so."

"What have you discovered?" asked Fenton, who could find nothing over which to be so pleased.

"Do you see that window on the third floor?" she asked excitedly.

"Yes. What of it? It is closed like all the rest."

"Closed," she replied; "yes, but not fastened. Don't you see that the bottom of the window is about one inch above the sill?"

"I believe you are right," he answered. "But how does that help us?"

"Don't you see that narrow balcony running around the third floor?"

"I see it, but there seems to be no way of reaching it."

"Oh, yes, but there is," said Isabel. "In the back of the house is a fire-escape."

"Which extends to the top of the first floor, and doesn't reach farther, because you are supposed to let down the ladder in case of fire. The ladder can't be reached from the ground."

"Never mind about that," retorted Isabel. "Follow my directions."

She led the way to the rear and halted in front of a luxurious wistaria vine.

Fenton looked at the vine, then at the fire-escape one floor above.

"I understand," he said.

"I will go in the house with you," said Isabel.

In another moment he had climbed up the twisted wooden rope, after first trying it to see if it would bear his weight. Upon reaching the first platform of the fire-escape he detached the ladder and let it down.

In another instant Isabel stood beside him. Then they finally reached the iron balcony and walked around to the window.

Fenton had no difficulty in raising it.

"I hope no one saw us," he said, looking cautiously around. "And I trust there are no burglar-alarms attached to this particular window."

"Have you plenty of matches?" inquired Isabel anxiously. "I never thought of them before."

"It happens that I have, very fortunately," answered Fenton, striking one.

They went from one room to another. Their footsteps echoed through the deserted house, which was completely bare of furniture.

"It doesn't look as if we would be rewarded by anything in the shape of a clue here," remarked Fenton.

"Wait," protested Isabel. "We haven't been all over the house yet. This is only the third floor."

"There hasn't been a soul here for months. I can see that," went on Fenton. "Look at the dust."

Isabel, however, made no reply. She was too busy scanning every nook and cranny as best she could by the fluttering light afforded by the matches. She peeped into every closet, determined to leave no place uninspected.

They left the third floor and went down to the main one, containing the parlor, dining-room, reception-room, and library.

"Nothing here," commented Fenton. "My matches won't last much longer."

"Some one has been here," said Isabel triumphantly. "See, the footsteps in the dust! Look! Any number of them."

"So there are!" exclaimed Fenton. "But," he continued, in disappointed tones, "they are all large ones. No child has walked here evidently."

For a moment Isabel's face bore a de-

cidedly crestfallen expression. The next instant, however, a thought struck her.

"I have it!" she exclaimed. "Why should there be a child's footprints, when you say the boy was asleep when you brought him here?"

"So he was," answered Fenton.

"Well, if he was asleep, he couldn't walk," finished Miss Grayson triumphantly.

"What a quick intelligence you have," remarked Fenton in admiration. "Now, I would never have thought of that—never!"

He couldn't get over the way in which she seized points which escaped him. Truly, she was a wonderful woman, and he was becoming so fascinated by her method of investigation and her accurate reasoning that for the moment he forgot everything else.

Suddenly she laid one small, soft hand on his.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "There it is!"

"What?" he asked, seeing no cause for such excitement, although he was vividly conscious of the pressure of her hand.

"We've won," she went on. "I knew it. I knew we would find something."

She walked rapidly across the room and picked up a child's cap of some dark material.

"That's the one Bobbie wore," said Fenton, examining it.

"Oh, Mr. Fenton," said Isabel, taking his hand impulsively in both of hers, "I can't tell you how glad I am. I am so glad—for *your* sake!"

CHAPTER IX.

FENTON LEARNS SOMETHING.

ISABEL'S unexpected burst of enthusiasm was too much for Fenton.

"Do you mean it?" he asked, hardly believing what he had heard.

"Yes, I do," answered Isabel.

They were standing together in the darkness. The match had gone out, and Fenton forgot to light another. Unconsciously, both moved toward the open window through which the moon now sent a pale light.

"You mean that you are glad for *my* sake? Did you say 'glad'?" He repeated the word as if fearful that he had made some mistake.

Isabel nodded her head in assent.

"But I don't understand," began Fenton.

"What is it that you don't understand?" asked Isabel shyly.

"Why, that you should care one way or another about—about—" He hesitated for a word. He started to say "about me," but stopped just in time from making so clumsy an error. That would have been too absurd for words.

"About my part in this kidnaping affair," he finished finally.

"It is rather strange," said Isabel, "considering that I have been acquainted with you only a few hours."

"Do you know," rejoined Fenton, "I had forgotten all about that. Really," he added with an amused laugh, "it seems to me as if I have always known you."

"It is odd how near you feel toward certain people," remarked Isabel, "and how far away from others."

"Isn't it," answered Fenton significantly, for he realized how very much attracted he was by her.

"I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate all your interest in this affair," he said warmly.

"I *am* interested," she replied simply. "And I am so glad that things have turned out as they have."

"Look here," said Fenton impulsively. "Why do you take such an interest in me? I am an utter stranger to you. I may be an impostor!"

Isabel shook her head.

"I'm not afraid of that being the case," she said.

"But, then, you must admit things look black for me."

"They *did* look that way," she replied.

"I can't see that they are any brighter now," he observed gloomily.

"But the finding of this child's cap—"

"That may convince you," he said; "but what about other people?"

"I feel that everything is coming out all right," she said, laying her hand encouragingly on his arm.

"You are too kind," responded Fenton; "you are just the sort of girl I thought you to be—only, if you will allow me to say so, you are more wonderful."

Isabel didn't answer for a moment, and he wondered if he had offended her.

"You aren't angry with me for saying that, are you?" he asked fearfully.

"Oh, no," she said. "It's rather pleasing to know that somebody considers one wonderful."

"Well, I mean what I say," said Fenton. "I have known lots of girls, but I never met one like you before. How many of them would do what you have done to-night? How many of them would go one step in this direction in order to help me. Most of them wouldn't have put their toes out of the taxicab. Look what you have done. You've been as brave as six men—coming into this empty house. And why did you do it at all?"

"I will be frank with you," she replied. "I must admit it is rather unusual for a girl to do what I have done, and to place herself in the peculiar position in which I have put myself. We run all sorts of risks in being here. I know that. I appreciate fully the difficulties in the way of an explanation in case—in case we were discovered in this deserted house. I did all I have done because I believed in your sincerity, and I wanted to make sure of it."

Fenton was surprised by her answer.

"I didn't know that my sincerity was of so much consequence," he said.

"Yes, but it is," she told him. "I have always liked you from the first."

"Then you have noticed me before this evening?" he asked.

"Of course," she said honestly. "And I thought I would like you, if ever we met. Then this afternoon, while walking down the street with my fiancé—"

"Your—" Fenton paused when he reached the word "fiancé." It was nothing short of a blow to him. He hadn't fully understood just how much Miss Grayson meant to him until that moment.

His jaw dropped dejectedly.

"Then you are engaged?" he said in a tone of deep disappointment.

"I *was* engaged this afternoon," she said. "In fact, while I walked along we discussed our wedding-day. Come to think of it," she added, "I believe you were in some measure responsible for the fact that I didn't settle it then and there."

"What had I to do with it?" asked Fenton, astonished beyond words. "You are joking, aren't you?"

"Not at all. You were just ahead of my fiancé and myself."

"He was telling me of his plans and how he expected to make a fortune, and then, all of a sudden, I noticed you and—"

"There was nothing remarkable in that, was there?"

"No. Only"—she hesitated and laughed a merry laugh at the recollection—"I praised your shoulders, I believe," she went on, "and that provoked him. He doesn't like to hear me praise people," she explained.

Fenton laughed.

"Some men are like that," he said. "I don't blame him so very much."

"But he said some very unkind things about you," added Isabel.

"Oh, he did, did he?" said Fenton. "Would you mind stating a few of his objections."

"You see I had noticed that you kept to yourself at the hotel," she replied. "No one I knew, knew you."

"That isn't so very singular. I couldn't find any one who knew you, either. I tried mighty hard."

"Well," went on Miss Grayson, "there seemed to be a certain air of mystery about you. Several persons commented on it to me. Mr. Tracy also spoke of it."

"Tracy?" queried Fenton.

"Yes. George Tracy, my fiancé."

"Oh!" exclaimed Fenton. "So *he's* the lucky man!"

"He gave me to understand that you weren't my kind of a man; said he knew all about you, and hinted that you had been connected with questionable deals."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Fenton in a noncommittal tone.

If he felt angry, he did not betray himself.

"Thank you for telling me all this," he went on. "I will be on my guard. But I can't understand why you should tolerate me after hearing it all."

"I wanted to find out for myself," replied Isabel simply. "What do you think of what I have told you?"

"I won't tell you that now," answered Fenton. "Tracy and I are in the same boat. We both need money, and we love

the same girl. At present he seems to be in the lead. However, we will see about that."

Before Isabel could recover from her astonishment, Fenton pushed her back from the window.

He stood at one side and listened intently.

"I think I hear footsteps," he said in a low voice. "Stay here! Don't make a noise. I will see what it means."

In another moment he was gone, and Isabel was left alone.

CHAPTER X.

UNEXPECTED ARRIVALS.

FENTON had departed so suddenly that Isabel had no time to protest against being left there in the darkness. True, the moon at times shed a dim light in the room, but that couldn't be depended upon, for clouds covered the sky.

Instinctively she reached out her hand. Then she smiled to herself as the meaning of her gesture came to her. She was groping for matches.

Fenton had all that remained of the supply. Besides she wouldn't have dared strike a light.

There was nothing for her to do but to wait patiently for his return.

The sound of voices now reached her ears distinctly. She moved as close as she possibly could to the window without being seen and strained her hearing to catch the words.

Evidently there was a heated discussion in progress.

"What are you doing here then?" one voice demanded.

The speaker was certainly not Fenton. But there was something remarkably familiar in the tones.

Isabel could stand the suspense no longer. Even if discovered as a reward for her curiosity, she felt that she must take the chance.

She cautiously knelt on the floor, and, keeping her head as far within the window as she could, looked to the ground below from which direction the voices floated up.

"Oh, you can't answer!" sneeringly remarked the first speaker.

Isabel nearly fainted. The man was none other than George Tracy, her fiancé.

He stood facing Jack Fenton in a threatening attitude.

Isabel feared for the result, for she knew how thoroughly Tracy hated Fenton. There were just those two men there alone.

"Oh, what can I do?" she asked herself.

The next moment she realized that there was nothing she could do. To make her presence there known was to raise a storm of demands for explanations from Tracy, and Miss Grayson knew well that anything she might say in defense of her position would be scoffed at.

Tracy took a step nearer his enemy.

"Stand back," cautioned Fenton in cool tones.

"Oh, they're going to fight," exclaimed Isabel, but she was so far above them that neither heard her.

"I've been wanting to get at you for a long time, Mr. Jack Fenton," savagely exclaimed Tracy.

"Take care, Tracy," rejoined Fenton. "Don't make a scene. Some one might come along, and it wouldn't be very pleasant for either of us."

"Coward," growled Tracy. "There's nobody around. I'll have it out with you!"

"I am not looking for trouble with you, Tracy," continued Fenton in calm tones with a nervous glance at the house.

He had visions of the notoriety and trouble which the discovery of Isabel would bring about and he was willing to sacrifice his personal feelings for her sake.

"What are you looking at the house for?" demanded Tracy. "Anybody there?" he inquired.

"No," replied Fenton. "I am alone."

Isabel nearly collapsed with the suspense preceding this answer. After that, however, she noticed that Fenton did not glance in her direction. Evidently he was satisfied that she would take care of herself to the best of her ability.

However, Tracy's suspicions were aroused.

He looked up in Isabel's direction, but she leaned back quickly and escaped his vision.

"Maybe you're lying," said Tracy. "However, we won't worry about that now. Perhaps it's a blind to throw me off the scent. If so it won't work."

Fenton spoke very quietly. Isabel could with difficulty distinguish what he said, and she knew why he restrained himself and took Tracy's attack so nonchalantly. *It was for her sake.*

"Oh, if only I could tell him not to mind me!" she thought.

"You're all a bluff, Jack Fenton," said Tracy, glaring at him, "and I have a good notion to punch you."

He raised his fist.

"Why don't you try it?" asked Fenton.

"I'm going to tell you what I think of you first," retorted Tracy, retreating a step or two. "You're no good on earth. You put up a fine front and think that with your smooth manners and good clothes you can give the impression that you're a success. As a matter of fact, you're a crook, and nothing more."

His words had the desired effect.

Fenton became white with anger. Even with the girl he loved watching and waiting above, he felt that all patience was at an end.

Tracy was her fiancé. She had told him so. They had been planning their wedding-day only that afternoon. He was sorry, but human nature could only withstand so much.

"Take that, you scoundrel," he cried as he shot out a powerful fist and stretched Tracy on the ground.

As he fell there was a smothered shriek.

"What was that?" asked Tracy as he picked himself up.

"I didn't hear anything," answered Fenton, who knew from whom the sound had come. "Now come on, since you will have it. There are plenty more of that same brand waiting for you."

Tracy leaned unsteadily against the side of the house for a moment. Fenton waited for him, wondering whether he cared to resume the attack or not.

"What's it all about, Tracy?" he asked. "Kindly favor me with an explanation."

"You shall have that right away," responded the other as he recovered his breath.

The next instant he gave a low whistle, and before Fenton could recover from his surprise the dark figure of a man appeared from around the corner of the house.

"Now, Mr. Jack Fenton," exclaimed Tracy triumphantly, "here's your answer."

The newcomer had joined the two by this time.

"Officer, here's your man," said Tracy, pointing to Fenton.

The stranger laid a hand on Fenton's shoulder.

"This is the fellow," continued Tracy, enjoying Fenton's discomfiture.

"And what is the charge against me?" demanded Fenton, trying to free himself.

"You're arrested for kidnaping Bobbie Holt," answered the officer, with considerable show of excitement over such an important capture.

Fenton realized the hopelessness of his situation.

"I am nothing of the sort," he protested.

"You wouldn't expect him to say he was, would you, officer?" demanded Tracy with a sneer.

"Well, hardly," responded that gentleman. "He would be a new species if he did. Come along with me," he added as he took a tighter hold of Fenton's arm. "Too bad I haven't got those bracelets with me. I guess I can manage him, though. Call the cab, will you, Mr. Tracy?"

Tracy whistled again.

"See here, there's somebody—" began Fenton.

Then he stopped. It would have been the height of folly for him to tell of Miss Grayson's presence in the house.

He quickly thought things over and concluded that although it would be running a risk to leave her there alone, such a course was far better than to bring her into the affair. By calling attention to her she would only be brought into the most disagreeable notoriety.

He determined to save her from this.

"What about somebody?" interrogated the officer.

"I only wanted to say that there's somebody making a mistake," explained Fenton.

"Oh! Certainly, certainly," commented Tracy in ridicule.

The next moment a cab drew up in front of the house and Fenton was placed in it.

When the noise of the motor grew faint, Isabel, who had been crouching beside the window above all this time, rose from her cramped position. She understood Fenton perfectly in his attempt to save her.

"Now I will try to find my way out," she decided.

She groped around and reached the door, which was open.

Fortunately the arrangement of the rooms was a simple one. She had nearly reached the iron balcony, when an unexpected noise caused her to stop short with fast beating heart.

Some one was coming up the stairs from the floor below.

Quick as a flash Isabel hid behind the open door.

"We will take a good look," said one of two men who entered the room, and he flashed a dark lantern from one side to the other.

"Seems empty, but we'll make sure. He might have accomplices."

They brushed against the door, on the other side of which Isabel stood in almost a fainting condition.

"We'll begin in the front of the house first," remarked one, "and go straight through." Then they passed on.

"Detectives!" gasped Isabel.

CHAPTER XI.

A LOST SLIPPER AND AN EXTRA.

THE discovery of the identity of the two men left Isabel weak and frightened.

She had not until that moment realized the immediate danger she ran in entering the house.

Her one idea had been to inspect the interior rapidly and then leave. When she warned Fenton about the possibility of detectives, she had not really supposed that any one would follow them.

Events were developing so rapidly that she had to think hard in order to try to devise some way of escape.

"There was only one man outside when Tracy called for assistance," she recollected. "Where did these others come from?"

When Fenton, Tracy, and the detective who had figured in the altercation below the window drove away, her participation in the evening's adventure seemed safe from publicity. Now an unexpected danger confronted her.

"Oh, if they had only been burglars," moaned Isabel.

She clung, terror-stricken, to the door, trying to collect her wits in order to make her escape.

She understood that the slightest sound would attract the attention of the men, and decided that her only chance lay in the detectives consuming enough time in the front of the house to enable her to recover her breath and a little of her strength.

"I would fail if I attempted to get away now," she told herself.

In the meantime the two men went swiftly on their tour of inspection. Their footsteps echoed loudly through the empty house.

"There's nobody here," said one.

"Don't be too sure of that," rejoined the other. "It's just as well to keep your hand on your gun. I've been in places that didn't promise any more than this one, and suddenly I got a surprise."

"I tell you he was all alone," remarked the other.

"Well, we've got him, all right," rejoined the first man.

"Yes, and they'll hold on to him for a few years too," replied the second fellow. "I wouldn't be in his shoes for a million dollars."

While Isabel was listening with bated breath to this cheerful conversation, she began to devise plans for getting away.

The window through which the men had entered was only a short distance from the door behind which she stood, but she was afraid that the noise of even her light footsteps would give the signal to the visitors that there was a third person in the house.

After her first feeling of suspense had subsided, she became more courageous.

If only she could stop breathing and reduce her weight to nothing!

"I have it," she suddenly murmured as she released her hold of the door.

The next instant she reached down and

removed one of her dainty evening slippers. Then she listened to make sure no one had heard the movement. Reassured, she again leaned over and took off the other one.

Once more she listened. No one had heard her.

The men were laughing noisily by this time as they flashed their dark lantern from one corner to another down the length of the house. Isabel noticed that no spot was left uninspected.

"If I stay here, I shall be caught," she decided. "I must make the effort."

The men were then on their way back toward the place where she crouched. There was no time to be lost.

Softly she gathered up her long, clinging skirts, and, holding her slippers in the other hand, cautiously made her way to the balcony.

"If these two are the only ones," she told herself, "everything will be all right. But if they have more stationed below—"

She hated to think of the result in such an event.

Quietly she gained the balcony. In another moment she neared the rear corner of the house.

So far, so good! Evidently, no one had observed her. The moon was behind a cloud, too, fortunately.

She didn't pause until she reached the fire-escape. Then, slippers in one hand and skirts held by the other, she began the descent.

At first she made slow progress, for the suspense of being discovered was terrible. Then, too, she was weak, and with the greatest difficulty kept from falling.

Since both her hands were full, she could have no support. Then she thought of transferring her slippers to the same hand which held the skirt.

It was a fatal move, for the next thing she knew she dropped one slipper somewhere in the wistaria-vine.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she moaned.

However, she couldn't stop to look for the slipper now. Time was too valuable. Once on the ground, she concealed herself behind a thick bush and awaited developments.

It was with a sigh of relief that she finally decided that no one had heard her leave the house.

She peered around on all sides, and then determined to continue on her journey. Maybe she would be discovered, and maybe not.

In another instant she ran lightly to the front of the house, where, after a rapid glance down the street, she safely gained the sidewalk and limped toward Fifth Avenue.

A belated taxicab rounded the corner.

"Taxi!" she called.

The chauffeur, who had just left some persons in the neighborhood, answered her signal. He was surprised to find a young and pretty woman alone on the sidewalk at that hour of the night, but he waited for further developments.

"Here," said Isabel, placing a generous bill in his hand, "drive me to the Hotel Superior."

The chauffeur didn't hesitate. He closed the door on Isabel, and they were soon whisking along the avenue.

Once inside, she sank back against the cushions, and thanked her stars that she had escaped so easily.

"Well!" she exclaimed when she could breathe freely. "That was the narrowest escape I ever had in my life."

A few minutes later she reached the hotel. She was painfully conscious of wearing one high-heeled slipper, and being minus another. She walked with a decided limp, but as she entered the lobby the notion seized her to walk on the toes of one foot. This made up for the loss of the high-heel.

The result was cleverly accomplished, and no one observed her predicament.

The clerk glanced up at her as she passed him. She was thankful that he was not the man from whom she had purchased the tickets. As he handed her the key to her apartment, she stopped suddenly and listened.

"Extra! Extra! Here's your extra! All about the great kidnaping case! Latest developments!"

The boys in the streets were shouting their throats hoarse.

Miss Grayson called a bell-boy and sent him for a paper.

"Haven't you heard the latest?" asked the clerk.

"No; what is it?" inquired Miss Grayson as she waited for the return of the boy.

"Mr. Jack Fenton, of our hotel, is mixed up in it," replied the clerk. "Too bad, too bad!"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Isabel, who could hardly wait for further details.

"We supposed that he was rich man, a big club member, and man about town. And he turns out to be—"

"What?" breathlessly exclaimed Isabel.

"A kidnaper," answered the clerk. "But here's your paper. It's an interesting story.

"They arrested him to-night at the house where he had concealed Bobbie Holt, the heir to the Holt millions."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Isabel, trying not to display any unusual interest.

"Yes, the officers got him all right, but—"

"But—" repeated Isabel.

"But he was too slick for them. On the way to the station, there was an accident to the taxicab, and in the confusion Fenton escaped. That's what the extra's about. But you can read it all for yourself."

"Do you mean to say that he really got away?"

The clerk unfolded the paper for her and pointed to the glaring head-lines.

"'Fenton escaped!'" read Isabel, scarcely believing her eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. TRACY IS STAGGERED.

THERE was one important detail in connection with the Holt kidnaping case which the obliging clerk had neglected to mention. Isabel understood when she reached her room and read the paper. The name Tracy figured in the story.

Yes. It was true. Fenton had escaped.

Isabel devoured the head-lines until she reached one which startled her. It read:

> The capture of Fenton was entirely due to George Tracy, the Wall Street broker, who was recently put in charge of the Holt estate.

A thousand thoughts flashed through Isabel's brain. George had never mentioned to her that he was interested in the Holt affairs.

She eagerly read the details of Fenton's capture, which occupied considerable space in the paper.

Tracy was evidently the hero of the occasion. She saw his name in every paragraph. He was wildly praised for his strenuous efforts in behalf of the Holts.

By to-morrow every newspaper reader in the country would have heard of Mr. George Tracy. All the other millionaires in the United States would be envying Mrs. Holt because her affairs were in the hands of a man who evidently took a personal interest in them.

Isabel read and read until the lines swam before her eyes.

Two names haunted her all through the long hours of the night. She seemed to see in huge electric signs first the name George Tracy, and then that of Jack Fenton.

Tracy had spoken in unmistakable terms of his dislike for Fenton. He had offered no explanation and Isabel supposed that it was because she had dared admire Fenton.

She had been rather flattered by her fiancé's jealousy. But it had gone too far. That was quite evident.

She endeavored to recall all the conversation she had had with Fenton regarding Tracy. Fenton had said nothing derogatory to Tracy. He had dismissed the matter lightly.

Tracy was showing a sidelight of his nature which she had never suspected before. And she didn't like the development. She was sure that Jack Fenton would not have acted in this way, no matter how much he hated a man.

After a night of torture through sleeplessness, Isabel was glad to welcome the first faint streak of dawn. Perhaps the day would bring a solution to the mystery.

"And to think of yesterday," she reminded herself. "It seems a thousand years since George and I walked down the street behind Mr. Fenton."

The subsequent events flew in rapid succession throughout her brain.

As soon as she dared to do so without attracting too much attention to her interest in the case, Miss Grayson called for the morning papers.

There she again read the details of the Holt kidnaping.

The reporters described Fenton's capture minutely and also his escape, besides telling of the thorough search made by the two detectives in looking for accomplices, or clues to them. The paper gave an interview with George Tracy in which he stated that for some time past he had had his suspicions of Jack Fenton.

Isabel lost no time in going to the telephone, where she gave Tracy's number.

The answer came that Mr. Tracy was out, but was expected back at any moment. A few minutes later the bell rang and Tracy called for Isabel.

"I suppose you've read the news," he said. "I would have been up, but have been so dreadfully busy. Haven't had a moment I could call my own."

"I understand," said Isabel.

"I've just got back from another trip to the house where the child was concealed," he went on.

"Really!" answered Isabel. "If you can spare a little time for me, I wish you would call at my hotel immediately. It's rather early in the day, I know, but I want to see you on some important business."

"All right, dear," replied Tracy. "I am terribly rushed just now while this case is on, but I'll run up for a little while. You have no idea what it is to have a hundred reporters after you from morning till night."

A few minutes later Mr. Tracy jumped out of his cab and sent in his name to Miss Grayson.

"How pale you look, dearest," he remarked by way of greeting.

Before she could frame a reply, he continued:

"Isn't it great?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Isabel.

"I mean about Fenton. It was I who first suspected him. It was I who traced him to the house where he had concealed the child, and it was I who arrested him, and—"

"And it was from you that he escaped," finished Isabel. "He must have been dreadfully clever to have got away from you, George, when you were so anxious to hold on to him."

"Why, Isabel!" exclaimed Tracy. "You don't seem to understand. There was an accident, and—"

"And instead of looking after your prisoner, you looked after the tires, I suppose," went on Miss Grayson in cool tones.

"Well, he did get away, but we will get him again. Don't worry about that. He's too well known—"

"Why, George, I thought you said he wasn't anybody," remarked Isabel.

"I say so many things," explained Tracy. "But never mind about that. We'll get him sure."

Isabel did not reply.

"He thought himself so very clever," went on Tracy. "Thought that his position in town would cover up all suspicions of his hand in the affair. That was where he showed his stupidity."

"But, George, how did you happen to find out about all this?" inquired Isabel. "That's what I can't understand."

"Never mind about that just now," replied Tracy. "I haven't time to enter into all the why and hows of this case. I'll explain later."

"Then, too," continued Isabel, "the papers say that you are in charge of the Holt estate. That isn't so, is it? Surely you would have mentioned the fact to me. I remember distinctly that you have never spoken of the Holts except in an offhand fashion."

"Well, that's another story, too, dear girl," said Holt. "A business man hasn't time to tell his fiancé of all such details. I never thought you would be sufficiently interested."

Isabel studied him carefully for a moment.

"Well, now, Isabel, what do you think of Mr. Jack Fenton?"

Before Miss Grayson could answer he went on:

"What did I tell you about the fellow? Didn't I say he was a crook and a scoundrel? You didn't believe it, evidently, but now I have proved it to you. What do you think now of the fellow with the handsome face and the broad shoulders? A fine specimen he is to have a decent girl make such remarks about him! It takes a man to know a man," concluded Tracy.

"Does it?" coolly asked Isabel.

"Without doubt," responded Tracy.

He was evidently highly elated over his part in the affair.

"George," said Isabel, "I should think you would dislike all this notoriety. It must be very unpleasant."

"Nonsense," responded Tracy with a laugh. "It will be the making of me. As for Fenton, he's done for. Once they get him again it means a long sentence, and all his money can't restore him to his former position. He's finished and done for."

Then he looked at his watch.

"I must be going," he exclaimed. "I have an appointment with two detectives at eleven. If you promise not to tell a soul, I will give you the very latest development in the case."

"George," she said suddenly, "the whole thing is a mistake. Jack Fenton is innocent."

"What!" exclaimed Tracy, infuriated beyond expression. "You are crazy! He's as guilty as the worst criminal ever sent up for life. And what's more than that, he had an accomplice. It will all be out in the papers, this afternoon."

"What do you mean?" asked Isabel.

"Look at this," said Tracy, suddenly producing the lost slipper. "There's a woman in the case," he added, "and judging from this slipper she must be young and pretty. I found it this morning in the wistaria-vine at the back of the house."

"That's my slipper," said Isabel, reaching out her hand for it. "I am the woman in the case."

"Why, what do you mean?" demanded Tracy, overcome with astonishment.

"I mean," said Isabel, "that I was in the house while Fenton was being arrested. And I will also remind you that Mr. Fenton is to be considered innocent until proved guilty."

(To be continued.)

His Mark of Identification.

BY LITTELL McCLUNG.

The Bolt from the Blue that Fell in the Path of a Man Who Had Just Made Good in the Mail-Order Business.

AT last I had struck it.

I reached down into my pocket and drew forth three crisp fifty-dollar bills. In mute eloquence these told the delightful tale of one week's profits in my newly established mail-order business.

An orphan at an early age, I had traversed most of the globe, polar regions excepted, and had tried my hand at almost everything from weighing freight-cars at a tank-town to writing for a Paris newspaper. But now I had struck my pace, and the mail-order game was the one I was born to play.

I had clerked in stores in half a dozen cities, and knew well what people generally wanted, and the price they were willing to pay.

As I glanced at the money in my hand I smiled to think that I had finally overtaken fleet-footed fortune in the race.

Then—the door opened.

I turned in my chair, to confront a stockily built, square-chinned man with clear, calm, gray eyes.

"What can I do for you, sir?" I asked pleasantly, getting up and extending my hand.

"This is Mr. Henry Brown, I presume?" he said.

"You're right," I answered. "Sit down, sir, and make yourself at home."

The man did not sit.

"Thanks," he said crisply. "I don't like to trouble you, but I wish you would walk up the block a little way with me. The matter is important, and I must urge you to come at once."

I drew away from him in surprise.

"Certainly I'll go," I agreed; "but what is it that's so important?"

"You'll know when you go up the street," he answered, watching me with eagle eye.

The man's cool, unruffled manner of making such a request struck me as queer,

but I got my hat and followed him out at the door. For a block we walked rapidly. Then my unknown companion suddenly wheeled around a corner, and I found myself accompanying him into the corridor of a large marble building. A few more seconds, and I was in a room in the presence of a man about fifty years old, who regarded me in an offensively searching manner.

"Captain, this is Mr. Brown," explained my companion, motioning me to a chair directly in front of the man he addressed.

I took the captain's hand warmly, but he was no more enthusiastic in his greeting than my caller had been when he first confronted me.

"Mr. Brown," he said, "you conduct a mail-order business in the Continental Building, do you not?"

"Yes," I answered briskly. "I've just started down there, but business is very good. I am giving satisfaction to my customers, and I'm prepared to fill orders for household furnishings, ladies' dress goods, men's wearing apparel, crockery, sporting goods—"

"Aw, cut that!" broke in the captain. "I don't want to buy any of your stuff. Don't you see where you are? This is detective headquarters, Mr. Brown, and you are under arrest! Now, please remember that."

"Under arrest!" I gasped, as the cold chills began to crisscross up and down my back. Then I gazed stupidly around the room.

The walls were plastered with posters bearing pictures of individuals, black and white.

On nearly all the word "Reward" in large letters struck my eye. Before I could recover from the blow, the captain arose.

He laid a strong hand on my arm, and I was drawn out of my chair as if by a magnet.

I was led over to the wall opposite, where an authoritative finger directed my gaze to a particular poster:

"Now, can you deny that you're not the man wanted?" demanded the captain in gruff tones.

The face that confronted me was quite a good deal like my own. It might have been made from a photograph of me if I had been a little younger. Underneath it I read:

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.

The Tradespeople's Bank of Pittsburgh offers TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD ($10.000) for information leading to the capture and conviction of one Walter Brooks, formerly a trusted cashier in this bank. Brooks forged a check for $35.000 and fled with the money. He is thirty years old, and fairly good-looking. Weight, about 150 pounds; is five feet six inches tall, has sandy hair, a smooth face, and brown eyes.

As my gaze turned from the poster to the captain, he was surveying me from head to foot.

"Smooth face," he commented leisurely, "sandy hair, five feet six inches, and brown eyes; weighs about a hundred and fifty pounds. Young man, that's you—I'll wire Pittsburgh at once!"

In a second all my mental numbness left me, and a rush of vigor forced words from my lips. I threw back my shoulders and faced both detectives.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, captain," I declared hotly. "I know nothing of this Brooks. You've made a mistake, and if you don't know it now you'll find out pretty quick. I'm running an honest, straightforward business, and I don't intend to see it ruined and myself disgraced by detectives or anybody else. I warn you that you'd better be sure of your game before you pounce down on it."

The other detective bristled up and his eye flashed, but the captain's calm expression never changed.

"Not so hasty, sir," he cautioned me. "How long have you been in the city?"

"Three months," I answered.

"Where were you before you came here?"

"In London. I came here direct from England."

"What did you do over there?"

"Worked for a transportation company. I came back to America because the company gave me a pass and I was tired of England."

"Aha!" muttered the captain. "Have you any relatives anywhere?"

"Nobody but a rich uncle somewhere out West," I replied.

"Aha!" from the captain again. "I never saw one of your kind yet that didn't have a rich uncle somewhere. Is there anybody here who's known you more than three months?"

"No," I answered flatly; "I don't think there is."

I was expecting more questions, but the detective only looked at me. His eyes were kindly, indeed, but there was a steely glint in them that told me he was one of those men whose iron hand is always concealed by a soft glove.

"Mr. Brown, please take off your collar!" he commanded.

Again I flared up.

"Take off my collar?" I ejaculated. "Why, what do you mean, sir? I'll do nothing of the kind—I don't intend to be hanged without a trial!"

This bit of grim humor was wholly lost on the other.

"I mean just what I say," he answered. "Take off your collar, or I'll take it off for you."

Instantly I backed away and threw up my hands to protect myself from physical insult. But the other detective quickly grabbed both my arms from behind. With a deft, swift movement the captain seized my collar, wrenched it to one side, and peered down at my neck.

"I thought so!" he blurted out, exhibiting some spirit for the first time. "There is a mole on your neck as big as a cent!"

"I know that!" I thundered. "*You* don't have to tell me. But what has a mole got to do with such an insult as this?"

"Aw, thunder!" exclaimed the captain in disgust. "Come over here, Brooks, and read the rest of that description about yourself."

Again he drew me over to the wall, and once more I stared at the photograph that looked so much like me. One steady look at the printed matter below told me that I had missed a line of the description down at the bottom which read:

> Brooks has one particular mark of identification—a large, round mole, about the size of a cent, on the left side of his neck.

"Now say you're not Brooks and a forger," commented the captain.

"I do say I'm not!" I declared. "It's strange, I admit, but other people have moles on their necks besides me — I've seen them. Send for those bank people—they can get here by to-morrow morning—and you'll see pretty quick that I'm not the man you want. I'll be at my office, and come up here for examination."

"You will be back there in the room we've reserved for you," said the detective, with a grim smile. "I'll have you photographed for our gallery, and wire Pittsburgh."

"Photographed?" I thundered. "Photograph an innocent man, before he's even been brought to trial? If you dare attempt such a thing, I'll—I'll—"

I paused; but in an instant the threat popped into my head:

"I'll not only sue your detective department, but I'll tell every newspaper in the city all about it. Then, when you find out you've got the wrong man, you'll have a fine lot of trouble on your hands."

It was a random shot, but it hit the bull's-eye, for the detective winced. Evidently the newspapers had given the department a few good, stiff raps. Quickly I followed up my advantage.

"I want a lawyer," I said, "and I'm going to have one. You'll not treat me like a common criminal."

What the captain might have replied I never knew, for into the room bustled a clear-eyed, breezy young man, who never even knocked to announce his approach.

"Hallo, cap," he began cheerily, "what's up? Looking for a good story to-day."

He was a newspaper man, and evidently a clever one. Here was my chance.

"I'll tell you what's up," I said, before the detective could speak. "Because I've got a mole on my neck and look like one of the pictures there on the wall, I've been arrested. Now they want to lock me up and photograph me for the rogues' gallery."

"Ho-ho!" exclaimed the reporter. "What you need is a lawyer, and a good one."

"I certainly do," I agreed quickly. "Won't you try to get one for me? I would appreciate it."

"Sure I will," declared the reporter. "Use your phone, cap?"

The detective uttered a gruff "yes," and the newspaper man began talking over the wire to a man whose name I caught as Harry Bell.

"He's a good one," he assured me, as he hung up the receiver, "and he'll be here in a pair of minutes."

We waited, and soon Mr. Bell breezed in. He was young, alert, and possessed a degree of self-assurance that was gratifying.

The attitude of both detectives had changed. When Mr. Bell asked to talk to me alone in another room, the request was readily granted.

In a few words I told what had happened. I protested that, despite the similarity in appearance of my face and the forger's printed photograph, and despite the mole on my neck, I was innocent. He seemed keenly interested when I showed him the mole that threatened to condemn me.

"I want you to defend me, Mr. Bell," I said. "Get me out of this scrape the best way and as quickly as you can. Here's twenty-five dollars which I will give you as a retainer."

I drew the money from my pocket. My lawyer took it and thanked me. Then he said there would be only one way to get out of the clutches of the detectives until somebody from the Pittsburgh bank could come to say I was not the man wanted—that was, to go before a magistrate and give bail.

"But you can keep those detectives from photographing me and having my picture put in the papers?" I asked anxiously, as we went back to the captain's room.

"Sure," he replied. "You'll not be photographed—that must be prevented at all hazards."

Then he spoke to the chief of detectives.

"Captain, I believe this man is a gentleman, and I want him treated as such," he said. "There'll be no photographing until he's convicted—and he's a long way from that."

The captain frowned, but assented. My lawyer certainly knew his business, and the newspaper man smiled approval. I had found two good friends on short notice.

"Then, what are you going to do?" inquired the captain of the detectives, sour at being cheated out of a chance to get another photograph for his gallery.

"I'm going to take Mr. Brown over to the police station and get him out on bail," Mr. Bell answered. "It'll ruin his business to keep him locked up here, and you know it."

The captain looked at his watch, and informed us that the morning court would still be in session for half an hour. The details were quickly arranged. I walked beside my lawyer, while the two detectives walked behind.

This was at my lawyer's request. Oddly enough, the reporter had disappeared. On this point I suddenly became anxious.

"You will ask your friend to put as little of this as possible in his paper, won't you?" I said to Mr. Bell. "A big newspaper story on this might utterly ruin me and my business."

Mr. Bell nodded.

"The first thing is to get bail," he reminded me. "The rest will be easy."

As we entered the police station the reporter bobbed up all at once to greet us. He called my lawyer aside and whispered to him for a moment. Then he smiled, nodded, and hustled in ahead of us. I was greatly relieved, for he had agreed, I thought, not to write much about my being arrested on such a serious charge.

The "trial" did not last ten minutes. The detectives declared that I was undoubtedly Brooks, the forger. Again my collar was pulled aside and the telltale mole exhibited.

My face burned as the judge looked at this evidence of my guilt. I was shaking with anger when my lawyer began his plea. He asserted vehemently that I was not Brooks: that I had never been in business in Pittsburgh, and that I was unquestionably the victim of "mistaken identity"—a not infrequent, and sometimes a terrible, thing. He ended his argument by asking that my case be sent to court and that I be freed on bail which he was prepared to furnish.

For a moment the magistrate regarded me silently. Then his eye turned to the blotter, on which I was charged with forging a check for thirty-five thousand dollars. When he glanced up he spoke his decree.

My heart thumped, and I drew in a

full breath. Surely I had an able lawyer and a just judge, and in five minutes I would be back in my office. I thought of a word of thanks to say to the magistrate.

But—

"Can you furnish ten thousand dollars bail?" the latter asked.

The question was like a blow struck a drowning man who has just grasped the side of the boat.

I turned appealingly to my lawyer.

"Isn't that a little stiff, your honor?" said Mr. Bell. "I can furnish bond for a thousand, but ten thousand—that's impossible. Can't you make it two thousand, your honor?"

This angered the magistrate, and he partly rose in his chair.

"Ten thousand was what I said," he declared sternly. "If you can't get a bondsman for your client, Mr. Bell, he'll have to go to jail to await the action of the Pittsburgh authorities."

"Then, that settles it," rejoined my lawyer, turning to me sympathetically. "But it isn't so bad. I'll have the bank people here to-morrow morning if it's possible to get them."

"Not so bad?" I repeated. "It's unjust, it's criminal, and I'll not stand for—"

"No back talk, young feller," commanded a gruff policeman, clutching my arm with a determined grip. "You just come with me."

But I turned to face my attorney again. As I did so he stepped back a few feet, and the reporter slid in between us. From under his coat he jerked out a kodak, and the next instant there was a click.

"Fine!" he exclaimed, and before the officer beside me could intervene he darted out at the door and disappeared.

Impotent with rage, I bit my lips to keep back the imprecation that was ready to burst from them. Silent, I suffered myself to be led back through a long corridor to a cell.

As the iron door swung shut behind me I turned and glared through the bars. There stood Mr. Bell looking at me. To him I must have appeared like a hunted beast.

The sight of him broke down the floodgates of my rage.

"You! You are a fine lawyer!" I cried. "After keeping the detectives from photographing me, you deliberately help a reporter to get a picture. In a couple of hours my face will be on the front page of that paper, and I'll be disgraced forever. Get out of my sight, you shyster! I don't want anything more to do with you except to punch your head when I get out of here. That'll be to-morrow, I'm thinking."

But I might as well have yelled at a wall. Mr. Bell stood coolly looking at me until I had finished my tirade.

"Now, see here, old chap," he said. "I'm sorry, really I am. I did want to keep the detectives from photographing you, but that reporter — well, that was different."

"Different?" I shouted, my blood still boiling. "How different? It was ten times worse—that was the only difference!"

Still Mr. Bell remained unruffled.

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Brown," he replied, "that reporter is a friend of mine. He did me a service not long ago that I can hardly repay. When he said he wanted a picture of you, I had to submit. Maybe you won't believe me, but this is the truth."

This explanation drove my temper to white heat.

"Friend!" I hissed at him through the bars. "And so you sacrifice a client for a friend? That's your idea of honor, is it? You're a liar; you're a detestable— Get away, get away, I tell you! I never want to see you but once more; then I'll make it hot for you!"

The lawyer turned indifferently.

"All right," he replied nonchalantly; "if that's the way you feel about it, I'll let you alone for a while. But I'll be around again when we hear from Pittsburgh; maybe you'll be calm enough then to talk business, and give me a chance to get you out of this scrape."

I might have burst into another torrent of invective, but he walked down the corridor out of sight. Before I had time to get my breath, two reporters whom I had not seen before came to talk to me.

"What have you got to say for yourself?" they demanded.

Here was my chance, and I seized it. I began by roasting the whole detective department in general, and my lawyer in

particular. The reporters seemed to relish my eloquence, and they asked to see the mole on my neck that had been the cause of my being held.

At this I rebelled; and if I could have done so without seriously injuring myself, I would have taken my knife and sliced the hated spot out of my flesh.

When I became insolent again, the newspaper men left me alone with my troubles. Half an hour later a policeman obligingly thrust a copy of an afternoon paper through the bars.

"Thought you might like to see it," he remarked with a grin.

One glance at the first page and my spirits fell. There was my picture, two columns broad, and beside it the story of my arrest.

The "feature" of the account was that my identity rested largely on the mole on my neck just under the collar. This seemed to be a choice morsel for the reporter, for he gave this fact more prominence than any other. At the bottom, two or three lines told of my protestations of innocence.

Then underneath these was a despatch from Pittsburgh. It said that the president of the bank I was supposed to have relieved of thirty-five thousand was ill, but that the cashier would leave at once to identity me. From the information received, he was sure that I was Brooks.

For a little while this message cheered me up, for I knew that as soon as I confronted the cashier I would be a free man.

But what about my business, my reputation? Both were damaged beyond repair. My eye fell upon another paragraph in the same paper. Already here was proof that I might be a ruined man.

A fellow to whom I had sold some goods only the week before complained to the police that the merchandise was worthless. That man, I know, had received one of the best shipments I had ever bought, for I had tested the goods myself.

"Let a man get down once," I mused bitterly, "and every dog in the street is ready to snarl at him. It's cruel; it's barbarous."

With a sigh of despair I sank down on the bench in my cell, my head in my hands to still the throbbing in my temples. I passed a wretched night, sleeping scarcely an hour.

When I did doze off, it was only to awaken with some sickening dream of spending the rest of my days behind round, black bars.

But next morning I felt better. Prospects of early freedom made me forget for the moment some of the indignities I had suffered. Eagerly I awaited the arrival of somebody who would cut the cords of the web that bound me. I did not have long to wait.

About ten o'clock a policeman came back to my cell, and with him was my discharged lawyer, Mr. Bell. Sight of the latter almost drove me to wrath again, but I mastered my feelings and tried to make myself as presentable as possible.

"The Pittsburgh bank cashier is here," said Mr. Bell. "I don't think you'll have much trouble in proving yourself innocent—if you really are innocent!"

"A nice way for a lawyer to talk before a policeman," I thought.

But I said nothing. The officer opened the door and I stepped out. He placed his hand on my arm, and I was again led up to the magistrate's desk.

The room was full of people. The two detectives were there, three or four policemen, as many reporters, and a stranger whom I at once took for the bank cashier.

I gazed steadily at this man, and he gave me a searching stare in return. The next thing I knew the man had taken the oath, and I was thrust about face to face with him.

"Have you ever seen this man before?" asked the magistrate, pointing to me.

The cashier never once turned his eyes from me.

"Yes, I think I have," he said slowly. "He's changed somewhat; but his name is Walter Brooks, and he was once employed in my bank."

My muscles contracted to strike my accuser in the face, but better judgment suddenly warned me that I must be calm now, whatever the banker did or said. I was reading his thoughts, and I felt the hated mole on my neck increase in size.

I would have given all that I had to blot out for one minute the spot that might convict me—an innocent man.

But the banker gave me no time for much thought. He stepped up to me, and, with a quick tug at my collar, looked down at my neck. That settled him. I knew in a flash.

"Yes," he said to the magistrate, "this is Walter Brooks! I felt pretty sure of it as soon I saw him—but now I know it. No other man I ever saw had a mole like that on his neck!"

Here my ire burst bounds.

"It's not true!" I screamed at both banker and judge. "A lot of people have moles on their necks. I've never seen this man before in my life, and he's never seen me. It's an outrage, a mockery of justice to condemn me like this, and somebody is going to suffer for it!"

"Not so fast, young man," warned the magistrate. "You're not being condemned; you're simply being identified."

"Are you dead sure this is Walter Brooks, the forger?" he asked, turning to the banker.

"Perfectly sure of it," replied the man, giving me another steady look.

"Then, Mr. Brown, or Brooks, whichever you are, there's nothing for me to do but commit you to jail until the papers can be obtained for your removal to Pittsburgh," announced the magistrate. "Then, if you really are not Brooks, you'll get your freedom."

No sooner had he uttered this sentence than two policemen took hold of me. I jerked violently, but they half carried me back to the cell and locked me up again.

Crazy with rage, I saw the detectives smile as they passed by me, and I knew they were thinking of the big reward they would get for my capture.

I raved and swore that I was innocent. My strength gave way under the strain and I sank down to await the next step.

It came pretty soon, for in less than an hour I was taken out of the cell again. This time I was escorted out of the station-house by three policemen and put into a big, cage-like automobile. In less than twenty minutes I was inside another cell—in the city jail!

I was now struck dumb by the disaster that had come upon me.

I tried hard to realize what a wall I was up against. But the mental strain had been too much for me, and I went off to sleep.

I was awakened by the jailer, who handed me a letter and ordered me to open it in his presence. The missive was from Mr. Bell.

"You have discharged me," he wrote; "but I have your money, and I am going to do what I can to get you out. You think I have wronged you. Maybe I have, and, if so, I am sorry for it. So I am going to do my level best for you."

"Bah!" I exclaimed, handing the letter back to the jailer. "Tear it up. I don't want to have anything to do with this crooked lawyer."

Next day I heard nothing from Mr. Bell, and gradually I became resigned to my fate. I would have to go to Pittsburgh to stand trial, and, whether found guilty or not, it would make little difference. I was branded a criminal, and the brand would remain, regardless of the outcome.

Then there came to me an ugly determination to make good the mark that had been put upon me. All my money would be gone, my prospects ruined, and there would be nothing left but to become a sure enough criminal.

Then I realized what a terrible thing it is to put a sensitive, well-educated man in prison, even if only for a short time. In three days I felt as if I had actually committed some crime, and that when I got out the first thing to do would be to crack a safe or rob somebody in a dark street. Somebody, I felt, must pay for the wrecking of my life.

One morning, after I had been in jail a week, the jailer stopped at my cell.

"The Pittsburgh people will be over here in a little while," he announced. "They came last night, I think. So hurry and get yourself ready."

This was not welcome news; but a little excitement was better than the dreariness of the narrow, iron cell. I persuaded the jailer to get me some clean linen, and I dressed myself as neatly as possible under the circumstances.

Then the old feeling of fight came over me. I determined to protest against my exportation with all the strength I possessed, though protestation might be futile.

An hour later the jailer came back to unlock the door. Who was with him but Mr. Bell!

The lawyer was smiling at me, and under my breath I cursed him. I was nerving myself up to the point of making a rush to throttle him when he spoke.

"Come out, Mr. Brown," he said cheerily. "*You are now a free man!*"

"A free man?" I gasped, staggering back as from a blow. "A free man?"

Though dazed by his words, I saw his smile, and the thought flashed through my mind that I was being tricked again. My arms tense, I lunged toward him, hatred in my eye.

But I never reached him, for the jailer grabbed me. Mr. Bell retreated in fear.

"I mean it—I mean it!" he insisted. "This man Brooks was caught day before yesterday in a town a hundred miles down the country! He's confessed everything, and the president of the bank has come here and identified him. I've got an order for your release!"

My changing emotion overcame me, and I reached forward to grasp Mr. Bell's hand.

"Stop, don't do that!" he ordered. "At least, till you know how it all happened. *That newspaper picture you raised such a racket about was the cause of Brooks being caught!*"

"The picture?" I repeated, now more amazed than ever. "How on earth did that catch him?"

"Well," said Mr. Bell, "a chief of police down in this town saw the picture, and he knew of a stranger in the place who looked a lot like it. He got it into his head that you might be the wrong man, and so he arrested this fellow. He found a mole on his neck like yours, and the chap broke down and confessed everything."

"Then I *can* shake your hand, Mr. Bell!" I said joyfully as our fingers clasped.

Five minutes later I was out in the air again. Mr. Bell asked forgiveness for his betrayal of his client, and I asked his pardon for the frightful things I had said to him. Then we shook hands again.

Soon, though, I became greatly dejected. I was free, but that was all. I could never begin business again in this city.

Starting out in a new place even would be hard, for my prison record might bob up any time to topple me over.

"Oh, and I forgot," said Mr. Bell, who was walking along watching me. "I want you to go up-town with me on a little business matter. Then I'll say good-by and wish you best luck."

As we boarded a car, I wondered how much his bill would be, and whether I would be able to pay it. If not, I might be jailed again, I shuddered to think.

Soon he touched me on the arm, and we got out. Mr. Bell led the way into a large building, and in the lobby we were met by a dignified and perfectly groomed man.

A word of introduction informed me that he was the president of the bank Brooks, my alleged double, had hit for thirty-five thousand. I did not hesitate to tell him of the indignities I had suffered simply because I had a mole on my neck like that of the forger.

He seemed deeply interested, and I drew aside my collar and showed him the cursed mole that had caused my downfall.

"I am deeply sorry, Mr. Brown," he said kindly. "But I don't see why you hate that mole so, for surely it was the cause of our catching a man we have been after for a solid year?"

That was his side of it—a bright one, indeed. But my side was a black one. Things certainly did look dark, I told him, with the memory of prison bars haunting me.

"Not at all, not at all," he protested quickly. "Your arrest has been the direct cause of our catching this Brooks, and you should have a reward as well as the detectives. How does this strike you?"

From his pocket he drew a slip of paper and handed it to me. I glanced at it, and nearly fell off my chair. It was a check for five thousand dollars!

"That ought to start you in business again," he remarked.

When I recovered from my amazement enough to thank him, we had a late breakfast together. Then I talked with my lawyer.

"How much do I owe you for your services, Mr. Bell?" I asked.

"One hundred dollars," he replied.

"I'll send you a check for twice that amount to-morrow morning," I joyfully told him.

A Submarine Enchantment.*

BY GARRETT SWIFT.

Author of "Tracking It Down," "Guarding the Treasure," "Mrs. Curtis's First Husband," etc.

The Search for a Dangerous Derelict, and How It Came to Result in a Case of the Hunter Hunted.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

CAPTAIN MERRILL, of the United States navy, who tells the story, is sent out in command of the Otter to look for a dangerous derelict, but in a fog his vessel rams this same derelict, is wrecked, and the crew put off in the small boats, while Merrill remains with the Otter until she goes down, and then escapes at the last moment in the cutter. After a period on the open sea he sights an island, whereon he sees a woman, dressed in the height of fashion, standing on a rock. But the girl suddenly disappears, and Merrill can find no trace of whence she came or where she went. He lands and finds himself among a queer lot of people, little, if any better, than pirates, under a rough fellow, Huggers, whom they call king, and who has a ship on which he makes frequent cruises. Huggers gives Merrill to understand that he is a prisoner, and places him under guard, Merrill, it appears, having once tried to arrest him in the course of his duty.

Meantime Merrill receives a note signed "Mildred Symes," which he realizes must have come from the mysterious woman. This note bids him get away as soon as he can contrive to do so. But there is no hint of where the writer keeps herself concealed. Later Huggers comes to him in the tent he has set up, tells him that the story about the dream-woman he has been talking about is all moonshine, but that if there be any truth in it, he, Huggers, will marry her and make her queen of the islands. He ends by assuring Merrill that he will never be allowed to leave the place, as he is too dangerous to be permitted at large with the knowledge he has gained.

Finding a short iron bar on the shore one day, Merrill conceals it in his trousers-leg, stuns therewith the two men who keep guard over him, possesses himself of their pistols, and wriggles his way through a small hole he has discovered at the back of the cave. Very shortly the orifice broadens out into a cavern trending downward, and along which Merrill gropes his way with the aid of matches. At last he uses up his stock of these, and is sitting on a ledge of rock, wondering what to do next, when far down the slippery tunnel he sees a light moving toward him.

"Miss Symes," he calls out, "stay there! I am coming."

There is a startled exclamation, and the light ceases to move.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LADY WITH THE LIGHT.

WITH something that had once been a decently steady heart pounding and thumping inside me, I started toward the light. It was farther away than I had supposed, the gleams having been carried by reflections against the wet and glistening walls for a considerable distance. But guided by the increasing glow I made good speed.

I cannot adequately describe the picture that was presented to me in that great, vaulted, creepy cavern. Standing at a distance of perhaps two hundred feet, clad as I had seen her on the rock, holding above her head, a ship's lantern, was Mildred Symes.

The picture she made as compared to the Statue of Liberty in New York Bay was like a golden eagle of the currency contrasted with an old-time copper cent.

"Miss Symes, I am here," I said, advancing mincingly I must admit, even for a naval officer, down the slippery slope.

"I'm glad you are here—but I—"

As I joined her and she spoke, she lowered the lantern.

"I infer," I went on, "that what you intend to convey is that you don't understand how I got here."

"I don't understand how you discovered the secret door."

* *Began February* ARGOSY. *Single copies,* 10 *cents.*

"I wouldn't exactly call it a door, I replied. What I discovered might properly be described as a small hole in a large rock. I crawled through that."

"That little hole?" she exclaimed in something like amazement. "With a—with—I mean—"

"You mean that you can't understand how a man with the corpulence I possess could get through such a hole."

"Yes, I meant that."

The cavern echoed with her laughter. And her laugh, after the raucous guffaws of Huggers and his men, sounded like the music of the spheres to me.

"I squeezed through. A naval officer has to squeeze through a good many tight places, you know, Miss Symes. I've got the habit."

She laughed again, and it sounded like a heavenly carol.

"Well—is there any possibility that they will discover which way you went?" she asked. "Because if they do—"

She did not finish the sentence, but I felt rather than saw a tremor pass through her form.

"Not unless they discover the hole in the rock between the cave and passage."

"I doubt if they do that. They seem not to have discovered it in all the years they've been here."

"But how did *you* discover it?" I inquired.

"Oh, I have the chart."

More and more I wondered who this girl might be. But I knew that now we were together I would soon learn, so curbed my impatience and asked no more questions.

"Well," she went on, "since you are here and safe, we will go on to the castle. And while we walk along you must tell me all about it. I know your name of course, from hearing it spoken above. But what really brought you here? Was your ship wrecked?"

"It was." And then I related all that had befallen the Otter, and my own surprise at seeing her on the rock, and then at not seeing her at all.

"I was just as much surprised to see you," she said, "but I had a secret to keep, and dared not meet you openly. There are prying eyes in the village. Now tell me just how you got away from them."

"I found your note," I answered. "Did you know you told me to do the most dangerous thing possible?"

"How?"

"Why, to remove my tent. What was your idea in that?"

"In the first place I could not go through your sleeping apartment at night. And in the second place, when the time arrived for you to come here, the fact that you left your tent without being seen would surely lead to a complete exploration of the spot where it was pitched and the discovery of the passage."

"True. But you could not go outside again—not while I was on the island. Two armed men guarded me all night."

"O—oh! I didn't know that," she said. "I'm glad you came without being asked."

So there was nothing supernatural about her after all. She was just a beautiful flesh and blood girl taking big chances for some reason or other, but not wishing to rush into unnecessary danger.

"No matter," I commented. "Whether I would have obeyed your command or not, the thing was taken out of my hands. The wind blew the tent away. I needed no excuse for the change, as Huggers had told me that I was to go with him in the ship in three days, and I needed only a temporary shelter."

"Well, what did you do?"

"I slung the tent between two trees. I found an iron bar, and carried it to the tent without anybody seeing it, and tonight, or last night, or last week some time, I don't know when in this place, I hit the two guards with the bar, cracked both their skulls, I think, took their revolvers, squeezed through the hole, and here I am."

"Something of a feat, I'm sure. You see now the fact that your tent was at a distance from the cave will not draw their attention to it."

"I'm afraid you are too sanguine. Heretofore they have had no incentive to explore the cave. But they now have a mysteriously escaped prisoner to look for."

"Yes, that is true," she said soberly. "The situation is most dangerous

here," I went on. "I would advise an immediate departure."

She stopped in the tunnel, flashed her eyes and the lantern at me at the same time, and laughed bitterly.

"You don't think I am here for fun?"

"I was wondering," I replied, "what you were here at all for."

"You will learn," she said. "I came willingly enough, and am still here because I can't get away."

"Are you an American?" I inquired.

"No. I don't really know what I am. My father is an English gentleman. My mother was a Norwegian. I was born in Christiania."

"Does this island belong to Norway?"

"No. This island belongs to me."

The exclamation of surprise I could not suppress was scarcely out of my mouth when another followed it. Rounding a turn in the tunnel we came almost suddenly upon what might have been the great hall of one of the old-time feudal castles.

And in the center of it, under a swinging lamp, a man reclined on a cot.

CHAPTER XIV.

MILDRED'S STORY.

"FATHER," spoke the girl tenderly, stepping up to the recumbent figure, "this is Captain Merrill, who was, as I told you, a prisoner of our unwelcome tenants."

The man turned a handsome face toward me, and held out his hand weakly.

"Pardon me for a seeming incordiality," he said. "I have been injured in reaching here. I welcome you just the same, and congratulate you on your escape—if you have escaped. And perhaps we are a little selfish in our congratulations, for we were sadly in need of company, Mildred and I. Is that not so, Mildred?"

"In need of company and a good many other things. Do you know where you are, Captain Merrill?"

"Well—as nearly as I can get at it, in an enchanted cave."

"You are sixteen fathoms below the surface of the channel between two islands."

"More enchanting still. I have been as low, but in a submarine."

"A boat, you mean. But you had the freedom of the sea, and we are prisoners," she reminded me.

"It is night," I said. "Don't you sleep?"

"I usually visit Faljford in the night."

"But why do you visit it at all? What is Faljord to you?"

"My only inheritance. If you are not too weary, and are interested, I will tell you the history of these islands."

"Weary? With such a treat before me? How can you suggest such a thing?"

"Give the captain some cakes and wine and a cigar," said Mr. Symes. "Pardon me, captain. I'm going to sleep."

While I sipped the wine the girl sat down beside me on a long bench.

"My grandfather's name," she began, "was Olaf Bjorgasson. At one time he was very influential in the affairs of Norway, being a member of the Lagthing, which, you probably know, is the higher house of the Storthing.

"Away back—long years ago—his ancestors had been, I suppose, not exactly pirates or robbers, but those were the days when might made right, and the rude strong men of that time did not look at things as we do now. Anyway, whatever they were, they controlled these islands. I will show you."

She rose, went to a rudely made cabinet, and brought me a paper.

"This is a chart of my domain," she said with a light laugh in which I could detect a tinge of bitterness. "Here, you see, is Faljford. Here is Najoid. We are between the two, but nearer Najoid. And the islands are so situated and the mouth of the tunnel on Najoid is so much larger and lower than on Faljford, that there is always a current of air providing ventilation. Then there are other islands, as you see, some acres in extent, and some mere rocks.

"Now to return to history.

"It seems that these old Norse kings of the sea used the harbors of these islands, especially the big one between the horns on Faljford, as shelter for their ships. Possibly because they dared not go to the mainland, possibly be-

cause it saved them time. Anyway they did, and their motives need not bother us.

"One of my grandfather's ancestors, who seemed to be sort of a big chief among these men, somehow obtained a feudal tenure of these islands—the entire group, although he seems to have done nothing toward improving them in any way.

"After that from father to son the papers confirming the tenure were handed down, and each one seemed to have done nothing except one, I don't know which, who saw a possible outlying fortress for his country, or a refuge, or something, and having discovered this submarine passage connecting two of the islands had a secret door built at the Faljford end.

"Why he did not close the entire mouth of the tunnel I don't know, unless the purpose was to leave opening enough for a complete circulation of air. If that was the case it has served you—us—well to-day.

"As I said in the beginning, my grandfather was quite a prominent man if all I understand is true, and being a poor one as well, had the tenure confirmed again, to establish forever the title.

"His plan was to people the islands with sturdy, but poor folk, let them have land at a small rental, and establish a little domain of his own over which he would be the master, magistrate, chief.

"He got as far as bringing a few families to one of the other large islands, where they still are. They are rather a stupid lot, and care no more about what goes on in Faljford than they care what is done in London.

"But my grandfather enjoyed the hunting and fishing, and I spent many pleasant weeks here with papa and grandfather, and so came to learn of this tunnel. It is not a remarkable formation, for the islands and rocks along the coast of Norway can show many peculiar freaks of nature as singular as this.

"My grandfather never lived here, never built a house, but his old Norse nature took a liking to this cavern so far under the sea, and he had it rudely fitted up, as you see.

"My mother was his only child, and when he died the islands became hers. But I saw little of them during her lifetime because we were in London—papa in business, and I at school.

"But when mama died, father and I both thought of the islands. As I was another only child they were mine. Our idea was something like my grandfather's, and we went to Christiania, there to fit out an expedition to begin the settlement. But we thought we had better come over first and examine the place, having heard rumors that bad men had settled here. We came in a small yacht, with only two sailors.

"We landed on Najoid at night, and the two sailors took the boat to coast around Faljford and see what had been done.

"They never came back. Whether Huggers and his terrible crew captured them or not, we don't know. They may have discovered what a crowd we had to contend with, and deserted.

"Before we landed my father, who is not a very good sailor, fell down the hatch and hurt his spine. And now we are prisoners.

"Is it not like a story out of a book? I am veritably a queen and yet a prisoner in my own domain. And you—"

"Well—and I?" I asked with curiosity.

"Are the knight who has come to deliver me."

And then this remarkable girl laughed again.

CHAPTER XV.

INTRUDERS.

By this time, although I had been greatly interested in the story of Mildred Symes, I was a very sleepy knight indeed.

"I have about exhausted my Sir Galahad," said Miss Symes, with another of her musical laughs. "I don't suppose you really enjoyed waiting in that dark tunnel so many hours?"

"I have had more hilarious experiences," I answered. "But is it day or night?"

"Oh, it makes no difference here. No daylight can get in here. And that is

one thing that worries me. What shall we do if our oil gives out?"

"Has the end nearly been reached?"

"It is almost in sight. I am not a widow, and no miracle can continue to keep my cruse supplied."

"If we remain here long we must supply the miracle—somehow," I told her. "But, as you wisely remarked, I am rather sleepy, and I know you must be. There are many questions I want to ask to which the answers would be most interesting. But if I begin we shall talk a week. I suggest that we sleep and continue our conversation in the morning, or night, or whenever it is we wake up."

"A good suggestion. Your room is yonder."

She pointed to a dark arch in the wall of the great cathedral-like cavern, and peering into it I managed to make out a small apartment, furnished a little better, I thought, than the larger one.

"Is that the guest-chamber?" I asked.

"It used to be mine when the hunting parties came here."

"Then I will not deprive you of it now. I see there are plenty of bunks, and I will remain here with your father. I'll get the run of the place. Don't fear. It's a hard matter to lose a sailor."

"The map of the entire cavern is here," she said, pointing to a well-drawn chart hanging against the rock wall.

Examining this, after she had gone to her room, I found the large cavern to be merely the center of a number of smaller ones, and not far from the opening on Najoid.

Too weary to pursue my inquiries further, I threw myself on a bunk and slept soundly for hours.

When I awoke the aroma of coffee assailed my nostrils. A small table was set, and Miss Symes was busying herself getting breakfast.

"So, Sir Knight, you are awake," she said. "Sleep well?"

"Like a brick. But where did you make this coffee?"

"Well, in other days we had a small oil-stove in here. But as the current of air trends toward Faljford, I fancied the odor of cooking might reach the cave. In other days it didn't matter. But now, when the men are so near, it was dangerous. So I carried the stove outside."

"I think I'll stroll out and see what your Najoid looks like."

"Well, when you return please bring in that pot on the stove and turn off the flame."

I walked some distance on an almost level floor and then began to ascend. After the journey from Faljford the walk to Najoid seemed insignificant.

I found the island to be more level and yet better wooded than the larger one. The shore facing Faljford rose in cliffs that cut off all view from the larger island of what might be taking place on Najoid or beyond. Almost at the entrance to the tunnel an old oil-stove was burning, and on it stood an iron pot.

Curiosity got the better of me and I lifted the cover. In it were fresh mackerel and potatoes.

"Pretty good for castaways," I said to myself.

Turning off the flame I took the pot and hurried down to the castle, temple—home—whatever one might call it. Here another surprise greeted me. On the table were white bread, fresh butter, and milk. Sugar, of course.

"A Lucullian feast!" I exclaimed. "But how do you do it?"

"I buy these things from the Norwegians," she answered.

"But if you can communicate with them so easily why can't they take you to Christiana?"

"They say they have no boats that could travel that far. We are a good many miles—eight hundred, at least, from the mainland. Their boats are just to fish in around here. These people are not like the old Norsemen."

We drew the rude stools to the table, Mildred first helping her father, who could not leave his cot. Then we two, facing each other as though we were at home or in a restaurant, ate heartily, and I do not remember a meal that tasted so good.

"Now, Miss Symes," I said, "what are you going to do? You can't remain here forever. What are your plans—if you have any?"

"I have wishes—but no plans by which to carry them out."

"And what are those wishes?"

"To reach Christiana, to raise a force, and come here to claim my own."

"The first—and only difficult thing is to reach Christiana."

"Exactly."

"Now tell me why you risk going to Faljford."

"All the ships that come this way pass on that side. I go when Huggers is away in the hope of signaling a passing vessel."

"You are certainly a remarkable young woman."

"I am no different from others. But I am placed in remarkable circumstances."

"I am wisely answered, but I insist that you *are* different from others. You are more—"

She shot me a warning glance. I suppose there was warmth enough in my manner to make her think I was going to say "beautiful," which I was.

"Courageous," I ended with.

She nodded. "That's better than I expected," she said.

At last I could smoke again. Mr. Symes had cigars and plenty of matches. Standing against the wall was a rifle and fowling-piece.

"Suppose I go take a shot at something," I suggested. "Will they hear the rifle on Faljford?"

"No. The distance is too great, the town is on the opposite side, and there is a mountain between you and it. In the woods, especially on the hill, you will find plenty of wolves, bear—the little brown bear, deer, and lynx. There are no inhabitants on Najoid, so you have nothing to fear."

I selected a gun, took a small quantity of ammunition, and after receiving the good wishes of Mr. Symes and Miss Symes for my success, I sallied forth.

The air was as salubrious as one could wish. Not fearing Huggers and his gang, I trod the ground like a king. And wasn't I a knight?

It was early morning. I could tell that from the position of the sun and my watch, which, though it kept good time, could not tell me in the cave whether it was night or day.

I first shot a wolf, which I left where it was. I wanted game to eat. After some time a deer crossed my path and I brought it down. In no hurry I slung the carcass across my shoulder and walked back to the cave.

At the entrance of the big chamber I paused, horror-struck. Miss Symes was held fast in the arms of one of Huggers's men, while another was tying Mr. Symes with ropes.

CHAPTER XVI.

GREETING A VISITOR.

NOTWITHSTANDING the training that comes with service in the United States navy, I felt a tightening sensation at my heart.

As yet none of the four knew of my approach. The backs of the two scoundrels were toward me. Mr. Symes was being bound so that he could look only upward, and Mildred was making such a desperate fight that she could look nowhere except at her assailant.

A strange wild feeling came over me. Hating Huggers as I had before, and his whole dastardly crew, that hate dwindled into insignificance compared to what I now felt toward the man whose sacrilegious hands were laid with violence on Mildred Symes.

For in that moment it suddenly flashed upon me that here was the girl I loved.

A life at sea, visiting every port, seeing beautiful women of all nations, had left me thus far loveless. But here, in a romantic and dangerous situation, this brave and lovely girl appealed to my emotions as none other had ever done.

Under certain stress and circumstances love takes a plunge when it would in smoother times loiter on the way. It was so with me.

Yet I knew I must not act as might one of the knights of old, and bawl out my threats and challenges, only to be shot down. This knight of a submarine castle must be wary—cautious—remorseless.

I crept back a few paces out of sight, and carefully deposited the deer without making a noise. Then, with my rifle ready, I crept with light footsteps toward the cavern again.

"I think my beauty will make the boss a fine wife," said the fellow who

had Mildred in his arms. "But it won't hurt if I take a kiss first. He'll never know."

"Brute! scoundrel! Let me go!" I heard Mildred gasp. "Oh, there is a man—a real man—if he was only here!"

"Give me the kiss," the fellow cried roughly.

He never got that kiss.

"I am here," I said stepping forward, and clubbing the rifle I brought the butt down on his head with crushing force.

With a half-uttered curse he sank to the floor, blood streaming from his scalp.

I did not wait even an instant to see the effect of my blow. I knew what it would be. And I saw the other fellow turning in surprise and something like fear to find out the cause of the interruption.

I swung the rifle again and whacked him in the temple. He had already drawn his revolver, and as he keeled over under the side blow, it was discharged by the spasmodic action of his fingers, the bullet flattening against the wall of rock.

Both men now lay unconscious, and I turned to Mildred. She stood there looking—rather staring—at me, her whole frame shaking and trembling, and rigid with terror.

"Captain!" she murmured.

"Mildred, my dear girl," I said, "you have had an ugly experience. I am glad I came back in time."

"You saved me from—you saved me—from him." She spoke half hysterically, pointing to her late assailant who lay bleeding at her feet.

"And I will save you from the rest if God spares my life," I said.

"He did not hurt you, did he?" I added, turning my rifle round. "If he did—a bullet—"

"No; not here—not now," she begged, touching my arm. "We've work to do."

She pointed to her father. I stepped to his side, and with my knife cut the knot that had been tied, and then began to unwind the rope instead of cutting it in pieces, for I had use for it. Mildred stood on the other side and helped me. The injured man lay and watched us, breathing hard.

When we were taking off the last laps of rope Mildred's hands touched mine. They rested for a moment where mine were close to them. Color came back to her face, and she looked me unflinchingly in the eyes.

"My God, Merrill," said Mr. Symes, "what would we have done without you—Millie and I? Merrill, if I am killed before we get out of this, I want you to promise to take care of Millie."

"With my life! With all my life—if she will let me."

"Ah," he breathed. "The man!"

I led her away, for by this time she was almost fainting.

"I am not so brave after all," she murmured, as she sank on a bench.

"You are, dear; but few could go through this experience as you have. You heard what I said before to your father. I meant it, but this is no time for love-making. I will simply say I love you. May I say that?"

She breathed harder.

"Yes," she whispered.

"Then one—for a voucher—I'll take the kiss that fellow didn't get."

I kissed her, and the kiss was returned.

"Now," I said, pulling myself together to face the situation that lay before us, "we must get busy. First I'll tie these fellows so that when they return to consciousness, if they ever do, they will be harmless. Then I'll take a look up the tunnel."

I used the rope I had taken from Mr. Symes, and trussed the men together, splicing them with their heads touching, but their bodies apart, and fastening the rope, of which there was plenty, around their necks so that if they struggled to release each other they would surely strangle themselves. Neither one could raise a hand to his head without tightening the rope around his neck.

"Have you a pistol?" I asked Mildred, who had recovered some of her nerve.

She shook her head.

It will be remembered that I had taken two revolvers from the two fellows I had struck down when I escaped from the tent. I now handed her one of them.

"You know how to shoot," I told her. "Now if either of these fellows tries to get free, and that harness I've put on doesn't seem to work, put a bullet through his head. This isn't going to turn into a prayer-meeting, and there is no Red Cross sympathy to be wasted on such cattle. We are going to get out of here, and in safety."

"I'll do it," she said calmly.

I lit the same lantern she had used, and making sure the rifle was loaded I started up the tunnel slope.

"Is it a straight road? No dividing places?"

"None," she answered. "It leads straight to the cave."

I met no one on the way. It seemed a terrible climb, and I marveled at the girl making it alone. But I finally reached the small opening.

I turned down the lantern-flame, and hid in a recess in the wall. Then I waited. It seemed hours before anything happened. Then suddenly a light gleamed in the opening.

First a hand, bearing a lantern, was thrust through. Then a face appeared, looking weird and wicked in the lantern-light. Next the entire head was thrust in. Then the squirming and twisting I had gone through was performed.

I waited until the fellow was through to the waist. Then taking steady aim I fired. The report of the rifle echoed and reechoed along the walls. The lantern fell. I picked up my own and went to see what I had done.

The fellow hung half way through the opening, shot through the head.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GUARDIAN OF THE GATE.

I HAD been in sea-fights, and if a shot from the ship I was on, or of which I was in command, carried another vessel to the bottom at the cost of so many lives, it was all in the fortunes of war, and the battle went on. But I had never before been in a position when I had to shoot a man in cold blood, and I confess the feeling that came over me when I saw the drooping head of the fellow I had killed was not pleasant.

I knew he was a scoundrel, and at the bidding of Jim Huggers would have cut my throat without blinking. Nevertheless the feeling was there.

There was not, however, room for sentiment. I had not only my own life to preserve, but the life of a helpless man, and the life, and more, of a beautiful girl—one whom now I loved. No lives, I resolved, should stand between them and safety if I had to commit assassination in the dark.

I tried to peer beyond the opening to see if there were others in the cave, but the body of the desperado was so jammed I could not find an opening large enough to enable me to see past it.

I had in a vest-pocket a pencil. When I landed on Faljford I had possessed a fountain pen. But this had vanished in some way. I also possessed a small note-book. Turning up the lantern I wrote on a leaf of the note-book as follows:

> JIM HUGGERS:
>
> There are more of us than you think. The two men you sent in are dead, and this makes the fifth to feel my hand. You and your gang enter here at your peril. You will be killed one by one as this one was.
>
> MERRILL, U. S. N.

Tearing this leaf out of the book I tucked it into the pocket of the dead man's coat so the end of it could be seen.

I waited a few minutes longer, but as no one came to remove the body, I took up the lantern and returned to the central cavern.

I found Mildred standing with an oil-can in her hand, and an anxious look on her white face.

"Captain!" she gasped. "A terrible catastrophe has occurred."

"What is it, Mildred?" I asked.

"I was about to fill the lamps, which would take about all the oil we had, when one of the men moved and began to curse, which frightened me so that I spilled it—spilled it all. Oh, what a clumsy thing I am! What shall we do? You spoke of performing a miracle to keep up the supply of oil. What is it?"

"The accident amounts to nothing, my dear girl," I told her, "only I don't

like to leave you alone. I have just shot a man—up there."

"In the tunnel?"

"Half-way through the opening. I left him sticking there."

"Are—are those men secure?" she asked, pointing at the prisoners.

I made sure they were.

"Then give me the rifle—but here is my own. You may need yours. Now the worst thing that could happen to us would be to have no light. We simply must have light."

"We'll have some kind of a light. I don't know how it will work with wicks."

"Fish-oil?"

"Cod."

I chose a pole and tackle.

"Where is the boat in which you go to buy your stuff from the islanders?"

"If, when you emerge from the tunnel on Najoid, you turn to the right, you will find a little cove. The boat is there."

"Are there mussels along the rocks?"

"Plenty."

The boat I found was a miserable affair, not fit even for Mildred to go among the islands. But I soon had some mussels, and, rowing out, began fishing for cod. In an hour I had three large enough for my purpose.

I was no adept in the art of extracting the oil from the livers. But I managed, after trying one method and another, of getting quite a quantity, but not clear and pure as it is in the market. However, it was oil.

I returned, and not believing that the thick mass would rise through a wick, I unscrewed the burner of a lamp, filled the bowl with the stuff, and made a float through which I put a wick to keep the flame from the oil. I lit this and it gave off a flame, but also an uncomfortable amount of smoke.

"Anyway we can have oil," I said, "and if I can kill off our enemies at the rate of five a day we won't need it long."

I noticed that the same man who had startled Mildred was cursing and trying to burst his bonds.

"Here, you," I cried, giving him a kick, "none of that unless you want a bullet in you. What's your name?"

"What the—"

I kicked him again.

"What's your name?"

"Ben Hake."

"Now, Ben Hake, how did you discover the opening to this tunnel?"

"We searched all Faljford and knew there must be another way for you to leave. We found the tunnel. Darn the tunnel. I wish we hadn't found it."

"I wish so, too. Now, what is the intention of Huggers?"

"Orders was to shoot you on sight."

"How generous. Now what do you suppose he would do with Mr. Symes and Miss Symes?"

"Kill the old man and carry off the gal. He's wild enough for anything since you clipped the two guards."

"Did I kill them?"

"Might as well. Neither ain't spoke since."

"Now," and I turned to Mildred, "we've got to do something at once. If we only could be sure of that passage I'd try to get my cutter."

"Captain," broke in Mr. Symes, "it is abhorrent to me to lie here so perfectly useless and dependent on you and Mildred. I ought to be of *some* use. Of course I can't get up and walk around, but it's only my back. I can use my hands and eyes. Suppose you get my cot up there by the opening, place me face down so I can shoot, and give me a rifle. I can guard that tunnel as well as anybody."

Mildred gasped, and looked at me with a face deadly white. I hesitated. It meant much to us if he could.

"But, Mr. Symes," I objected, "that is putting a terrible task on a sick man."

"I'm not a sick man. I merely sprained my back. I'll be all right soon. I insist. That will give you all your time to plan and work. I am doing it for my own good as well as yours."

It was so settled. We lifted him from the cot, and I carried it to the spot from where I had fired. The body was still crowded in the opening. Then with the assistance of Mildred and myself her father chose his own position as a marksman. I left him the lantern, a rifle, and some ammunition.

"If you have occasion to shoot—if a live head shows itself," I said, "shoot

quick and shoot with the express intent of killing."

"I will; you can be sure of that," he answered as we left him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DESPERATE CHANCE.

"Now, my dear girl," I said to Mildred, after we had returned to the great central cavern, "we've got to get right down to soil and dig. There's no use trying to hold out here any longer."

"I see neither a way to hold out nor to get away," she answered, something like a sob escaping her. "The oil is gone, and we can't live with all the lamps like this one. And Huggers is sure to get us sooner or later."

"It is a sure thing," I admitted, "that Huggers won't sail now till he does get us. We might leave here, and take refuge among the few peasants, but as soon as he learned we had left this place he would scour every island in the group. He would surely discover us. And we could never find a better place than this to fight him from, and this has about outlived its usefulness."

"You think that—What do you really think?"

"I think this: Huggers did not believe in your existence because he never had seen you. But then he did not know of the existence of the tunnel. Having learned of the tunnel, he will believe and the reports of your beauty will make him mad to have you at any price of life among his men.

"He will not know of any secret door at the Faljford end of the tunnel, and will see only the small opening as I did. This will prove to him that there is another entrance somewhere. He will begin his search, if he has not already done so, on this side of the Faljford mountain. Having satisfied himself that there is no tunnel opening there, he will start a systematic search for the Najoid end, and will find it. I actually believe Huggers is a madman. But he is no fool. And his men obey him like whipped dogs.

"Suppose he does find this end of the tunnel. We are then in his power."

"I know it, I know it," she repeated. "But what can we do? You and I cannot go to the other islands and leave papa guarding the tunnel."

"No, that is quite true. We must plan to help him as well as ourselves. There is nothing to do that I can see, but to try what I had thought of, and given up."

"What was that?"

"Before your note came I thought of trying to steal my cutter and skipping out."

"Why didn't you?"

"For two—three reasons. One was that there was little possibility of my securing the cutter while I was a prisoner on Faljford. Another was, that if I did succeed in getting away with the cutter, a steam or motor launch from the ship might overtake me. And the third—"

"Well, the third?"

"I wanted to see you."

"And yet, after these three reasons had caused you to drop that plan you now think of going back to it again? Why?"

"Because I am no longer a prisoner on Faljford, but for the moment a free man below the bottom of the sea. I have your little boat, if it deserves the name, and can row late at night into the cove and get my cutter. And again, I have seen you. Not only that, but I *have* you. And in answer to the other objection, we might just as well run the risk of being caught by the launch from the ship as being caught in here."

She looked at me anxiously, dubiously.

"Your arguments are almost unanswerable," she said. "But suppose we fail."

"Are we going to succeed here? You just said yourself that you saw no way out."

"True, I see none. I must leave it to your judgment. It all seems to depend on your getting safely back here with the cutter."

"I hope to do that. If I am away too long—don't worry for a while—but if the time seems so long that it appears certain that I have failed, you must guard this end of the tunnel. Shoot any man who appears except me, of course. The deer I killed will give you food for a while."

"But—but—if you are away too long I shall know—shall know—you are killed."

She flung her arms around my neck and burst into tears.

"There, there, brave little woman," I said, kissing her, "this won't do just when you need the most nerve. You must brace up. I must leave you full of that courage you had before I came. I fear my arrival was a bad thing for you. It has brought about all this trouble."

"Oh, don't say that! Don't say that. Even if we die together I have had your love for a little time, and that is something."

I managed to get her calmed somewhat, and then even cheerful.

"I think I'll fix up that deer for you," I told her. "Outside in this cold atmosphere it will keep a long while. And we'll have a good meal before I go. There is plenty of time."

I skinned the deer, cut it up conveniently for her, and then we cooked some of it over the oil-stove.

It never seemed to be real night, and I had to wait till about two o'clock in the morning before I started. I had made a visit to Mr. Symes, carrying him his supper.

I was not surprised to find the man I had shot had been removed.

"Did you see anybody?" I asked.

"No, they kept out of sight while they dragged him in," was the reply.

The next question was what to do with the two men we had inside.

"I've got a scheme," I announced to Mildred. "We'll drag them up and place them in front of your father, and tell him to shoot them if they try to escape."

She nodded, and we struggled up the long steep incline first with one, then the other. I secured the ropes again and told Symes to shoot if they moved.

I also explained what I was going to do.

When it came time for me to leave, Mildred's nerve gave way again. I kissed her and tried to cheer her.

"It is like—like bidding farewell to somebody who is to be hanged," she said.

I laughed at this, and untwining her arms from around my neck, stepped into the little boat and rowed away.

It was but a short row to Faljford, and though the tunnel had seemed of almost interminable length, it took me only a few minutes to row around the island to the cove. There, to my delight, was my cutter, just as I had left it, and no one in sight to prevent me from sailing away in her to the rescue of the girl I loved.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

ELATED as I was over my success thus far, and the fact that the cutter was just as I had left her, I did not rush in rashly to take possession of it. I lay at the mouth of the cove for several minutes in the little rowboat.

I thought there might be men lying in wait for me. But no one appeared, and I rowed in, being careful not to bump one boat against the other.

I cautiously hauled up the anchor of the cutter, which I had found in the water, though I had thrown it on the rocks, and then, placing it in the small boat, rowed out of the cove hauling the cutter after me.

I wished to get some distance from the cove and place some high land between me and any possible observer before I raised the sail.

I might have towed the cutter all the way to Najoid for that matter, it was so short a distance, but then if I was pursued I would surely be caught. There was a good sailing breeze, and with canvas up I would have a living chance.

When I was well out to sea I hauled alongside the cutter and boarded her. It took but a moment to raise the sail, and soon, with the small boat in tow, I was bounding along at a good rate of speed.

I glanced behind toward Faljford, and then my heart almost stopped beating. For, crawling along in the shadow of the cliffs, was a launch. From the lack of noise I concluded its power was electric, which of course would be just the thing for Huggers to use in any pirate work.

In an instant I knew why the launch

skulked along in this fashion. It was the purpose of her crew not only to capture me, but to have me lead them to the other end of the tunnel. This I was resolved not to do.

I cut loose the small boat, and, relieved of this incubus, the cutter shot ahead. The wind was strong, and with the lee rail almost under water, she scudded along as if she knew my life depended on her speed.

I did not head toward Najoid at all, but turned toward a small rocky island on which there was one tree. The crew of the launch, evidently divining that I had discovered them, now put on all power and it became veritably a race for life.

The launch made no more noise than the cutter, and with the wash of the waves, the knowledge that capture meant sure death to me, and a horrible captivity to Mildred, a grimness settled down on me, and I began to jockey my boat to get all the speed out of her I could.

I rounded the little island on the lee side, and then ran round the windward side of another, almost similar.

I wanted, if possible, to draw my pursuers on to destruction on the rocks. But I had at the same time the safety of my own boat to think of.

My mind was torn with the thought of what would happen to Mildred if these miscreants captured me. For myself I knew it would be death, and death only.

Huggers by this time was, I conjectured, in a condition of exasperated madness. I could face my own fate if it became necessary, but my reason almost left me when I thought of Mildred in the clutches of the greatest blackguard the sea knew.

I almost prayed to the cutter to take on more speed, yet I knew that in the nature of things the launch must surely win in the end.

If I could only keep on till her batteries gave out I would have the better of them. I could leave them drifting, or at best rowing, but even then I would not dare go to Najoid and the cavern until they had wearied of the chase and returned to Faljford. And this they would not do until forced by hunger.

In and out among the islets I sailed, and at each turn I could see the launch always, it seemed to me, a little the gainer.

It was light enough for me to see, and had this been anything but a race for life I would have enjoyed the danger and the wild boat ride among the rocks and between beautiful islands, some lofty and crowned with trees, others low and seemingly of tilled land. Here and there I caught glimpses of a house, a thatched cottage, but no people.

As I rounded the end of an island I saw the launch coming head on. It had turned from its course to cut off my retreat. I jockeyed again, and permitting them to get near me, I went about, and with the wind dead astern, flew like a bird away from them before they knew enough to turn the launch.

"Shoot him," I heard somebody cry.

"No. We've got to get him alive. The boss said so."

"Yesterday he said to shoot him on sight."

"That was when he thought he was on Faljford. The boss wants to know how people get in that tunnel from the other end."

"You can bet this fellow will never tell you."

"You'll see whether he will or not. I've got secrets out of strong men before now with a rope around their necks."

Voices carry far over the water and this entire conversation was brought to me by the wind. It did not make me any the less anxious to escape my ugly pursuers. But the fellow was right who said I would never disclose the position of the cavern entrance.

My course straight before the wind was carrying me out to the open sea. This, if I had been gaining, would have been fortunate. But the launch was a speedy one, and I had only a small mainsail. Had I a racing rig this story might have had a different running.

I was armed only with one of the pistols I had taken from the guards of my tent, having, as it will be remembered, given one to Mildred. Yet I hesitated even to use this.

I had heard that the orders of Huggers were to take me alive. Those or-

ders had thus far prevented my pursuers from shooting. I knew, however, that if I opened fire they would respond, and the five shots I carried would be nothing against the fusillades they could deliver.

I came around again and put for a group of rocks. Some were really more than rocks, while others were mere pinnacles of stone sticking out of the water. As I reached this group one of the party in the launch fired.

I was not hit, and did not know if he really intended to hit me. But, drawing my pistol, I fired. I heard a yell of pain and then a concert of curses.

There was more firing. I emptied my revolver, and without knowing what damage I had inflicted, realized that I was completely at their mercy.

I ran in among the little islands, recklessly keeping at full speed, but the launch was still gaining. I knew that in another quarter of an hour I would be killed or captured.

I saw clear water ahead, and the high formation of the islands just then hid the pursuing launch from view. I seized a painter and lashed the tiller. Heading the cutter for the open water and letting her go her way, I plunged headlong into the sea.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LEDGE OF ROCK.

NEAR the spot where I had taken my headlong dive, there was a rock of peculiar formation. It was quite barren, rising almost precipitously from the sea, not very high, but with a tide-worn ledge running part way around it.

I swam as rapidly as I could toward this rock; and, not daring to land on it on the side toward the channel through which the launch would pass, I swam part way around. I had just managed to crawl onto the ledge, which was not more than a foot and a half wide at any place, and crouched there while the launch passed.

"We've got the rascal now," I heard one voice say. "Shoot him."

"I don't see him," said another.

"He's down in the boat. We'll catch him anyway."

After they had gone, I flattened myself out on the ledge, and got in a position from which I could watch their chase of the empty boat.

It has often been written that a stern chase is a long one. But that was destined to be untrue as applied to the chase of the unmanned cutter. Deprived of a managing hand she plunged, staggered, and faltered. In two or three minutes the launch had overtaken her and steered alongside.

Even in the night-light—there was no night blackness in this latitude—I could see the evident discomfiture and perplexity of the launch's crew. Studying them at my leisure I counted five men. Whether there had been a sixth or even seventh, wounded by me and put out of commission, I could not then tell.

Two men had stepped from the rocking launch into the cutter, the motor had been stopped, and there seemed to be some exciting talk. I could see them gesticulating and pointing back to the labyrinth of narrow channels through which I had led them on such a blind chase.

Then after a time the cutter was made fast to the stern of the launch, and the latter was headed back toward me.

As I said in describing the rock I was on, the ledge did not extend for its entire circumference. But it went far enough round for me to crawl, if they examined the rock, to such a distance as would keep me out of their sight.

I had a great desire to hear what they had to say about my disappearance, and took some risk in order to do so.

"It's plain enough," I heard one say. "He knew we'd get him. He's gone and drowned himself to escape Huggers. Good for him he did. He wouldn't have an easy death with the captain."

"The king, you mean. Didn't Huggers say to call him king?"

"King be blowed. Huggers is so puffed up he thinks he's one of the big guns of the earth. W'y, if he ever started in the king business he'd land us all in prison or on the gallows. He's cracked."

"On that subject, anyway," said another.

"Look here," cried a voice I had not heard before, speaking sternly. "we ain't here to discuss Jim Huggers, his

sanity, or anything else. We're here to get that infernal captain of the United States navy and find the other end of that hole in the ground."

"For why does he want the other end of the hole in the ground? Ain't the captain here—or wasn't he a few minutes ago?"

"There's a reason. Remember the note we found on the body of Jim Sickers? It said there was more'n him in there. The boss believes it. Then remember this captain asked about a woman and Merrill said he saw, and Sally Grover said she saw the woman, too. The boss didn't believe it, but now he does. He wants this woman and wants to know where she came from and who she is."

"If she's good-looking God help her if she falls into his hands."

"Shut up. Let's hunt for the captain first."

"There ain't no use huntin' dead men in this tide. It's runnin' five mile an hour. Let's hunt for the bloomin' cave if he wants it and the woman."

"But the captain may not be drowned."

"Ho! No, he ain't drownded, he ain't. Think he's a mermaid? The clothes he had on would sink a cork. Where d'ye think he is? Up in a balloon laughin' at us?"

"Maybe he is drowned, after all."

"Ain't no maybe about it. An' then these two fellers, Kunkle and Wilf, need care. The sneak-rat put holes in both of 'em."

I felt a little exultation at this. I began to think I would have to notch my gun-stock as the old-time American Indians did to keep an account of their victims. Here were two more. That made seven of the gang gone.

If Providence continued to favor me I might annihilate the whole crew, Huggers included, before I got through with it.

The launch passed on, and after a while evidently gave up the search, for it headed toward Najoid.

I was now thoroughly alarmed on Mildred's account. As long as Huggers persisted in his unbelief in her existence she was practically safe from pursuit. But now that he had awakened to the fact that she, and perhaps others besides myself, occupied the tunnel, he would make unremitting search until he found her.

My first thought, rash enough, but natural enough, too, owing to the love that existed between us, was to plunge in again and swim to her assistance. But of what aid could I be?

I lay on the ledge of rock a long time thinking this over.

If the launch went straight to Najoid, the natural location of the tunnel's end, it would be there before I could possibly reach it. And I, possibly exhausted after a difficult swim, and absolutely unarmed, would be useless against five men.

Moreover, my anxiety, instead of assisting Mildred, might do her harm by attracting attention to the very thing I wished them to overlook—the Najoid mouth of the tunnel.

And then, if they did discover the tunnel, and also Mildred, I could not hope to prevent her being captured, and would also be captured myself, which would effectually destroy all hope of being able to help her.

So, after reaching the conclusion that just then I would do more harm than good on Najoid, I remained stiff on the rock and waited.

CHAPTER XXI.

MILDRED MISSING.

My brief sojourn on Faljford, and my shorter stay in the submarine cavern, had taught me nothing about the tides. I found presently that I had taken to the ledge at low, or nearly low, tide, and the water was now rising.

It soon covered the ledge, and I clambered to the top. I looked toward Najoid and Faljford, but could see nothing of the launch. In my anxiety for Mildred I hoped the crew had hurried to Faljford in order to give the two men I had shot immediate attention.

I did not stop to think—although I knew from experience—that men of this kind are often callous to the suffering of their fellows when on a quest such as that in which they were engaged.

I sat on the top of the rock, watching other rocks around me of less altitude disappear one by one under water. And

at last after a few hours the seat I was occupying began to grow uncomfortable.

It was time to move. Again making sure that the launch was nowhere in sight I slid off easily, and then, taking my time, swam leisurely, in order to husband my strength as much as possible, toward Najoid.

It was well I did so. I virtually had to feel my way. For I remembered those sharp pinnacles I had seen, but which were invisible now, having been submerged by the rising tide. They might, however, be near enough to the surface to severely wound me, and possibly end my swimming. I could tell where some of the rocks were by the swirling eddies above them. But a very sharp point seldom makes much of an eddy.

I did not feel the exertion, because I put forth scarcely any. The current set toward Najoid and about all I had to do was to keep afloat—no difficult matter.

At last I felt the sloping ground of Najoid under me, and walked ashore. I was on that side of the island opposite the tunnel, and walked across it, warily watching for any signs of the men from the launch. I passed through one end of the wooded portion, and saw several animals I could have shot if I had possessed a gun.

They seemed to know I was harmless, for they were surprisingly bold. One big she-wolf actually stood and seemed to grin at me. It was just as if she were sympathizing with the human wolves on Faljford.

The island was about half a mile across, and as I approached the clear, stony place near the tunnel opening I went slower and more cautiously.

I looked in every direction for some sign of the launch or its men, but saw none.

I glanced into the cove where Mildred had kept the little boat, but the launch was not there. Nor could I see it anywhere along the beach or off shore.

Feeling hopeful again that the crew had decided not to land on Najoid, I rushed into the tunnel. I could not reach the big cavern quickly enough. When I arrived there I found it unoccupied.

"Mildred! Mildred!" I called.

There was no reply.

Almost distracted, I rushed hither and thither, shouting into the dark, smaller chambers, thinking she might have heard my footsteps, mistaken them for an advancing enemy and was hiding.

But no answer came except the echo of my own frenzied calling.

I stood nonplused, disheartened, in the big chamber, when I chanced to glance at the floor. Again my heart took to thumping.

A great pool of blood lay in one spot, and a spattering of the same red fluid was in another.

They had been there. Mildred had been surprised and captured. But the blood! What did that portend?

I tried to tell myself that this was merely the result of the blows I had given Ben Hake and his companion. But no, the dried evidence of that encounter was in another place altogether.

Had Mildred been wounded in her fight for liberty?

Or had she used her weapons against her captors with telling effect? Had she killed or wounded one or more before she had been overcome?

Almost beside myself, and weak from horror, I sank on a bench. I knew the kind of man Jim Huggers was, and my blood ran icy cold to think of Mildred being in his power.

It was bad enough to have him seek to kill me. But if he determined to make Mildred his wife it was a thousand times worse. I could scarcely command my thoughts.

Suddenly I awoke to the fact that I was very cold. The water in my clothing was freezing. The atmosphere in the cavern was not calculated to warm the blood of a man just out of the sea, so I got up and walked around briskly.

I fancied I heard a noise. I stopped and started to draw my pistol. Then I remembered it was empty, and I had no ammunition for it.

But there were guns. I looked toward where they were kept. Not a gun was left.

This was the last straw of proof that the miscreants had been there.

Then, with a great bound, my spirits went up again. Possibly Mildred, firing from the shelter of some of the pillars,

had driven off her assailants and was with her father at the Faljford end of the tunnel.

Filled with this hope, I raced the entire length of the tunnel as rapidly as the steep and slippery incline would permit.

I saw the gleam of Mr. Symes's lantern ahead, and the cot where I had placed it. When I drew nearer I made out the two captured men where I had placed them, and presently I saw Symes himself lying face downward with his rifle pointed at the opening to the cave.

"Mr. Symes," I gasped, "have you seen Mildred?"

"No," he answered wearily. "I thought she was safe with you. I rejoiced, being willing to be left, useless as I am, if by any possibility she could be saved."

"Saved!" I groaned. "Oh, my Heaven, saved! She has been captured and taken to Faljford."

With a groan his head dropped, the rifle fell to the floor of the tunnel, and Ben Hake, who had somehow managed, unseen by Symes, to wriggle himself loose, seized the gun and leaped to his feet.

"Now," he cried with an oath, "we'll have another story to tell."

(To be continued.)

MIXED COMPANY.

BY JOSEPH IVERS LAWRENCE.

A Painter in Oils Finds It Necessary, on Extremely Short Notice, To Dabble in Diplomacy.

EUGENE CARSON, in slippers, pantaloons, and velveteen jacket, stood on the cool, breezy roof over his studio, viewing, with more appreciation than contempt, the multiform and polychromatic gables, battlements, and chimney-pots of the city about him, until his pipe held naught save ashes. Then he quietly descended his Jacob's ladder into the warm studio with a half-hearted idea of resuming his station at the easel.

For an artist he possessed an uncommon sense of order, and he no sooner set his two soft-slippered feet upon the firm floor than he perceived that a chair and a tabouret had been moved during his brief absence. His glance instantly swept the rest of the room and paused at the open door of his sleeping chamber, which he clearly remembered closing.

Stealthily he tiptoed behind a Japanese screen, and from that covert peeped into the room. His chiffonier drawers were all pulled out, their contents littered the floor, and two strange, uninvited visitors busily amused themselves over his cherished personal effects with a calm assurance born of fancied security from interruption.

By a felicitous coincidence Carson was standing with his back to a decorative panoply of arms and armor, collected and arranged with little regard to style or period, and with commendable presence of mind he turned and selected from the array the most modern and business-like pistol it afforded. It happened to be a pattern used during the Civil War, but Carson reflected that a man looking into the round, staring muzzle of a revolver is not inclined to be finical as to its age.

The two intruders were deliberately sorting his jewelry and knickknacks, and stowing away those which suited their fancy in their capacious pockets, when the master of the place advanced toward them and uttered a mild stage cough.

A clarion blast or cannon-shot could have had but little more effect, for the two men seemed almost to jump out of their skins, and with the same thought they started forward and came together in forcible collision. By that time full ten seconds had passed and the sedative action of the brandished pistol began to assert itself insidiously.

"Stung!" groaned one of the burglars disconsolately.

"Put up your hands! Quick!" commanded Carson.

They obeyed with pathetic humility.

"What you going to do with us, mister?" asked the older-looking thief.

"Search you and then hand you over to the police, I guess," answered Carson, with the sententiousness of suddenly realized power and authority.

"Oh, don't do that, sir," pleaded the younger one earnestly. "This is the first time either one of us ever tried this game, sir. You might know that by us getting caught so easy."

"I guess you might be tryin' to crack something yourself if you hadn't eaten for a day and a night, nor had any place but a park bench to sleep on," suggested the older man.

"You look pretty hard for first offenders," said Carson with the air of a connoisseur in criminality. "I'll search you first, anyway. Now, keep your hands 'way up! If you make a single suspicious movement I'll shoot."

With the venerable weapon looking as menacing as it could, considering its sad emptiness, the master of the situation solemnly paraded around his prisoners like an officer at guard-mount, and from a position in their rear went through their pockets with the thoroughness and dexterity of an adept.

His plump wallet (he was a successful painter) and an assortment of familiar gewgaws came back into his possession, and in addition he collected a penknife, a couple of pipes, some loose small change, and an implement which he instinctively took to be a jimmy.

"I have heard," he said severely, "that old hands at this game do not carry weapons; that novices are apt to provide themselves with guns and blackjacks. You are undoubtedly old offenders, both of you."

"Now, look here, mister," sighed the older burglar, "don't go to acting too hasty; you're no *Sherlock Holmes*, you know. What'd we want to be carryin' round guns and things for, anyhow? We're just poor hungry devils. We don't want to hurt anybody. If you call in the cops, we'll get sent up, and we'll have to 'sociate with nothing but jailbirds; and you know yourself that that ain't going to do us any good. Be a good sport, now, and let us off this once; and we'll have a chance to go on being honest men, like we was this morning before we got so hungry."

"H-m, yes—I suppose so," mused Carson. "You're the huskiest looking starving men I ever saw; and the way you must have got by my Yale lock would make any crook proud of himself. You two just stand over there in the middle of the studio, where I can see you, and I'll get an honest, fair-minded policeman up here to talk this over."

"Say, that's a joke, all right, ain't it?" laughed the older burglar bitterly. "Come, now, mister, just listen here a second—"

An electric bell rang.

"What's that?" asked one of the men in alarm.

"That's my door-bell," answered Carson. "I have a caller, no doubt, but don't think you must go on that account. I shall be glad to have you meet my friend."

He thereupon sidled to a speaking-tube in the wall and proceeded to talk into it out of the corner of his mouth, while he kept an eye and the pistol trained upon the prisoners.

"Hallo! Who is it?" he called.

"It's Marian, Eugene," answered a musical voice; "I've brought Aunt Dorcas to take tea with you."

Marian Benton was the girl whom Carson privately regarded as his fiancée, although he had delayed serving her formal notification of election. He turned pale and red in rapid alternation as he considered the unusual situation.

The girl was uncommonly self-possessed and courageous, but her aunt was notoriously hysterical and almost prided herself upon a precariously weak heart. It would never do to alarm them too suddenly, but something must surely be done to relieve him of his embarrassing charges and set matters as straight as possible.

"Marian," he said calmly, "please don't come up just yet. I have visitors—er—you see—er—"

"Oh, I'm very sorry," replied the girl a bit stiffly. "I hope we haven't disturbed you too much—"

"No, no!" cried Carson: "listen, Marian: I don't want to alarm you or your aunt, but would you mind asking

some one to call a policeman? I've a couple of burglars visiting me."

"Oh, my Gawd!" wailed one of the thieves, and they both started as though to make a rush upon their captor, but with all the strength of his thumb he cocked the ancient and rusty hammer of the pistol with an impressive click and menaced the rascals so fiercely that they fell back in dismay.

The girl at the other end of the tube indulged in a hearty laugh.

"You always seem to have a joke ready at any hour, Eugene," she called. "I suppose you'd like me to bring a policeman in to tea."

"Oh, now, really, Marian," he protested anxiously, "I assure you this is no joke, my dear girl; I really want a policeman. Just ask any man you see to send for one, please."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the girl maddeningly. "I haven't forgotten the time you sent me to the address of the aquarium to call on poor, sick Mrs. Fish. You've cried 'wolf' too many times, Eugene. I'm coming right up."

"Great Scott! You mustn't, Marian!" he shouted, but her voice no longer sounded in the tube and he knew that he must decide quickly upon a plan of action.

"Look here, you fellows!" he said suddenly; "I don't quite know what I'll do with you, but two ladies are on their way up here in the elevator, and they're not accustomed to meeting burglars every day. They're rather nervous and I wouldn't have you alarm them for the world. Now you're both pretty shabby and tough looking, but so are some artists, and I may give you a chance if you do as I tell you now.

"Brace up as well as you can and pretend you're calling on me here. Keep your mouths shut all you can—the effect will be better—and if it isn't too much of a strain on you, you might drink some tea with the ladies. All I want you to do is to keep quiet and decently polite as long as they stay. After they go I may let you down easy.

"Say, maybe I don't look it, but I was an actor once," declared one of the robbers almost enthusiastically. "I tell you what, mister—"

A sharp rat-tat-tat sounded on the brass knocker outside.

With a warning shake of the head Carson slipped the pistol into his roomy velveteen pocket and opened the door. A pretty, handsomely gowned girl came into the studio, laughing merrily, followed by a fussy little old lady, rosy and breathless with the idea that even an ascent in an elevator is a form of exertion.

Cordial greetings were exchanged and Carson summoned all his nerve and histrionic talent to present his two new vagabond friends.

"Mr. Turpin," he murmured in introduction, with inward facetiousness; and, looking at the younger burglar, "my old friend, Mr. Claude Duval."

"So these gentlemen are the two burglars you wanted arrested," laughed the girl, as she advanced into the room and threw the thieves into consternation by shaking hands with them cordially.

Aunt Dorcas was a bit deaf and missed most of the conversation, but she laughed appreciatively, taking her cue from the faces about her, and said pantingly, as she scanned the somewhat inelegant afternoon costumes of two male visitors:

"Ah—ah—Mr. Carson is—so clever, isn't he? All sorts—clever people one meets—up here, you know."

"That's right, ma'am," agreed the former Thespian, striking what he considered the attitude of a society man. "If you ask me, is my old friend Carson clever? I say, ma'am, he's all to the highbrow, and then some more."

"H - m — h - m — how interesting!" gasped Aunt Dorcas, catching a word or two.

Her niece elevated her eyebrows slightly and ceased to smile for a moment.

"I suppose Mr. Carson will tell us something of this burglar joke soon, Mr. Duval," she said to the ill-at-ease desperado near her, to make conversation: "but please tell me, do you paint, or etch, or—"

"Well, you see, miss, it's this way," he began, but Carson cut in suddenly:

"Mr. Duval is a wood carver."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the girl. "I adore wood-carving. I once did a little myself—in the most crude way, you know, just for amusement."

"Mr. Duval is a professional," went on Carson. "He has just been doing a studio door and a chiffonier for me."

"Ah, I shall be so glad to see them." she said.

Carson had quietly got out the tea-kit and presently the hot infusion was ready to pour. Miss Benton assumed charge and proceeded to modify the several cups according to individual taste.

"Lemon or cream?" she asked Mr. Turpin.

"Thank ye, ma'am. I'll take mine neat," answered the robber, rising and sitting down again ceremoniously.

"Neat? How funny: what do you mean?" she laughed.

"Mr. Turpin will take sugar only." explained Carson. "And I think he may welcome the addition of a little of this Russian arrack. He works in aqua fortis, you know, and is accustomed to all sorts of powerful fluids."

Mr. Turpin cautiously tasted the decoction, which Carson had made nearly half arrack.

"Ah," he drawled, "Mr. Carson is so clevah."

"Marian, my child, we must go." said Aunt Dorcas suddenly, to the immense relief of the three men.

"Just what I was a'thinking 'bout us, Mr. Duval," remarked the wily Mr. Turpin.

"Oh, I couldn't think of having you leave so soon, gentlemen!" said Carson pointedly. "I am sorry the ladies are in such a hurry."

"Well, me friend," explained Turpin familiarly, "I'd stay right on here forever, but yer see I got a date with Mr. Morgan and Mr. Rockyfeller at the Central Park Cusiner. Sorry, old chap."

Carson laughed and realized his helplessness as the two crooks took up their rusty derbies and accompanied the two women to the door. He was loath to let them escape, but there seemed no alternative which did not involve a serious shock to the ladies.

"I will go to the door with you and act as elevator man," he laughed.

The building was an old one and the elevator had no attendant, but was operated by the occupants by means of perpendicular wire cables, which could be grasped inside or outside the car.

As the vehicle glided slowly downward Carson racked his brain for some scheme by which he might get rid of the women and effect the capture of the escaping crooks. He could hit upon nothing feasible, and was preparing to bid them as graceful a farewell as possible, when an unexpected development gave him new hope.

"I believe we ought to get out at the third floor and call on Mrs. Gibbs, Marian." said the elder woman.

"I should love to, Aunt Dorcas," answered the girl.

"Just in time," cried Carson gleefully, stopping the car on the third floor and stepping out to hold open the sliding door for the two women.

"Let me ring Mrs. Gibbs's bell for you," he added, and began to pray that the two would lose no time in disappearing.

The sliding door clanged shut and the car glided downward again.

"Ta-ta, Carson, old sport!" called Mr. Turpin.

"Call me up at Sherry's, Carson, me lad!" piped Mr. Duval.

But Carson had anticipated the move, and it almost suited his plan. The Gibbs door opened and closed upon the disappearing forms of the girl and her aunt as the car dropped out of sight, but Carson threw himself at the wire cable outside the wrought-iron cage and tugged at it until it gave to him and the motor in the cellar was reversed, stopping the car between the first and second floors, thus caging the two unsuspecting crooks beyond hope of escape.

As soon as they realized what had happened they made the shaft ring with cries of rage and consternation. They seized the inside cable and wrenched at it madly to start the motor once more, but Carson had quickly torn a wooden baluster from the staircase and wedged it in the tube through which the cable passed, binding it securely.

"Now, my hearties," he chuckled, "we can talk it all over again."

"You're a pretty cheap sport, you are," whined Mr. Turpin. "You let on you was going to let us go if we did the right thing."

"Well, I haven't had a chance to talk it over with a policeman yet," said Carson. "You keep as quiet as you can down there while I go to a telephone."

"I didn't think it of you, Mr. Carson,"

complained the younger man. "I supposed a gent like you had more respect for the hospitality game than to get a guy pinched that had sat and drank his pink tea without a kick, just because there was ladies present."

Carson stood silent for a moment, listening to the complaints and protests which rose from the elevator-shaft. Then suddenly he laughed aloud with good humor.

"Now I think of it," he said. "I guess you fellows behaved about as well at my tea-party as any gentlemen could have behaved under such unusual conditions. Will you both promise to be good in the future, stop this wood engraving business, and keep your tea-party manners brushed up for all occasions?"

"Honest to Gawd we will!" vowed Mr. Claude Duval.

"Just you give me a trial," suggested Mr. Turpin; "you'll scarcely recognize me at your next pink tea, Mr. Carson."

"Not if we see each other first," laughed Carson "Well, gentlemen, I believe I'll let you off this time. Good luck to you! Never mind about a party call!"

And he withdrew the wedge from the cable tube and started the car downward, while a storm of expressions of genuine satisfaction and gratitude came back to him from the departing guests.

But as he stood laughing and wondering if he had been foolishly lenient with the two thugs, the door of the lower vestibule opened and closed, and coincidently the much-abused cable was jerked back again with cruel violence and the car began again to ascend.

"Beat it to the roof, fer Gawd's sake!" one of the crooks said in a voice just audible to Carson.

On a fortunate impulse the mystified artist grasped the cable and stopped the car once more, jamming the trusty baluster back in its recent station as a mighty struggle began with the other side of the cable.

"Let us up quick, Mr. Carson," begged one of the crooks in a hoarse whisper. "You wouldn't have us get pinched now, would yer?"

"Well," answered Carson, "I must satisfy my curiosity as to what can so startle such a brave pair as you."

"What's the row about up there?" called a clear voice from below.

"Hello, Martin," shouted Carson, recognizing the voice as that of one of his fellow flat-dwellers, a member of the district attorney's staff. "I've got a couple of odd specimens in the elevator cage. Come up and have a look at them before I let them go out by my skylight."

The lawyer came up the stairs until he could peer through the grill work into the car. The occupants at once set about wild efforts to tear or gnaw their way out, dashing about the trap as rats do after long periods of sullen quiet.

"Gee whiz! They could use you in their business at the central office, Carson," cried the observer. "Do you often make such hauls as this?"

"What's the matter?" asked Carson. "Are my friends political opponents of your worship?"

"Why, great guns, man, you've got Kid Halloran and Jim McMasters boxed up here. They're wanted in half the cities from here to Chicago. I'll need about a platoon of police to handle them. Keep them just as you've got them, while I get next to a phone."

A few minutes later, as the patrol wagon started away from the house through the growing crowd of spectators, the elder of the two prisoners, having regained his *sang froid,* waved a parting salute to his late host.

"Good afternoon, Carson, old feller," he shouted bravely; "drop in and see us. We're at home on Fridays at Ossining-on-the-Hudson."

INDEPENDENCE.

How happy is he born or taught,
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armor is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill!

Sir Henry Wotton.

The Man Who Ran Away.*

BY BERTRAM LEBHAR,

Author of "His Handicap Mate," "When a Man's Hungry," "The Isle of Mysteries," etc.

Discord in Bachelors' Hall, Followed by a Tragedy which Precipitated Mystery of the Deepest Dye.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

FRED HANSON, one of five men who keep Bachelors' Hall, with a Japanese as housekeeper, at Winsdale, announces to Tomlinson, Gaines, and Corbett, three of his friends, that he intends to marry. Stanley Hawthorne, the fifth bachelor, comes in and tells the others he is going to marry Miss Winifred Willis, a neighbor. Hanson is obviously shocked by the news; and, when asked for the name of the girl he is in love with, declares his talk of getting married was only a joke.

Hawthorne, a jeweler's clerk, has brought home with him about $5,000 worth of diamonds, which he has been unable to deliver to a customer. Early next morning the bachelors are driven out of the house by fire. Hawthorne is dragged lifeless from his room by Tomlinson, and later the coroner discovers that he has not been suffocated, but strangled to death. The fire proves to have been of incendiary origin.

Fred Hanson was seen to take the six-five train to the city just after the fire started. He has not reported at the office; and Tomlinson, who has guessed that Hanson loved the same girl as Hawthorne, begins to feel alarmed. Corbett reminds him of the diamonds which Hawthorne had with him that night, and says that Hanson has of late been much in need of funds. Suspicion against him strengthens when on a search of the ruins his match-box is found among them. Chief Hodgins, of the local police, announces his belief that Hanson is the guilty man, and implies that Tomlinson, who defends him, may be talking through the bars of a penitentiary before the case is closed.

Later on, after a trip to New York, where he finds that Hanson has not been to his place of business, Tomlinson calls on Winifred Willis, and to his horror discovers that she has received from Fred Hanson a present of the very diamond sunburst which has been stolen from poor Hawthorne. It is accompanied by a note, undeniably in Fred's hand, congratulating her on her birthday, and hoping that she will accept this remembrance from him. Horror-stricken at this seeming absolute proof of his friend's guilt, Tomlinson declares that they must burn the letter at once, and drop the sunburst into the deepest part of the creek.

"You will do nothing of the kind!" cries a voice, as the coroner, Dr. Weston, and Winifred's father throw open the folding doors and step into the room.

CHAPTER XV.

CORBETT FINDS SOMETHING.

AT this startling interruption Winifred Willis uttered a scream.

It flashed through her father's mind that Dr. Weston was adopting a mighty queer cure for her shattered nervous system, and he glanced at the coroner with some indignation.

But Dr. Weston had quite forgotten that he was a physician and that the girl was a nervous patient under his care. He was the coroner now, and nothing else, and he was determined to prevent that precious letter from going into the fire.

"Take one step toward that grate and I'll put a bullet into your head," he thundered at Tomlinson.

But the latter was not at all frightened by this threat. Fred Hanson's incriminating note and the diamond sunburst were clutched in his right hand, and, ignoring the coroner's peremptory command, he rushed across the room, and with a reckless laugh threw both the sheet of paper and the diamonds in among the coals.

Coroner Weston did not shoot. What would have been the use? He rushed toward the fireplace in an attempt to rescue the valuable evidence from the flames, but he was too late, so far as Hanson's letter was concerned.

* *Began January* ARGOSY. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

The piece of paper had flared up and been reduced to ashes before he was able to get to it, but he managed to withdraw the sunburst before the flames did it any serious harm.

Then he replaced his revolver in his hip-pocket and turned toward Tomlinson, quite unruffled.

"Think you're smart, don't you, young man?" he drawled. "Well, I guess you haven't accomplished such an awful lot by destroying that letter, after all.

"Mr. Willis and myself have overheard every word of your conversation, and we can both go on the stand and swear that such a letter was written. That will serve our purpose almost as well as if we had the original document.

"You see, therefore, that you haven't done Hanson much good, and, on the other hand, you have put yourself in pretty bad. By destroying that piece of evidence you have become Hanson's accessory and are liable to a long term of imprisonment. There is nothing to prevent me from placing you under arrest right now."

Tomlinson shrugged his shoulders defiantly.

"You can go as far as you like," he said. "I don't care what you do with me."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I am disposed to be lenient with you, my boy," said the coroner, in a kinder tone. "I realize that you are actuated by motives that are wholly unselfish, and I admire a man who will stick to his friend through thick and thin.

"I saw you rush into the burning building next door this morning and risk your own life in an effort to rescue the unfortunate Hawthorne, and I must say that I like the stuff you are made of.

"But believe me, my boy, you are making a great mistake. You have admitted that you are now convinced of Hanson's guilt, and therefore you are very wrong to stick to him any longer. By his crime he has forfeited all claims upon your friendship.

"And you, too, my dear young lady, are showing mighty poor judgment in allowing yourself to be influenced by this misguided young man here. When you have had time for mature reflection I am sure you will perceive the enormity of striving to protect a murderer from the vengeance of the law."

"But I feel positive that Fred is not a murderer," protested Winifred faintly.

"Pshaw! That attitude is ridiculous," retorted the coroner. "In the face of these proofs there can be no further doubt. I shall communicate at once with Hawthorne's employers and have them identify this piece of jewelry.

"When that is done our case will be complete. All that remains for us then will be to effect the capture of Hanson, and, with your help, that ought to be easy."

"With my help!" gasped Winifred.

"Yes. I want you to be a good girl and consent to take part in a little scheme that we are going to try. I will tell you all about it; but I think we had better talk privately. Mr. Tomlinson, you may go now. We won't detain you any longer. Let me assure you that you are mighty lucky to get off so easy."

Tomlinson was not at all anxious to go. He wanted to stay and hear the coroner's scheme for the capture of Hanson, but thus unceremoniously dismissed, there was nothing for him to do but to depart.

He obtained some consolation, however, from the fact that the girl accompanied him to the front door and whispered in his ear: "Don't worry. I won't let them persuade me to do anything that would injure Fred. Come back here to-night after the coroner has gone and I will tell you all about it."

"That girl is all right," said Tomlinson to himself, as he walked slowly away from the house. "Generally her sex is not to be trusted, but she seems to be the one solitary exception. She's white all through, and I can scarcely blame Fred for falling in love with her.

"But when it comes to committing murder for her—that's another matter," he added fiercely. "To think that any man would be crazy enough to murder his friend for the sake of a woman!

"And there doesn't seem to be any doubt now that Fred did commit that murder. There's no other way to account for his sending her that diamond sunburst. I never dreamed that he possessed such a vicious nature. I always believed him to be the most generous-hearted and even-tempered fellow I had ever met.

"It only goes to show that Eddy Corbett was right when he said this morning that a man could live under the same roof with a fellow for years and yet never learn his real character.

"By the way, I wonder what's become of Gaines and Corbett? I feel sort of sorry I had that row with them to-day. Guess I spoke a little more harshly than I should have done; but, then, they certainly did make me mad by their unfriendly attitude toward Fred."

The next minute he uttered an exclamation of surprise, for, on turning the corner, he almost bumped into the very two men he was thinking about—Gaines and Corbett—who were walking toward him, arm in arm, looking very dejected and miserable.

Tomlinson, remembering his quarrel with them, and too proud to make any overtures, was about to pass without a word; but Corbett frustrated this intention by suddenly stepping in front of him and barring his path.

"Say, Tom, old man," he said reproachfully, "you're not going to cut us dead, are you? Let's be friends. You must realize that your attitude toward us this afternoon was very unjust."

"Perhaps it *was* somewhat unjust," admitted Tomlinson. "My remarks were probably a little hotter than they should have been, but I was angered by your eagerness to turn over to the authorities that match-box we found in the ruins, notwithstanding the fact that you knew that by so doing you were greatly strengthening the case against Hanson. It seems to me you ought to stick to poor old Fred, boys. You oughtn't to desert a pal when he's up against it."

"That's where you're in the wrong," broke in Gaines. "Fred Hanson is not our pal. He ceased to be such when he murdered poor Stanley. I've got no use for an assassin and no sympathy to waste on such a cowardly wretch. I sincerely hope they catch him and send him to the chair."

"Let me ask you a question, Tom," said Corbett. "Do you still believe in Hanson's innocence, or has your common sense by this time convinced you that he must be guilty?"

Tomlinson did not answer, and, correctly interpreting his silence, Corbett exclaimed triumphantly: "Ha! You, too, now believe that Hanson killed poor Stanley. Don't attempt to deny it, old man, for I can read the truth in your face."

"Yes," cried Gaines indignantly. "He believes it—in his heart he must have believed it all along—and yet he is anxious to protect the murderer.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Tomlinson. Your sympathy and your loyalty are sadly misplaced. It is your duty as a citizen to help bring this cowardly assassin to justice instead of trying to save him. In the name of poor Stanley Hawthorne, I beg you to abandon your unholy championship of Fred Hanson."

Gaines spoke with all the eloquence at his command. The young man had been more friendly with Hawthorne than with the other members of Bachelors' Hall, and his heart was so full of horror and indignation at the awful crime which had robbed him of his friend that he fiercely resented Tomlinson's attitude.

The latter did not make any reply to this impassioned harangue. A bitter struggle was raging in his mind.

Was not Gaines right, after all, he was asking himself. There was a striking similarity between the young man's words and those which the coroner had used only a few minutes before.

Surely there was a great deal of justice in the argument they advanced.

Why should not Hanson suffer the penalty of his atrocious crime? He was no better than any other murderer. His crime had been wholly unjustified and horribly brutal.

He had shown himself utterly selfish and heartless, for not only had he killed Hawthorne in cold blood, but he had imperiled the lives of his other friends by setting fire to Bachelors' Hall while they slumbered.

A fellow who could do that, Tomlinson argued to himself, was too mean and contemptible to deserve any sympathy or help. Yes, surely by his acts Hanson had forfeited all claims upon his friends.

Tomlinson's mind was almost made up. He was on the point of announcing to Gaines and Corbett that their arguments had prevailed and that he now realized his mistake and was no longer desirous of saving the murderer of Stanley Hawthorne.

But just as the words were on the tip of his tongue the recollection of something Winifred Willis had said to him during their recent conversation entered his head and caused him to hesitate.

"Fred Hanson loved me, and yet he would not propose to me because he had given his pledge to you and the other members of Bachelors' Hall," the girl had said.

How like Fred Hanson that sounded—the old, familiar Fred—loyal, square, the very soul of honor.

And was it possible that a man who would not break a pledge lightly given in order to win the girl he loved could be capable of committing murder, arson, and robbery because he had lost that same girl?

No, it did not seem at all possible, Tomlinson told himself, and suddenly his lost faith in Fred Hanson came back with a rush.

"Boys," he said, "you are making a mistake. I do *not* believe that Fred is guilty. I am firmly convinced of his innocence in the face of all proofs to the contrary, and I am going to stick to him through thick and thin."

Corbett shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I guess every man is entitled to his own opinion, after all," he observed. "I don't see any reason why we should quarrel about it, Tom. You can stick to your belief; but at the same time you cannot reasonably blame us for sticking to ours. We've got logic on our side, you must admit, while you are governed entirely by a blind, unreasoning faith. Let us cease to argue about it and be friends."

"All right, I'm willing," replied Tomlinson. "I've no desire to quarrel with you fellows, and I want to apologize for what I said to you this afternoon."

"That's all right, old chap," said Corbett genially. "You were beside yourself with grief and despair, and didn't realize what you were saying. We don't bear you any grudge for that. Let's shake hands and forget all about it."

Tomlinson and Corbett exchanged a hearty handclasp, but when Tomlinson extended his hand toward Gaines the latter drew back and shook his head.

"No," he exclaimed bitterly, "I'm sorry, but I'll be hanged if I'm going to shake hands with an ally of Stanley Hawthorne's murderer. When you are ready to admit that Hanson is an assassin and to cease befriending him I'll be glad to shake hands with you, Tomlinson; but I can't do it now."

Tomlinson shrugged his shoulders.

"Just as you please," he said coldly.

"And I'll tell you something else," went on Gaines fiercely. "I don't agree with Eddy here, that you are entitled to your opinion. Your adherence to Hanson in the face of all reason looks mighty queer to me, Tomlinson. I'm almost ready to believe that there may be some truth in what Chief Hodgins said this afternoon."

"What do you mean?" cried Tomlinson hoarsely.

"I mean that your peculiar attitude entitles us to suspect that you may have had a hand in that murder yourself."

Before he could utter another word Tomlinson had him by the throat.

"You dirty, sneaky little puppy," he growled. "I'll choke you for that."

And there is no doubt that he would have made good his threat, for even with the handicap of the burns he had sustained in the fire he was much more than Gaines's match physically; but the horrified Corbett hastened to intervene.

"For Heaven's sake, Tom, don't do that," he cried. "Stop! Stop! You'll kill him for sure if you don't let go."

He threw himself between Tomlinson and his victim and by main force broke the former's savage hold upon the latter's throat.

"Let me at him," shouted Tomlinson, frenzied with rage. "I'll give him good cause to accuse me of being a murderer before I get through with him. Step aside, I tell you, Corbett, and let me get my hands on him just once more."

But Corbett, who was Tomlinson's equal in the matter of physical strength, kept tight hold of the latter and forcibly pushed him backward.

"Keep cool, Tom. Don't let your temper get the best of you," he implored. "We don't want another tragedy on our hands. Gaines didn't mean what he said. He'll apologize for it later on. Of course he doesn't really think that you had anything to do with that murder, old man. Be sensible and—Hallo, what the

deuce is that lying there? Looks like a diamond!"

He stooped and picked up from the ground something which sparkled in the light of the moon.

"It *is* a diamond," he declared, examining his find with interest. "It's a diamond earring. One of you fellows must have dropped it during the struggle, I guess. Good Heavens, I'll be hanged if it doesn't look exactly like one of the diamond earrings poor Stanley Hawthorne showed us last night."

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO DROPPED IT?

All around the spot where the diamond earring had been lying the mud sidewalk, softened by recent rains, had been torn up by the feet of Tomlinson and Gaines, so that there was good reason to believe that it had dropped from the pocket of one of these two men during their struggle.

And if Tomlinson or Gaines had dropped it a truly alarming possibility suggested itself.

At first the significance of this did not occur to Corbett as he stood there fingering the diamond and gazing at it almost dazedly.

Tomlinson, all thoughts of wreaking vengeance on Gaines momentarily dispelled by this amazing find, glanced over Corbett's shoulder and examined the gem eagerly.

"You're right!" he exclaimed excitedly. "It does look exactly like the earring Hawthorne showed us last night. The setting is exactly the same and the stone appears to be of the same size."

"Yes," gasped Gaines, who had by this time partially recovered from the effects of Tomlinson's attack. "And if it is the same earring it means that you will go to the electric chair along with Fred Hanson, for that diamond must have fallen from your pocket."

"No, it didn't," retorted Tomlinson hotly. "It fell from *your* pocket, and it opens my eyes to a new side of the case. I didn't dream of suspecting you before, but now I begin to see a reason for your well-simulated indignation against Fred Hanson. I shouldn't be surprised if this little piece of jewelry here enables me to turn the tables on you and prove that it was *you* who murdered Stanley Hawthorne and robbed him of his jewelry."

"That's a lie!" cried Gaines. "You can't bluff me, Tomlinson. That earring didn't fall from my pocket, and you know it. You must have dropped it, and you'll have to explain to the police how it came into your possession."

"Say, fellows, what's the use of standing there hurling accusations at each other in that fashion?" protested Corbett. "This may not be the same earring after all; and even if it is, maybe neither of you fellows dropped it. It may have been lying here before we arrived on the scene."

"That isn't very likely," replied Gaines. "If it had been lying there, surely one of us would have noticed it. Its glitter would have attracted our gaze. And I feel pretty positive that it *is* the same piece of jewelry which Hawthorne had in his possession last night.

"Tomlinson undoubtedly dropped it while he was making that cowardly attack upon me just now; and the fact that it was in his possession proves that he helped Fred Hanson kill and rob poor Stanley, and shared his bloody plunder with him."

Tomlinson's fists closed convulsively as the daring Gaines, apparently undaunted by the rough handling he had already received, sternly repeated this charge. He glared at his accuser, and seemed about to make a second attack upon him; but suddenly the fierce expression upon his features gave way to a contemptuous smile, and he shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"Go ahead and rant, you little whippersnapper!" he sneered. "You can accuse me and you can accuse Fred Hanson all you want, for I guess I understand you pretty well now. You've got to make that bluff in order to shield yourself. I'm mighty glad you dropped that earring, because it gives me the clue I've been looking for. I'm going to fasten this crime on you, Gaines, if it takes me the rest of my days.

"I'm going to prove that it was you who murdered Stanley Hawthorne. You robbed him of his jewelry, set fire to Bachelors' Hall, and then cunningly sought to divert suspicion from your own worthless self and direct it toward an innocent man by placing Fred Hanson's match-box in

the cellar, so as to make it appear that he left it there."

"Bah!" exclaimed Gaines scornfully. "You can't scare me by such empty threats. You're quite losing sight of the fact that your friend and partner in crime, Hanson, has run away, while I am still here. That fact alone renders your accusation absurd in the eyes of every fair-minded man.

"If Hanson is innocent, why has he fled? You'll have to answer that question satisfactorily before you can throw any suspicion on me. I'm willing to swear I did not drop that diamond earring, and that it had never been in my possession. It will be my word against yours; and, considering the present attitude of the authorities toward you, I guess mine will go all right."

"Well, you may be believed now, but by the time I get through I'll have proofs enough to convict you," retorted Tomlinson confidently. "I'm going to work harder than I've ever worked on this case, and I'm going to send you to the electric chair instead of Fred Hanson."

Gaines laughed at this threat, and was about to reply in kind, when Corbett, who had been listening to this heated argument in silent horror, suddenly broke in:

"Boys, I've got an idea. Each of you accuses the other of having dropped this earring. It seems to me that it ought to be a very easy matter to find out who is telling the truth."

"How?" cried Tomlinson and Gaines in a breath.

"Well, this earring has its mate. All earrings come in pairs, you know. If one of you two really did drop this diamond, he's probably got the other earring in his pocket at the present time.

"I don't like to suggest that you be searched, but, under the circumstances, I think you both ought to be willing to submit to it. Let me go through your pockets and see if either of you has the other earring on his person."

Tomlinson received this suggestion with a scowl, perceiving which, Corbett's suspicions were at once aroused; for he did not know that very often in such cases as this the innocent party will be the very one who will indignantly object to being searched.

Gaines, on the other hand, eagerly indorsed Corbett's suggestion and, with a challenge glance at Tomlinson, declared that he was perfectly willing to submit to the test.

At first Tomlinson felt inclined to refuse to subject himself to this humiliation; but he was so positive that Gaines had dropped the diamond, and therefore hopeful that the other earring would be found on him, that he at length gave his consent.

"Which one of you shall I search first?" inquired Corbett hesitatingly.

"Me, if you like," replied Gaines. "But while you're going through me, Eddy, I'll keep my eye on Tomlinson, and see that he doesn't get a chance to throw that diamond away before you can search him."

Tomlinson did not deign any reply to this insinuation, but stood close by while Corbett went through Gaines's pockets.

"He doesn't seem to have it on him," announced Corbett at length. "I've been through every pocket, Tom. You'll have to admit that I've made a fair search."

"Look in the lining of his hat and inside his shoes," growled Tomlinson. "Those are the places where *crooks* generally conceal their plunder."

The ugly emphasis he placed on the word "crooks" caused Gaines to glare at him savagely; but Corbett, realizing the value of the suggestion, proceeded to examine carefully the interior of Gaines's hat, and not finding the earring there, requested him to take off his shoes.

Gaines sullenly complied, and Corbett thoroughly searched inside each shoe; but, much to Tomlinson's disappointment, the other earring was not to be found.

"Now, it's his turn," cried Gaines, eagerly pointing to Tomlinson. "Search him as rigorously as you've searched me, Eddy, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if you find it."

But, of course, this search proved equally unproductive. Apparently the mate to the earring which Corbett had found was not on the person of either of these two young men.

"There you are!" cried Corbett heartily, when his task was finished. "Neither of you has it, and therefore what I said before is probably the truth. This earring was probably lying in that mud before we got here. Neither of you dropped it.

Why don't you apologize to each other for your unjust suspicions, and be good friends again?"

"Not me," declared Gaines stubbornly. "I'm not at all convinced by this test. I hoped to find the other earring on Tomlinson: but, after all, the fact that he hasn't got it doesn't prove that he didn't drop this one. He may have only had the one earring on his person. He may have disposed of the other one previously."

"Exactly the theory I was going to apply to you," declared Tomlinson. "It will be a pretty hard matter to convince me that the diamond Corbett has found didn't drop from your pocket."

"Well, I'm going to Chief of Police Hodgins right away," declared Gaines. "I'm going to tell him all about this earring, and I wouldn't be surprised if you're arrested and locked up before daylight."

Tomlinson shrugged his shoulders.

"That wouldn't feeze me," he retorted. "If I'm thrown into a cell I shall have plenty of time to think, and when once my brain gets to working properly it won't take me long to build up a strong case against you. At present I am mystified, I will admit, as to how you managed to strangle poor Hawthorne without attracting suspicion to yourself, but I'll solve the mystery before long, I promise you."

With this fierce exchange of threats they parted company, Gaines and Corbett heading in the same direction, and Tomlinson taking an opposite one.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON HIS TRAIL.

Gaines was in deadly earnest about communicating with the chief of police without delay, and at his request Corbett accompanied him to the police station.

They found Chief Hodgins in his private office, and that official became very much interested in what his visitors had to tell him.

"So this feller Tomlinson had this earring in his possession, did he?" he remarked, eying the glittering diamond on his desk with great satisfaction.

"Well, of course, I can't swear that he did," replied Gaines. "But I'm pretty sure he dropped it while we were struggling together."

"Of course he did," declared Hodgins. "You can take my word for that. I've been suspicious of that chap right along, and I'm mighty glad to have something definite on him.

"I shall get into immediate communication with Hawthorne's employers, and see if they can't identify this piece of jewelry as one of the pair of earrings they gave to that unfortunate young man to deliver. If they say it's the same piece I'll be justified in arresting this Tomlinson: and I guess, when we've caught Hanson, we won't have any trouble in getting one of 'em to squeal on the other."

"Then you think that both Hanson and Tomlinson had a hand in the murder of poor Hawthorne, do you, chief?" inquired Corbett, with a sigh.

"Yes. That's my idea. It's been my theory from the start that more than one man took part in that murder. I feel pretty sure that Hanson and Tomlinson killed Hawthorne, in order to get those diamonds, and then shared the booty together. That's why you didn't find the other earring on Tomlinson. In all probability they split the pair, Hanson taking one and Tomlinson the other."

"And you haven't located Fred Hanson yet, chief, eh?" inquired Gaines anxiously.

"No. Not yet," grunted the chief. "But we'll get him before long, never fear. I've got nearly all my men out looking for him, and the police of New York and neighboring cities are keeping their eyes open. We can't fail to land him before long."

"Well, I sincerely hope you succeed," declared Gaines. "He used to be my friend, but since he murdered poor Stanley I'd give a great deal to see him brought to justice and made to suffer for his crime. And although I always admired Tomlinson, I'd like to see him punished too, if he had any hand in that horrible murder."

"They'll both get theirs all right, don't you worry about that," the chief of police assured him. "As I said to them newspaper men this afternoon, if I can't prove Hanson guilty of that murder to the satisfaction of any impartial jury, I'll be willing to resign my job. And now I make the same offer regarding this chap, Tomlinson.

"He's a smooth proposition—a mighty slick article, but if I don't convict him of being an accessory to this crime, I'll get out of the police department."

Half an hour after Gaines and Corbett had left the station-house, Coroner Weston stepped in to see the chief.

"Hallo, doctor!" exclaimed the latter. "Come into my private office. I've got something mighty interesting to show you. Take a look at this piece of jewelry and let me know what you think of it."

Dr. Weston gazed curiously at the diamond earring.

"Mighty fine diamond," he commented, holding the gem in the hollow of his palm. "Where does it come from?"

Hodgins puffed out his fat cheeks with pride and assumed an air of great self-importance.

"I rather guess the police department of Winsdale ain't so slow after all, when it comes to clearing up murder mysteries," he chuckled. "Unless I'm very much mistaken this piece of jewelry is part of the stuff which was stolen from the young man who was murdered."

"Ha!" exclaimed the coroner excitedly. "Then, perhaps, you will be interested to see this;" and putting his hand into his vest-pocket he produced and held out before the chief's surprised gaze the diamond sunburst which he had taken from Miss Willis.

"What's this?" inquired Hodgins. "Surely, not more of the stuff?"

Dr. Weston nodded and smiled.

"Gee willikens, coroner! That's mighty good work on your part. Where did you get it?"

"Hanson sent it through the mail to his sweetheart, and I got it from her."

"Hanson sent it through the mail!" gasped the chief. "Gee whiz, you don't mean to say that Hanson's been heard from since he ran away!"

"Yes. He sent the young woman a letter and this sunburst."

"A letter, too, eh? Does it give any clue to where Hanson is now?" inquired the chief eagerly.

"No. I'm sorry to say it doesn't. All I've been able to learn from that package is that it was mailed in New York City, in the Wall Street section, at eleven o'clock this morning. I obtained that information from the postmark on the wrapper. This shows that Hanson was in New York until nearly noon to-day; but, of course, that doesn't give us any idea where he is now. He may be miles away by this time."

"That's true," admitted the policeman with a sigh. "Well, anyway, when we do catch him, this piece of jewelry will just about settle his hash. The public prosecutor couldn't wish for a stronger bit of evidence. We've got a perfectly flawless case against him now.

"When the jury hears about his sudden flight, the finding of his match-box in the place where the fire started, and his sending to his sweetheart this piece of jewelry, which was stolen from his victim, they'll bring in a verdict of guilty without leaving their seats."

"Well, there's one thing that puzzles me exceedingly," remarked Dr. Weston. "Why did Hanson send this diamond sunburst to the young woman? He must have realized the danger of such a step."

"Just natural foolhardiness, I guess," replied Chief Hodgins. "Murderers often made idiotic breaks of that sort, you know."

"Yes, I suppose so. But, from what I have heard of Hanson, he is by no means a fool, and he ought to have foreseen that it would lead to his undoing."

"Well, maybe he's idiot enough to feel confident that he'll never be caught, and therefore ain't particular how much evidence he piles up against himself; or maybe he had an idea that that sunburst wouldn't be recognized."

"Oh, he couldn't be foolish enough to suppose that," exclaimed Dr. Weston. "This piece of jewelry is distinctive enough to be recognized instantly. By the way, we must notify that jewelry firm and have them send somebody to identify this stuff."

"I've attended to that already," replied the chief with a self-satisfied smile. "I ain't the man to let any grass grow under my feet. I've telephoned one of Hawthorne's bosses at his home, and told him about this earring, and he promised to come out right away and see if he can identify it. Reckon he's on his way here now."

An hour later the senior partner of the jewelry firm which had employed the unfortunate Hawthorne arrived at Wins-

dale, and was closeted with the chief of police and Coroner Weston.

"Yes," he remarked, pointing to the sunburst and the earring reposing on the chief's desk, "both those pieces of jewelry are our property. I can say this without the slightest hesitancy. That sunburst and that earring and its mate were given to poor Hawthorne to deliver to a customer on his way home last night. I am absolutely positive they are the same pieces."

"Very good, sir!" exclaimed Chief Hodgins. "That's all we wanted to know. We felt pretty sure of it ourselves; but we wanted to have a positive identification, you understand. Now that that point is settled, I'll go right out and look for that chap Tomlinson and place him under arrest."

"Place Tomlinson under arrest!" cried Coroner Weston in surprise.

"Sure. I guess I haven't told you yet where this earring came from. Tomlinson had it in his pocket."

"Tomlinson!" gasped the amazed coroner.

"Yes. Surprises you somewhat, eh? Well, it didn't surprise me. I've believed all along that he had a hand in that murder."

"Good Heavens!" gasped Dr. Weston. "I begin to see a light now. I was deceived into thinking that Tomlinson's efforts to shield Hanson were due to his loyalty to his friend, and way down in my heart I had a sneaking admiration for him; but now I perceive that he was actuated by no such unselfish motives. He is trying to save Hanson in order to shield himself.

"That is why he burned that letter and tried to destroy this sunburst. You are right, chief. He must be placed under arrest without delay. Where is he?"

"I don't know. Somewhere in Winsdale, I suppose. We must go out and hunt for him."

It was nearly midnight when they found him. He was at the railway station, waiting for the train to New York; and, as they espied him standing on the platform, Chief Hodgins was about to step up and inform him that he was under arrest.

But Dr. Weston tugged at the chief's sleeve and whispered in his ear.

"Wait," he said. "Don't be too hasty, chief. We've got plenty of time. It's mighty peculiar that he's bound for New York at this hour of the night, and it may mean something important.

"In my opinion, it will be worth our while to postpone his arrest for the time being. Let him go to New York, and let us take the same train and trail him. We can arrest him at any time, you know."

Chief Hodgins shook his head dubiously.

"Well, I don't know, doctor. It's sort of risky. I set one of my best men to trail him to-day, and the rascal managed to give him the slip. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, you know. I'm in favor of making sure of him while we've got the chance."

"But he may be going to join Hanson," whispered the coroner. "What other reason could he have for going to New York at this late hour?"

This suggestion decided Chief Hodgins.

"You're right," he assented. "That's probably just where he's going. We'll give him the trail, coroner, and see if we can't nab the pair of them."

When the New York night express pulled into Winsdale and Tomlinson stepped aboard, Chief Hodgins and Coroner Weston managed to sneak into the last car without being seen by the man they were shadowing.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE TRAIL OF A BLUE BOX.

THE more Tomlinson thought about that diamond earring which Corbett had picked up the more convinced he became that Gaines had dropped it, and that the latter was either directly or indirectly responsible for the murder of Stanley Hawthorne.

"It's a wonder I didn't suspect him from the start," he said to himself, as he walked away from Gaines and Corbett after the heated altercation described in a previous chapter. "His very bitterness against Fred Hanson and myself should have put me on my guard.

"Gaines could easily have crept into poor Stanley's room and choked him while he slept; and then, having set fire

to Bachelors' Hall, he could have sneaked up-stairs to his own bedroom, and a few minutes later pretended to have been aroused from his sleep by the flames.

"Of course, Hawthorne was easily Gaines's master physically; but, taken unawares, he would have been unable to put up much of a fight.

"As for the motive for the crime, it may have been robbery, or it may have been some other cause which I may discover later.

"As for the finding of Fred's match-box in the cellar after the fire, it is quite possible that poor Fred accidentally left it lying around up-stairs, and that Gaines found it and cunningly placed it in the cellar in order to throw suspicion on Hanson.

"Yes, I feel pretty confident that I've hit the right trail at last. Gaines is guilty and Hanson is innocent, and I owe Fred a thousand apologies for having suspected him."

But there were two incriminating facts which still stood against Fred Hanson, and which greatly dampened Tomlinson's enthusiasm over his new theory.

Why had Hanson run away? Why had he not shown up at his office all day, or sent any word to his employers to explain his absence?

Tomlinson knew that he was alive and well, and in full enjoyment of his liberty; for had he not seen him on board the Subway train?

Why had he not come back to Winsdale that night? If he was in ignorance of the fact that Bachelors' Hall was in ruins, and that poor Hawthorne was slain, it was difficult to explain why he had not returned home as usual that evening.

And if, on the other hand, he did know of the terrible tragedy that had occurred since he went away, it was still more difficult to explain why he had not hurried to Winsdale as fast as he could get there, to mourn over his dead friend and see if he could be of any assistance.

And then there was that other still more convincing indication of Hanson's guilt—the letter and the diamond sunburst which he had sent to Miss Winifred Willis.

Tomlinson could not doubt that Fred Hanson had written that letter, and he could not doubt that the piece of jewelry which he had sent to the girl had been stolen from Hawthorne.

How could Hanson have obtained it unless he was guilty? It was all very well to try to build up a case against Gaines; but unless these things could be satisfactorily explained there was no chance of proving that Gaines was any more guilty than Hanson — in fact, it looked very much as if Gaines and Hanson might have committed the crime together and shared the plunder.

This new possibility staggered Tomlinson. He had no desire to convict Gaines of this crime unless he could thereby clear Fred Hanson; and if both were indeed guilty—if Gaines, despite his pretended bitterness and indignation toward Hanson, was really the latter's accessory —he was no better off than previously.

Plunged in thought, Tomlinson paced the quiet, deserted streets of Winsdale until suddenly he recollected his appointment with Winifred Willis and turned his steps in the direction of her father's house.

As he stepped upon the porch, the girl, who apparently had been watching for him, softly opened the door and came out.

"Hush!" she whispered. "My father must not know that you are here; for he would interrupt us and prevent me from telling you this bad news. They are going to set a trap for poor Fred."

"A trap, eh?" exclaimed Tomlinson excitedly. "What sort of a trap?"

"They are going to insert a news item in the daily papers, stating that I am prostrated with grief over poor Stanley Hawthorne's tragic death, and that my father has taken me to Atlantic City to recuperate. Their idea is that Fred will read that item in the papers and will go to Atlantic City to have a secret meeting with me.

"That is the scheme which the coroner referred to. They tried to get me to consent to help them by really going to Atlantic City after the funeral and stopping there for a few days. They tried to persuade me that it was my duty to lure poor Fred there, so that they could arrest him; but I indignantly refused to listen to any such proposition."

"Good girl!" exclaimed Tomlinson approvingly.

"Yes, but they're going to put that item in the papers, anyway; and, even though it won't be the truth, I'm afraid Fred will see it and, thinking I am there, will go there and fall into their hands. Oh, what can we do to save him?" And tears of grief and apprehension stood in the girl's eyes.

"Well, let's hope that he won't notice that item; and that if he does, he'll be wise enough to see through their game," said Tomlinson consolingly. "By the way, Miss Willis, have you got that wrapper in which Fred sent you the sunburst? I didn't look at the postmark, after all, when I was here before."

The girl shook her head.

"No. I haven't got it now. The coroner overheard all our conversation, you know; and he made me show him the wrapper, and took it away with him. I've still got the little pasteboard box in which the sunburst came, though. Would that be of any use to you?"

"Humph! I don't think so. There's no postmark on that, of course. I wanted to see where Fred was when he mailed that package to you. Still, it doesn't matter much. The package was mailed this morning, and wherever Fred was then isn't of great consequence. The question is, where is he now? And, of course, the postmark couldn't tell us that."

"Oh, I do wish you could find him and get him to explain how he came into possession of that horrid sunburst! I feel so sure that he is innocent and can account for everything. Do you really believe he is guilty, Mr. Tomlinson?" she added tremulously.

"Well, since I saw you last something has occurred which leads me to believe that he may be innocent, after all." Tomlinson replied earnestly. "But I must admit that the facts are still decidedly against him. It is hard to account for his sending you that sunburst except by the assumption that he killed and robbed poor Hawthorne, unless—

"Good Heavens, Miss Willis, I've got a great idea!" he broke off excitedly. "It's just entered my head, and it may give us the solution of the mystery. On second thought, I would very much like to see that little pasteboard box."

"Here it is!" exclaimed the girl breathlessly, producing it from her waist. "I took care to save it, thinking that it might be of some use to you."

Tomlinson carefully examined the little square blue cardboard-case and uttered an excited exclamation as he discovered the imprint of a small rubber-stamp inside the lid.

This imprint, stamped in purple ink, read:

H. MARX,
FINE JEWELRY,
509 Sixth Avenue.

"Miss Willis," cried Tomlinson as he put the piece of pasteboard in his pocket, "this may be very important. It may enable me to establish Fred Hanson's innocence. I don't want to arouse any false hopes, though, so I won't explain matters to you until I come back; but I beg you to pray as you have never prayed before that I may be successful."

"Where are you going?" gasped the surprised girl.

"I am going to New York right away, to see Mr. Marx, the jeweler of 509 Sixth Avenue."

"But his store will be closed at this hour," protested the girl.

"That's true. I forgot about that. But doubtless Mr. Marx has a home address somewhere in the city, and I must find him. I can't afford to wait until morning, for I may be under arrest myself by then."

And, without waiting to explain further, he unceremoniously left Miss Willis and headed toward the Winsdale depot as fast as he could walk.

So engrossed was he in his own thoughts that he forgot to look around to see if he was still being trailed by one of Chief Hodgins's men; and, therefore, when he stepped aboard the train he did not notice that Chief Hodgins himself and Dr. Weston were among his fellow passengers.

When he reached the Grand Central Station he hurriedly consulted a city directory, and was pleased to discover that Mr. H. Marx, jeweler, did have a home address in New York.

He lived in Harlem, and Tomlinson boarded a car and proceeded thither at once.

Mr. Marx was at home, and, as a matter of fact, fast asleep in his bed, for the hour was considerably past 1 A.M.

Tomlinson, however, felt no compunction in arousing him. Years of service in the newspaper business had robbed him of any natural sensitiveness about routing people out of their sleep.

"What is it you want?" snapped the jeweler, a little, bald, red-eyed old man, who came to the door of his flat attired in a blue bath-robe and a pair of carpet slippers.

"I want to ask you a question," replied Tomlinson, quite unabashed by the fierce air of the little man.

"Well, it's a pretty nice hour of the night to come around asking questions," growled Mr. Marx. "Who are you, anyway?"

(To be continued.)

The Hawkins Seven-Shooter.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

The Amateur Inventor Transfers His Activities to the Neighborhood of the Sad Sea-Waves, which Thereafter Take On an Added Tinge of Gloom.

IT is not that I blame Charles directly. Charles is my elder brother, and as thoroughly good and law-abiding a citizen as ever blessed a wicked community. Charles attends strictly to business six days in the week; and when disease or death makes it necessary for him to forsake work for a solitary hour, Charles seems to feel that he would prefer parting with his vermiform appendix, if the thing could be teased out as he sat in his office chair.

Nor, probably, is it Charles's fault that his children possess so wild and untamed a love for the billowy ocean that he finally decided to buy a seashore place for the summer.

But Charles certainly is to blame for asking me to take the first day I could possibly spare and run down to Brinymere, New Jersey, and seek a high-class bungalow for him at a low-class price.

This was the day.

It was one of those raw, gray early November mornings when a ramshackle cottage fronting a barren sand-beach seems about as desirable and necessary as a refrigerating machine on the Polar ice-pack. The wind swept up-town in a way that suggested a pressing engagement in Albany, and the skies promised one of those remarkable below-zero rain-storms.

However, it was very likely a good day to investigate Brinymere's realty gems. Any one cursed with a Brinymere cottage on such a day would be willing to hand over the deed and vacate for about ten dollars and a return ticket to the city.

So I adjusted a smile of sweet resignation, turned up my collar, and, crossing the Hudson River, made the train just as it was pulling out.

There was one vacant seat in the first car. I dropped into it and felt for my paper—and a voice rasped into my ear:

"So you followed me, *after all!*"

I jumped, approximately, eleven inches. I sat down again to stare at—Hawkins!

The inventor seemed angry this morning. His keen eye glittered wrath; his lips were compressed severely; and he took the liberty of pointing one forefinger directly at my nose.

"I left the house two hours before train time, to avoid *you!*" he announced.

"*What?*"

"You are going to Brinymere Beach!"

"Are you a mind-reader?" I asked mildly.

"What is more, I know why," the inventor went on sternly.

"Well, I haven't any intention of denying it. I—"

"And when my conduct indicated most clearly that I wished—"

"Oh, shut up!" I said politely, as I unfolded the paper.

"Griggs, I do not pretend to guess at

how you got wind of it," said the inventor with well-controlled rage. "I do not blame you, either, in a way. But—"

I read on silently. Hawkins snapped his fingers a few times, grunted a few times, said "Pshaw!" once or twice, and then ceased to erupt, until:

"Griggs!"

"What?"

"I forgive you," said Hawkins loftily. "Not only that, but your mission shall not be in vain, Griggs. Possibly, in the hour before we land there, I had better outline, in the rough, the basic governing principles of—"

"Look here, Hawkins," I broke in sharply, "I don't know what you're rambling about, and I don't want to know. If it's something you've invented, I won't be mixed up in it, and I won't listen to it. I'm going into the smoker."

The inventor favored me with one of those blinking, startled stares that rush to his countenance when squelched. I rose and walked ahead; Hawkins followed humbly. I sat down in the smoker and he dribbled into the seat beside me.

And a big hand was thrust between us from the seat behind, and some one said:

"Hallo, Griggs! Hallo, Hawkins!"

It was Firton; big, fat, eternally jolly Firton—eternally jolly, that is, save on the rare occasions when sudden anger turns him into a roaring threshing-machine, with limbs and tongue actuated by a dynamite motor!

We shook hands, and Firton chuckled long on general principles.

"Just running down to Brinymere," he announced finally.

"Where?" gulped Hawkins with a sudden stare.

"Brinymere — bought a shanty down there last spring, you know—going down to fix things up for over winter."

Firton leaned back after a while and took to his own paper.

"*He's* going to Brinymere, too," whispered the inventor.

"So he says."

"We can't have him," Hawkins whispered. "You take him off and lose him, and meet me—you know where."

"I don't know where, and I don't want the job," I answered placidly.

Hawkins sighed and glanced sidewise at me. I was reading interestedly.

"Griggs, if the government should learn that I am carting down a party of curiosity-seekers—"

"Hawkins," I said, "if you want to see a doctor, we can stop off at Handel's Station. Does your head ache? Are you dizzy?"

Hawkins turned away and sniffed impatiently. Indeed, he kept on sniffing impatiently until Firton reached over with:

"Wake up! Here we are!"

We trooped out of that warm smoker and down to Brinymere's station platform, and the train hustled away as if glad to leave the place. I did not wonder; Brinymere was before us!

The immediate vista included six forlorn-looking houses, unending acres of forlorn, dry fields, and the ridge. Topping the ride, I understood, one was supposed to drop flat with amazed ecstasy over the view.

An aged hack stood beside the platform.

"We're going to walk," announced Hawkins, as he noted Firton staring at it.

"So'm I," agreed that gentleman heartily. "I tell you what, I wouldn't miss that walk from the station for the finest automobile ever built."

"Well—er—that's where we fooled you," said the inventor with a sort of stammering laugh as he climbed into the hack. "We're going to ride over."

I followed him and squeezed into the other half of the seat with a grim smile. As a subtle loser of persons, Hawkins was perfect. Firton stared.

"Go right ahead, driver! Go right ahead!" the inventor called nervously.

The driver did so, to the best of his ability. We seemed to get into motion by a series of rattles, whether of the horse's bones or the rig itself I do not know. At any rate, we jogged away down the road and over the ridge into what there was of the town—a dozen stores, mostly closed, and a handful of houses.

Possibly three humans were in sight besides ourselves as we traversed Main Street. They stared hard, as well they might. I stared, too—and very shortly I was rewarded, for there was a "Real Estate" sign and an apparently alive man behind the glass of the window.

"What are you doing?" asked Hawkins, as I leaned forward to tap the driver's shoulder.

"That's where I'm going."

"Bosh!" Hawkins smiled knowingly.

"But I'm down here to look at cottages for—"

"It's all right, Griggs. Don't stop. driver—go right ahead. I knew you'd have some such puerile excuse," laughed the inventor merrily. "You're not here to look at any real estate. Don't worry. I'll show you what you came to see. I'm not angry."

"Thank you," I said. "But when I come to buy a house—"

"You can spend the whole afternoon buying houses," smiled Hawkins. "Get a move on you, driver!"

"But where the dickens are you taking me?"

"To the proving-grounds."

"The which?"

"The spot where I am cooperating with the United States government," announced the inventor complacently, as he straightened his tie and allowed his chest to puff a trifle.

"Does the government know about it yet, Hawkins?" I asked.

"To the extent of lending me a company of coast artillery."

"What for?" I inquired blankly.

"To milk the sea-cows and fry little sand-flies into croquettes!" responded the inventor pleasantly. "They're both delicious."

I fell silent, thinking. The horse, slightly excited by a lash that would have wound around a four-in-hand, was galloping now. We passed long lines of cottages, big and little. We ran into pure sand, and tugged and rattled. I stared ahead at the ocean below and thought.

It was not inspiring; it was merely a very large, very wet sheet of moving gray this morning, and it sent a chill through me. Where in thunder was Hawkins taking me now, and why was I not back there condoling with the real-estate man on Brinymere's existence? I was formulating plans for a return when the rig brought up with a crash.

"We walk from here," Hawkins announced.

"Where to?" I inquired, as the driver suddenly cut off escape by jerking about and leaving us alone with the beach.

"To *there!*" cried the inventor, turning up his collar before the gale as he plowed away through the sand with one arm extended like the pointer of a sign-board.

I looked. And I saw the thing that had puzzled me from above and then been forgotten—and I stopped.

"Hawkins, that's a cannon."

"Not at all," said the inventor.

"What is it, then?"

"An atomizer!" snarled Hawkins. "Come on!"

"Hawkins, I'm not going—"

Just here the inventor turned a somersault after his hat. By the time I had dragged him out of the sand and stood him on his feet, Hawkins had grown offended.

"If you hadn't taken my mind off what I was doing with your fool questions," he began.

"What is that thing?" I shrieked at him.

"It is the Hawkins Septishoot — the first automatic coast-defense rifle to amount to a row of pins!" the inventor flared back at me. "There have been machine-guns and rapid-fire guns and disappearing rifles and all the rest of that punk, but the Hawkins Septishoot is the first big rifle to find its own range, its own trajectory, its own mark to the very center, and automatically discharge seven loaded projectiles straight at it. The Hawkins Septishoot, Griggs, is the triumph of the science of war! It is—"

"Well, you go ahead and Septishoot yourself!" I thundered through the wind. "I'm going back!"

"On the contrary, you are not," replied the inventor. "You butted in, and now I hope to Heaven your poor little nerves will get all the shock that's coming to them! You try to run now, and I'll swear I don't know you, and have you arrested as a German spy! I can do it, and—that *means* something!"

I looked around hastily. Surely enough, two men in uniform were standing beside the cannon and looking at us intently. It may have been excitement; it may have been the depressing effect of chilly sea and chillier sky; it may have

been plain fear; but I blush in confessing to a momentary terror of those red stripes and brass buttons—and Hawkins was grinning fiendish contempt.

"Is *that* the company of artillery?" I slapped back, however.

"Er—it is possible that—er—some of the men may be off duty to-day," the inventor confessed less forcefully. "Now, march! Forget your nerves, Griggs. You're going to see something you'll remember for the rest of your life."

I did not doubt it in the least. I followed, though, and we approached the engine of war.

My knowledge of cannons is limited to the fact that they explode with a noise that makes you wish you had stayed home; but, despite ignorance, I am safe in saying that this contraption antedated the Wars of the Roses, at best.

It was partly steel and the majority rust. It stood on what looked like a revolving platform, with a mass of small, palpably new mechanism worked around it. As for the barrel itself, it was some ten or twelve feet long, a dull, rusty red, and wore a sad expression, as if something was preying on its mind.

Hawkins was beaming at it, though, as a mother beams at her first-born, as he talked with the two soldiers—who looked to me like mere boys. I groaned and looked toward the ocean.

Here and there, a lonely launch was anchored; there, too, was a beautiful little ninety-foot steam-yacht. Far off, half a mile or so, the lone, gray shaft of Deadledge Lighthouse reared itself from a snowy mass of foam, and, half-way across from it, a lone man was rowing a big boat over the heaving rollers. That was all.

Hawkins seemed to have finished his confab with the soldiers. The pair saluted with a grace that told of a full week's army service and started off down the beach at a dog-trot. Hawkins rested one hand gracefully on the circular platform, crossed his feet, and posed; the platform moved as gracefully away and all but dropped him to the sand; but he caught himself, and cleared his throat with a pompous:

"Ah, Griggs! I can give you a little attention now. They've gone to start the target."

"*What?*"

"Our floating target. They'll start it from the point over there in ten minutes or so, and she'll cross the mouth of the bay with the wind. Then—"

"Blast the target!" I cried. "I wasn't talking about that. You're not going to try to *shoot that thing* off?"

"This, Griggs, is one of the most modern rifles, loaned me by the War Department for reconstruction. I—oh! Don't back away like that, you clown! Cut that vapid grin. Look! Do you see this cabinet under the gun?"

I did, as he opened the big box. To me it was nothing more than several steel graduated circles and semicircles with pointers; a thing that looked like a telephone switchboard with several hundred holes and several dozen plugs; and the whole neatly decorated with several thousand twisted, intersecting, jumbled wires.

A dash of rain came down about then, and I winced before it. Hawkins smiled.

"It's plain as day, is it not? The range is found in the ordinary way, speeds of moving objects calculated and ascertained—and the Septishoot does the rest itself. Set a plug here—a plug here—a plug here and here and here and here and here. Throw on this switch—thus, although I won't do it. The Septishoot aims and discharges itself, propelled by—come back here!"

I paused.

"Propelled by the two motors for which I have led in a cable from the Brinymere power-house. Thereafter, the Septishoot, at intervals of seconds or minutes, plants seven shots, one after the other, and—"

"I want to talk to this man," I whined wearily, as I started for the occupant of the row-boat, who was just dragging it up the beach.

Hawkins caught me angrily. I calmed down, and Hawkins smiled at the thick-set, ancient person in oilskins who trudged toward us.

"Wet day, friend," observed Hawkins.

"It's a blank-blankety wet day t' be turned outen yer hum an' sent rowin' across that air blank-blankety-blank bay!" the person responded sourly, although not in just those words.

"Well, well! How's that, neighbor?" inquired Hawkins condescendingly.

"Say!" bellowed the visitor. "I heern ye was goin' t' try shootin' that junk heap, blank ye! D'ye suppose I'm goin' t' set over thar in the lighthouse an' have the blank-blank-blank thing blown up under me? If you ain't got no more sense'n—"

"My good man!" exclaimed the inventor. "Shells such as we use in practise are so loaded that they travel no more than five hundred yards!"

"Mebbe they be, an' mebbe they ain't!" thundered the old fellow, pointing a hard, brown finger at Hawkins. "But Rufe Banks sed you was an inventor, an' ye don't git *me*, blink-blank ye—ye don't git *me!*"

With which he trudged on. Somehow, that old man opened my eyes; he uplifted me and filled me with a big, glorious determination. I stood with my back squarely against the open cabinet and echoed:

"And now that the army's gone, ye don't git me, Hawkins! Good-by!"

Hawkins answered spectacularly by leaping a yard into the air, allowing his eyes to pop out, emitting a Comanche whoop, and screaming:

"*Griggs!* Great Scott, you've—"

Evidently I had. Just behind, a ticking—loud as the pounding of a hammer on steel—announced that something was happening, and I shot away a dozen yards and stood—paralyzed.

"You leaned on the switch and started the machinery!" Hawkins howled as he joined me.

"Is it loaded?" I gasped.

"Yes—all seven shells, you clown! Every one charged with a soft-nosed projectile that'll—"

Just then Hawkins ceased to speak, for the end of the world apparently had arrived.

There was a crash that must have made the crack of doom sound like the crushing of a peanut. The whole beach seemed to bounce up and settle down again. I sat down swashily in a puddle of water, and a new torrent of rain poured on me; but vaguely, I could realize that, far out at sea, something had blown up in the water.

Hawkins turned a white face at me.

"Those—those—those shells are overloaded!" he said, with an idiotic snicker. "Why, they must be!"

"Why, so they must!" I giggled back at him in a high treble. "What'n—"

Far down the beach the old man of the lighthouse had gathered up his oilskin skirts and was running like a deer. The sight seemed to bring Hawkins back to earth.

"Griggs," he cried, "that thing's set to fire seven times—anywhere—anyhow! The plugs are just jammed in haphazard, here and there and everywhere!"

"Then, how—"

"I'll have to risk my life for your carelessness," roared the inventor.

"Don't do that!" I grabbed him. "I—"

Whang! The Septishoot had decided to fire again. And again I paid it the compliment of falling down and carrying Hawkins with me.

And far out by the point a little white target suddenly appeared, collided with a few pounds of—I presume—dynamite, and went wherever little white targets go when they blow up.

"I'll go down!" screamed the inventor.

He went. He raced headlong for his contrivance, while I repeated little prayers and gibbered inaudible warnings. He dived at the box and tinkered a little—and came racing back.

"The concussion has jammed the main switch tight. I can't budge it," he said in a hoarse, curiously calm tone.

"And—" I quavered.

"And there's no way of shutting down the power, or telling what's going to happen next," gurgled the inventor. "She may shoot at two-second or two-minute intervals. She may shoot up or down, or east or west. She may—"

"Clack—clack—clack—clack!" ticked the Septishoot.

"Hey! Why couldn't you wait for me?" shouted a merry, breathless voice behind us.

We turned as one. There, on the bank just above, stood Firton, wet and red, but roaring with laughter.

"I'll bet a hundred dollars to a stale pancake it's a new invention," he bellowed. "Hawkins, you are—"

Whack! went the Septishoot.

"It's set for firing," yelled Hawkins. "Look out!"

His voice floated away in the new crash

—or the double crash, perhaps. It did not rise again. When the first smoke passed, no one spoke for a moment.

Where that beautiful ninety-footer had been was only a mass of splinters floating on the water, with a bright spar sticking a foot above the surface. The latest Hawkins invention was working. And—

"Holy Moses! That was Carburn's brand-new steam-yacht!" Firton howled, in an excess of mirth, as he sat down on the higher ground and shook. "Try it again, old man—try it again!"

The Septishoot was clacking away nicely. Far in the offing, if you know where that is, a steamer was churning along—possibly a quarter of a mile off the point.

"Hey! See if you can sink her, Hawkins," Firton suggested. "What d'you care about a couple of hundred people? Don't be a quitter. Try for her."

He chuckled near to apoplexy. Hawkins and I were silent.

I do not say that a Septishoot can hear and think, but I shall never affirm that it *cannot*. Certain it is, that ancient cannon, with its nightmare alarm-clock attachment, began such a performance as nothing but one of Hawkins's inventions ever dared essay.

As I hope for all things, good here and hereafter, the muzzle began slowly working around toward the distant steamer. It seemed to sight carefully. It let off a few new noises and raised its nose a full foot higher. It stopped short, then—and fired.

And, squinting through the rain, we saw that the steamer's tall funnel was missing and that there was a water-spout just beyond her.

For a moment I did not believe my own eyes. Then, as flags began fluttering up the rigging, I licked my lips and turned to Hawkins.

"Man," I croaked, "*stop it!* You'll sink her next time, or—"

"Oh, great Heaven, Griggs, do you suppose any one's—killed?" croaked Hawkins.

"No. I—I saw it hit," came the maddening laugh behind us, as Firton wiped his eyes. "That old stack went over as if she'd been clipped off with shears."

"Clack — clack — clack — clickety-clack!" rattled the Septishoot happily.

The Septishoot, it seemed, was nowhere near done. The wretched thing had taken to traveling in the opposite direction now; it was turning slowly toward the point itself. Foot by foot the muzzle moved on and—stopped. And our breaths stopped with it, for—

"Bang!" roared the thing.

And the flames of Hades seemed to spring suddenly from half-way up the lighthouse — and that upper half was gone. My mouth was open to speak—when my teeth were all but blown down my throat by the new crash. And—

"*What!*" screamed Firton amazedly.

I blinked and blinked. That second loaded shell had razed the poor old lighthouse. Incredible as it appeared, only the top of the ledge itself was left, with the few big foundation-stones of what had once been the mariners' guide.

And Hawkins was gone. With an unearthly scream, he charged at his automatic coast-defense rifle. He leaped down the beach—he plunged at the box. He gripped the big switch, and jammed both his feet into the mechanism for a brace and tugged.

And the clicking ceased abruptly. He had pulled the claws of the Septishoot.

"I—I've smashed the boards and—all," he groaned feebly, as he joined us, quivering and pale. "It was better than—better than—"

"It was much better than," I said, with a sigh of relief. "Is it smashed?"

"That one? Forever! And it's your fault," the inventor moaned miserably.

For a little time there was silence.

Firton spoke first, as usual, with a vociferous laugh:

"No more shoots?"

"No."

"Gee! And I was just beginning to enjoy it. Well — come on up to the house, boys. I haven't been there yet. We'll light the gas-logs and dry off, and have a nip of something to warm up on. Come!"

He started off. I followed briskly, with Hawkins shuffling forlornly behind. I was sorry for him and glad for the rest of creation.

Firton's summer home stood on the high bluff overlooking the beach. It was luxurious, to put it mildly, I observed as we entered. In fact, Firton seemed to have spread himself, even for Firton.

He led us into the huge den up-stairs and touched off the logs. He found a tall bottle and a siphon and glasses, and put them on his table. Then Firton sat down and roared almost hysterically.

I think, when he came out of it, he was going to make a few really funny remarks, and I pitied Hawkins a little.

The great and genial inventor was standing by the window just then, staring through the rain at his cannon.

And then, as if suddenly stricken with a mania, he slammed up the window and screamed:

"Don't touch it, boy—don't touch it! Hey! *Hey!*"

We darted to his side. There, below, a tall, lanky, oilskinned urchin was prodding the mechanism of the Septishoot rather curiously, and—yes! It was the switch that interested him, and—

The Septishoot was moving again.

Smashed or otherwise, she retained sufficient vim to wiggle a trifle when her motor started.

Fascinated, we watched as the boy took to his heels. Yes, the thing was going in good earnest. We could almost hear the ticking as the muzzle slowly turned and turned and turned.

Yes, and turned some more; for it was pointing straight along the beach now.

Hawkins clutched the window-casing; Firton stopped laughing; I froze, for an awful suspicion was creeping over me.

And still the thing was turning—steadily, mercilessly as the finger of fate. It began to point inland. Now it was halfway toward the house. Now, as a little shriek escaped Hawkins, it pointed at the house itself!

Slowly, jerk by jerk, the muzzle rose, aimed straight at us. And down the wind came the loud whack that denoted that the Septishoot was ready for action.

Curiously, I have a clear recollection of what happened after that. There was a puff of smoke; there was a terrific crash of boards somewhere on the far side of Firton's house, and a boom from the cannon itself.

And there was an explosion downstairs that shattered every window in the room, brought down ceiling and gas-fixtures together, and hurled us all flat.

And as we bounced up again, the middle wall of the house fell out with a roar, and the roof went with it, and we were standing in a roofless, three-sided room that swayed and tottered, and—Hawkins had dived straight through the shattered window at the side.

For a second, Firton hesitated. Oddly, Firton was not laughing now. His face was green-white; his fists were tightly clenched. There was no need of his speaking.

I knew just what Firton meant by that wild-animal roar, as he, too, dived after the inventor.

I reached the ground in time to see Hawkins disappearing and Firton gathering himself together and howling inarticulate, breathless things as he prepared for pursuit.

As for me, having landed on both feet, I merely walked away to allow the house to collapse without fatalities—and to rest. Somehow, I needed rest just then. I am not of the heroic Hawkins-Firton mold of man, that can take to sprinting immediately after having fifty thousand dollars' worth of house blown from beneath his feet.

It is a long, cold walk to Brinymere station on a wet November day. Suffice it that I accomplished it alive, and arrived on the station-platform able to turn one or two more somersaults if imminent death threatened, but no more. A train was standing there. I looked at it, and, despite the fact that it was mostly freight-cars, was glad to find it headed in the right direction. I leaned on the coal-box for a second to rest—and the coal-box opened an inch or two, and—

"Hist! Griggs!" said Hawkins.

I turned with a start. Yes, it was the inventor—or as much of him as could be seen through a two-inch crack. He was wet and smeared with black coal-dust, and—

"Griggs! I—I waited for you!"

"Thanks!" I said.

"Not so loud!" hissed the inventor. "Briggs, Firton didn't catch me. He's looked for me everywhere. He's on that train now. Stand where you are." A hysterical giggle. "We'll take the next train, Griggs."

"Say, when is the next train?" I asked suddenly, as this one began to move.

"Why, to-morrow," escaped the inventor. "In winter they—"

"Good-by!" I shouted, as I made a flying leap for the platform of the solitary passenger-car—and landed whole.

Yes, Hawkins got home. It was next day, I believe. I explained matters briefly to his wife, and she shut her lips, sent the butler for three new novels, and sat down to wait. I am not sure just when he landed.

Nor am I interested in other items of the Septishoot aftermath. Some one said that a steamship company had received a big enough check for one funnel to build a whole new boat. I believe, too, that the coast people charged Hawkins for a lighthouse inadvertently knocked over.

I do know that Carburn's new yacht is almost finished, and that Carburn invited me to wager my sweet existence that he was not footing the bills.

But the really interesting thing is the clipping before me. It is from a newspaper of last November, and merely states that on a certain date I recall too well, a new type of cannon was totally wrecked by the last experimental shot of the day.

It also gives the place as Brinymere, New Jersey, and adds that the disaster included the wrecking of Mr. Firton's new seaside home.

Firton, by the way, is building a new place, and they do say that Hawkins—but never mind.

The Septishoot is gone beyond. Peace be upon its soul!

THE IMPOSTOR.*

BY DOUGLAS PIERCE,

Author of "Two Tickets to Tuckerton," "The Shaft of Light," "Chasing Rainbows," etc.

A Western Story of a Mine Worth Millions Whose Ownership Was Hedged About with Mystery and Made a Target for Crime.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BELATED BRIDEGROOM.

FOR an instant Gladys was too utterly stricken by amazement to speak; then, as she heard an ominous movement from the loft overhead, she began to talk very loud and fast.

"But I don't want to get married," she declared vehemently. "And I don't intend to get married. And, least of all, will I be married to Mr. Hart. So there now! And if that is why you all came up here, you may just as well turn around and go home again."

She grew red in the face, stamped her foot, and was perilously close to tears. Then the ridiculousness of the situation overcame her, and she burst into peal after peal of hysterical laughter.

The crowd gazed nervously at one another, and began to edge toward the door. There is little doubt that if Gladys had thrust her fingers through her hair, and given vent to a few maniacal shrieks, they would have stampeded on the instant; but, unfortunately, she became serious again at that moment and calmed down.

Then Dave Richards, in that soothing and fatherly tone, which was especially obnoxious to the girl, began to exhort her.

"Thar, thar, miss. Don't git r'iled up that way, or first thing yer know you'll bring on one of them spells of your'n. Let's have these here obsequies quiet an' orderly-like, an' then everybody'll go away satisfied."

Gladys's brow grew troubled. Dave Richards was one of the most solid and sensible men in the camp. Was he, too, carried away by this folly?

"Mr. Richards," she said to him earnestly, "do you mean to tell me that you men have actually come up here to lay such a preposterous proposition before me?"

Dave seemed a little bewildered.

"Sech a propersition as, fer instance, what, marm?" he asked.

"That I should get married in this fashion."

"Well, I don't know ez I'd call it

eggszackly a propersition," and Dave scratched his head. "It's more like a order, ez you might say. We held a town-meetin' an' decided that you, bein' locoed, needed a husband to act as yer guardeen. An' James Hart, bein' a white male citizen of suitable years, we elected him to the job by a unanermous vote."

Gladys felt that it was time to assert herself.

"Well," she declared firmly, "you may 'decide' and 'elect' all you please. I do not intend to get married, and that is all there is to it."

A shocked and scandalized murmur ran around the room. Was the girl about to defy the popular will?

"Oh, say now, miss, that ain't no nice way to act," protested Richards. "We're tryin' to make it ez easy an' pleasant fer yer as we kin; but you might as well understand first ez last that we means business. We've come all the way up here, an' we've brung the minister with us, an' we don't intend to leave until we've seen you safely j'ined in wedlock."

Every head in the room nodded assent to this statement, and more than one muttered an emphatic "That's what!"

Gladys glanced helplessly about, uncertain what to do or say, until her gaze rested on the minister. He seemed to have an intelligent and not unkindly face, and she decided to try the effect of an appeal to him.

"Oh, sir," she pleaded, "you are a stranger in this camp, and I know not how far you have been led astray by what you may have heard; but if you have any regard at all for your sacred calling, I beg you to have pity on and save an unfortunate girl.

"I am the victim of circumstances and the machinations of an infamous scoundrel. I came out here, deeming myself the heiress to a fortune, only to find on my arrival that he had forged the will with the ultimate object of marrying me, and thus getting the property in his own hands.

"I have thus far defeated his designs, although he has even gone to the point of proclaiming me insane to accomplish his purposes; but now with these honest men who have hitherto protected me, tricked by his wiles, you are my only recourse. Will you not—"

"Here, here!" Dave Richards broke in, pushing forward. "Don't let her string you with that stuff, parson. It's all loco-talk, I tell yer. Shut her up, fer mercy's sake, or first thing we know we'll have to be puttin' her in a strait-jacket.

"Why don't Hart come," he fumed impatiently, "so we kin get the job over with, an' know everything is settled?"

But the minister shouldered Richards aside.

"Just a minute, brother," he urged. "The lady seems a good deal upset; but if you will let me have a moment or two alone with her, I think I can calm her down."

Then, when he had conducted Gladys a little apart, he quickly thrust a small bead-embroidered bag into her hand.

"I believe your story," he whispered, "and know you are sane; but I can do nothing for you now. In this bag, however, I think you will find the means to help yourself. It fell to my keeping today during the progress of a— Well, call it an altercation."

He did not think it necessary to tell her that the bag had come away in his hands during the squaw's furious struggles; and that later, upon examining its contents, he had decided not to give it back until he saw just how certain things were going to turn out.

Gladys hurriedly drew a crumpled sheet of paper from the bag, and smoothing it out, looked at it curiously. Then she gave an exclamation of triumph. One glance was all that was needed to tell her what it was.

"Look!" she cried, springing forward to thrust it in the faces of the assembled men. "You have refused to believe my story of the forged will, have insisted that it was only an insane delusion; but here is undeniable proof for you that I was speaking the truth!

"Look, every one of you! I do not know where this paper came from. I will not tell how it came into my hands. I do not need to. The thing speaks for itself!

"You all know James Hart's handwriting. There it is at the top of this page. And you can all see below how he labored to trace it into the cramped and crooked signature of William Burke.

"Now, dare any of you affirm that I

am the rightful and undisputed owner of the Gladys B.?

"Eh?" She added this in startled fashion, for she became suddenly aware that the bombshell with which she had thought to turn the day was arousing but little interest.

"Why don't you say something?" she quavered. "Don't you believe me? Do you mean to say you will not accept such convincing proof as this?"

If Gladys had but known it, she had sprung her sensation too abruptly. Lame Creek was slow of thought; and with the two ideas that she was insane and the rightful owner of the Gladys B. so firmly fixed in mind, her bold challenge—even backed up as it was by Hart's practise-sheet—merely served to dazzle these men without convincing them.

Besides, they had come up here to see her duly married to the man of their choice; and they didn't propose to be cheated of the ceremony, no matter how many papers she might flash on them.

After a brief consultation with some of the other leaders, Dave Richards again stood forth as spokesman.

"Regardin' this here paper, miss," he said, "we don't know nothin' about it, an' we don't want to know nothin' about it. Not wishin' to accuse you wrongful, we has doubts but what you fixed it up yerself; locoed folks is cunnin', they say.

"Aside from that, though, thar is another p'int. If Jedge Hart was here, he could state it better'n me— Why in tarnation don't he come, anyhow?" casting an anxious glance at the door.

"But it's about like this." Dave went on. "We holds it as good law that a wife can't testify ag'in' her husband; an' we fu'ther holds that you, havin' been 'lected to marry said Hart by the unanermous vote of this camp, it's jest the same as ef you was already his wife.

"The sentence of the court is therefore, miss, that you is locoed an' in need of a guardeen jest as much as ever; an' that you must be married whenever the jedge gits here, which he must certainly soon be now, ef somethin' hasn't happened to him."

Nor from this stern decree could Gladys obtain the slightest appeal. They had made up their minds to marry her, and married they intended she should be.

Even the minister, to whom she turned in supplication, looked away and indicated that he could not help her further.

It was useless, too, for her to say that the thing was absurd, or that she would not be married against her will. She was absolutely in these men's power; and, no matter whether she took part in the ceremony or not, they would consider the bond ratified and leave her to Hart's mercy.

The only thing which now delayed her being dragged to the altar was the unaccountable delay on the part of the bridegroom.

Another terror, also, she had to battle with. From time to time, whenever the discussion grew critical, she had heard the step of Sardon in the loft overhead, preparing to descend; and once she had even seen his foot swinging through the trap. At such moments she would be forced to overturn a chair or raise her voice to a shriek to drown the noise of his movements, while at the same time she had to tax her ingenuity to the utmost in framing covert appeals to him to keep out of sight.

She even wondered whether she would dare let him protect her when she was left alone with Hart. Wounded as he was, what show would he stand against so burly an antagonist?

No, she must contrive some way to make him stay in his hiding-place. Her trembling woman's heart grew steady as steel in her determination to preserve him from danger. If it became necessary to kill Hart, she would do it herself.

And then, as the hands slowly dragged around the clock, a wild, half-incredulous hope began to dawn in her breast. The lawyer was not coming. At the last moment his nerve must have failed him, just as it had in Chicago long ago, and he had fled.

It was now midnight and after. Stronger and stronger grew her hope. It was fast becoming almost a certainty that "the jedge" would not put in an appearance.

Evidently the others were likewise imbued with this idea; for now, after many grave consultations, it was finally decided to send out a search-party.

But, as the men were being selected and told off, heads were suddenly raised

to listen. Then a lagging step sounded just outside, and Hart stood smiling on the threshold of the cabin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN THE DAWN BROKE.

THE first thought of every one who looked at the man was that he was drunk, and that this was the explanation for his delay. But, strangely enough, his face was not flushed. Indeed, it was rather pale than otherwise.

Still, he lurched plainly, having to support himself with a hand against the post on either side as he stood in the doorway. The smile upon his lips was fixed; his eyes glassy like that of a man under the influence of liquor.

Then he seemed to recover himself with an effort. Drawing his revolver, and cocking it deliberately, he pointed it toward the loft.

"Henry Sardon," he ordered, "come down!"

It was a thrilling moment—a complete surprise to every one in the room. Gladys gave one sharp gasp, and stood like a marble statue, one hand clasping her throat.

"Come down," repeated the man in the doorway, "or I shoot!"

In the tense silence the sound of a movement overhead could be heard; then the engineer came slowly down the ladder, his wounded arm upheld by the other above his head.

"There is your man," Hart said to his followers, slipping the gun back into his belt. "Take care of him."

But Sardon shook off the hands which sought to seize him.

"No," he cried, his accusing finger pointing at the other; "there is your man!

"You would not believe Miss Burke," he went on hotly, "when she presented you proofs a while ago of this man's villainy; but I have evidence which even you cannot discredit. Prying around in the loft up there, I came across a package of papers stuffed into a chink of the chimney, and among them was the real will of William Burke."

"Ha! This is interesting," muttered Hart.

He walked, swaying a little, to the fireplace, and stood there, with one elbow resting on the mantelpiece.

Sardon thrust a hand into his coat-pocket, and drawing forth a yellowed document, flipped it open.

"See, here it is," he cried, "all written in the old prospector's own hand, and regularly signed and witnessed. No chance for forgery in this, boys. I will read it to you. Listen:

'I, William Sardon, generally known as William Burke, being of sound mind, do hereby make and establish this, my last will and testament.

'Item.—I first direct that all my just debts, including my funeral expenses, be paid.

'Item.—In accordance with a promise made long ago to my old partner, William Burke, when he sacrificed his life to save mine, I do hereby give, devise, and bequeath to his only daughter, Miss Gladys Burke, of Chicago, all my real and personal property, mines, mining claims, leases, and prospects, of whatever character and wheresoever situate, and do hereby appoint her the executrix of this, my will, to carry out its provisions.

'(Signed) WILLIAM SARDON.

'Generally known as William Burke.

'John Pinto and Thos. Telford, *Witnesses.*'"

"But that's jest the same as the other will that you're kickin' about," Dave Richards protested, scratching a perturbed head. "So, whar does any difference come in, and what's the use of further argument?"

"There is none," rejoined Sardon pointedly, "except for the fact that one is forged and one is genuine. That, to my mind, makes all the difference in the world; for it shows up this man Hart in his true colors as a villain and a rascal. He—"

"Hold on thar, stranger," Dave interrupted. "I can't foller yer on that lead at all. 'Cordin' to you, the jedge here writes a will fer Uncle Billy, an' Uncle Billy writes one fer hisself, an' they're both the same. Whar, then, is the wrong, an' whar has anybody been hurt?"

"Yes, but don't you see—"

"No, I don't see; an' this will business it gittin' me all comflusticated any-

how. How about you, boys?" turning to his companions.

A chorus of vigorous assent answered from every quarter of the room; and Dave continued:

"We come up here on entirely different business than to talk about wills; an' ez it's gittin' late, an' the parties is both on hand now, I guess we'll perceed to the splicin'. Parson, you all ready?"

"But," protested Sardon, "surely you are not going to force this marriage, after what I have told you?"

"Why not?" coolly retorted Dave. "She's still the 'hairess,' ain't she? An' she needs a guardeen; an' the camp has 'lected one for her. What more do yer want?"

Sardon, seeing that it was useless to strive any further with logic, wrenched himself free from his captors, and, wounded though he was, sprang toward Hart as if to engage with him in mortal combat; but a dozen hands seized him, and bore him back, struggling and resisting.

Hart did not even look up. He was standing with his head resting on his hand, his eyes closed.

A moment later he straightened himself and showed alert attention: for Gladys's sweet voice was thrilling through the room.

"Men of the West," she pleaded passionately, "you live in what you call God's own free country, the land of the square deal; and yet you would condemn a woman who has come among you a stranger to accept at your hands what no tyrant or czar would impose upon the meanest of his subjects—a husband not of her own choosing.

"Has it come to be so, then, that, here in these wild, free mountains, where the birds and the deer and the foxes each choose their own mates, you deny that privilege to a human being? I cannot believe it.

"You say I have need of a husband and guardian," she went on; "and perhaps you may be right. At least, I will not contradict you. But I ask you, as men and Americans, if I have not the right to choose for myself?"

Dave Richards slowly shook his head. "Sorry, lady; but, yer see, we've done 'lected—"

She would not let him finish though. Throwing out her hands in appeal to the crowd, she demanded:

"Have I not the right to choose for myself?"

Dave Richards felt himself thrust aside, and the others saw their old leader, reckless, magnetic, dramatic as ever, stride to the center of the floor.

Hart's eye flashed, and his voice rang out like a bell.

"Yes, you have," he said. "Choose!"

It was not a moment for indecision. Straight as a bird to its nest, Gladys flew across the room.

"Last night, you asked me, Henry, and I refused. Now it is I who do the asking."

And his captors released Sardon to let him take her in his arms.

Hart staggered, but caught himself, and forced a smile to his lips.

"Get ready there, parson," and he slapped Calvin on the back. "Bring them up here, boys, and we'll put the thing through in a hurry. I'll give the bride away. All ready now, parson?"

But the young minister suddenly drew back, and, clutching Hart tightly by the arm, jammed a pistol against his side.

"I'm not a minister," he said. "All that guff I told you to-day was a lie to lead you on. I'm a deputy sheriff."

But the smile never left Hart's lips.

"All right," he said coolly; "but I don't believe I'll go with you, after all."

It was only the arm of the deputy sheriff which kept him from collapsing to the floor: and as the coat he had held closely shut fell back, they could see his shirt was clotted with blood.

The deputy sheriff looked a quick question into the fast glazing eyes, and the other nodded.

"Yes," he whispered, "it was she; but no one must ever know. I only got what was coming to me!"

Two hours later, Gladys and Sardon stood by the trail, waiting for the stage. They were going to Overton for the immediate nuptials on which the camp had insisted. Suddenly a forlorn little figure drifted up out of the night, and halted to offer the pair his congratulations.

"I only hope we will soon have the opportunity of returning them, Mr.

Merriwether," rejoined Gladys. "You ought to be making some good woman happy."

"No," sighed the Whiffet sadly. "No. Henceforth I have made up my mind to live for Art. I'm goin' to make connection with that 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' show or bust a b'iler, an' after that I think I'll take on *Hamlet*. I kind o' feel that charackter."

Then, his feelings being too profound to linger longer in their company, he passed on, and the two stood waiting alone.

A soft, cool breeze blew down the mountainside: a faint gray tinge swept across the sky: and then the dawn grew and grew, until the peaks all around were glowing with rose and purple and gold. And still farther down swept the golden hue, until at last it lighted for them the opening of the Gladys B., and, just beyond, the entrance to the pass.

Sardon threw his arm about the girl, and drew her to his side.

"The night is past, sweetheart," he said. "We are starting forth in the full light of day."

THE END.

My Name in the Head-Lines.

BY ANTHONY WRIGHT.

When Furnishing the Means for a Newspaper Beat Ceased for One Reporter To Be a Virtue and Became a Crime.

CARPENTER, giving me a hearty slap on the shoulder, finished by saying: "—and when the time comes we'll die together." We had been talking of our long friendship as we left the city room at five o'clock in the morning, our night's work done.

Jones, who did society for the *Press*, and "dubbed" on the *Eagle*, where Carp and I spent our nights reporting, passed at that moment and overheard Carp's remark.

We both bowed to him coldly and went on. He was of the sensational, scandal-mongering school, and Carp and I disliked him greatly for certain blame he had shifted to my shoulders.

We walked on out of the building and went home. Our rooms were on the third floor, opposite each other. It was an ordinary boarding-house, and no one was ever awake when we got home between four and five.

The cop on the beat said good morning to us, and we passed into the house. I went into Carp's room and smoked a pipe with him. He was very jolly and wide-awake, while I was quite tired.

Having finished the pipe, I arose and yawned:

"I'm going to bed."

"Go as far as you like," smiled Carp: "as for me, I'm going to read a little before I turn in. Light that other gas-jet, will you?"

I did as requested.

"And close the door after you," he said, picking up a book and nestling back in his chair so he could get a good light from two jets, one above each shoulder.

"Carp," I protested, "how can you sleep with your windows and door closed? You ought to have some ventilation."

"Forget it, Jim," he drawled. "You know how I hate noise and hate to be bothered. It's bad enough to sleep in the daytime without having a window open so you can hear every pedler shout. Besides, I've got the habit by now."

"Some fine day you'll contract consumption or something like that from your habit of living as though you were in a safe," I admonished him.

"Oh, go to bed," he smiled, turning to his book.

I closed the door after me and went to my room. It didn't take me long to get to sleep. The last thing I remember before slumber overpowered me was hearing Carp turn the key in his door, and I hoped he had finished his reading and was going to bed.

Of course it was longer, but it seemed to me that I had hardly closed my eyes when there came a terrific banging at my door.

There had been a little petty thievery in the boarding-house, and Carp and I always kept our doors locked.

Thinking it was a phone call or a telegram, I jumped out of bed and rushed to answer the summons. As I did so I felt a peculiar drowsiness, and there seemed to be a strange odor in the room. When I threw my door open I recognized it.

It was gas.

I was confronted by the landlady and her maid.

"What is it?" I demanded, almost overcome by the smell.

"Something's happened to Mr. Carpenter!" cried the landlady. "It's eight o'clock, and we've been trying to rouse him for the last fifteen minutes."

I hurried across to Carp's door, and turned the handle.

The door was locked.

The smell of gas seemed to be coming from his room.

"Carp! Carp!" I cried excitedly.

"It won't do no good," spoke up Mary, the maid. "I followed the smell to here and have been pounding on his door ever since."

"Then, down goes the door," I cried, fearing frightful things. I placed my shoulder against the panel and forced it in.

A gush of gas flowed into the hall as the door went down. I staggered back, a bit dizzy from the effect.

Then, gathering myself together, I rushed into the room: the landlady followed, and began unlocking the windows, to open them and let out the gas.

In the chair where I had left him sat the body of Carp. The book lay open beside him, and his face was fixed in death.

The details are much too sad to relate. Everything pointed but one way. My friend Carpenter had committed suicide.

I had seen him last, and he was in perfectly good spirits. I had seen him first after the tragedy; and there he sat, in almost the same position, between the gas-jets, which were open wide and the gas escaping with a rush.

It was all inexplicable to me.

A policeman was called and shown the room just as it had been found. The coroner came and looked things over thoroughly.

The landlady and I testified to the fact that his door had been locked from the inside, that both of his windows had been closed and locked on the inside, and that each of the gas-jets was on full tilt.

There was only one decision possible. The coroner made it, and handed in the report that "W. E. Carpenter committed suicide between five and eight o'clock in the morning of the 14th, by means of asphyxiation."

I was stunned by the tragedy. Knowing Carpenter so intimately, I was at a loss to find a reason for it. He was never moody, had absolutely nothing to worry him, and, in fact, had received a raise just two days before.

He had never been in love, had no family dependent on him, and was a philosopher.

Even if he had had trouble, I knew Carpenter so well that I was absolutely certain he would never take his own life.

The force of this knowledge made me think of murder. But Carpenter had no enemies; he was a man of sweet disposition, who bothered nobody. He had no money. There was absolutely no motive for either suicide or murder. The thing left me in a kind of hole. I realized that it must have been suicide, for, as I have said, Carp's door and windows were securely locked on the inside when we discovered him.

It was two o'clock that afternoon before I thought of anything to eat. I had been up all day and had tasted nothing. So I went out to a little restaurant across the way.

I stopped to purchase a paper—the *Evening Press*—for which Jones worked.

Suddenly the following head-lines burst upon my vision:

SUICIDE PACT—AWFUL TRAGEDY.

W. E. CARPENTER DEAD.

James A. Hurst Breaks Suicide Pact and Stands By While Friend Kills Himself.

My blood ran cold, my finger-tips ached, my ears rang, on second reading.

My name connected with Carp's in a suicide pact!

It was incredible. Then it came to me in a flash.

I remembered Carp's words as we passed Jones coming home that morning: "And when the time comes we'll die together."

In a moment I connected them with the suicide. Evidently Jones had jumped at conclusions in his own way, and decided from Carp's words that he and I had entered into a suicide pact.

"James A. Hurst," I read it again. It was the first time I had ever seen my own name in head-lines—and in such a connection!

It was horrible.

Then I read the article slowly. Jones had made a good story out of it. Yes, there was the part of Carp's sentence that Jones had caught; there followed a statement from the policeman on our beat to whom we had said good morning. He testified that we looked sad and seemed to have something on our minds when we passed him.

There was lots more—all of it tinged with Jones's imagination and reasoned out in his illogical manner. It made me sick and faint.

Carp's death was enough to upset me, and to have this added scandal was unbearable.

I staggered back to the house, and went to my own room. There I racked my brains for a solution of the mystery, and tried to calm myself. Jones had made trouble for me before. He had given the city man a fake "lead"; I had been put on the story, and exposed it as a fake; later, by a twist of circumstances, Jones's story came to pass. The city editor upheld Jones, and raked me over the coals for putting the *Eagle* in a bad light.

Ever since that time there had been bad blood between Jones and me, and Carp had taken up my quarrel.

Late that afternoon I received a note from the newspaper for which I worked. They explained in plain language that a reporter was only desirable in getting head-lines for the paper; when he got into those head-lines he was quite useless to them. I took the news as best I could.

The day had been a hard one for me. Carp's death, the accusing newspaper story, showing me up to the world as a coward who had refused to carry out his part in a suicide agreement. On top of this to lose my job! But as bad as anything was the fact that Jones was at the bottom of it all.

I managed to get a little fitful sleep that night. The next day Carp's relatives appeared on the scene. I knew them well, but they passed me without recognition.

I was arrested that afternoon, and told my story before the grand jury. It was straight; the landlady supported it, and they found that they could not hold me, although I saw in their eyes the belief in Jones's newspaper yarn.

Ordinarily, I would have left the field; but there was one person who had confidence in me and insisted on my remaining where I was. That was the landlady, with whom Carp and I had lived ever since our graduation from college.

She was a trump. If it hadn't been for her there is no telling what would have become of me. I had just money enough to carry me for a couple of weeks, and insisted on paying her for my room and board; but she refused to take it until there was some turn in my circumstances. I had no reason to expect a turn, and told her so; but she was a good soul, and insisted on my staying.

Three or four days after the tragedy I began to pick up a little, and went around to the newspaper offices looking for space work.

"Nothing doing," was what they told me everywhere. It is almost unpardonable for a reporter to get his name in the head-lines in connection with any scandal. The papers are never interested in such a man.

Jones's story had been heard everywhere, and, as the Carpenter family had employed detectives to work on the case, there was still some interest in it. Jones seemed to be before me everywhere. I could have strangled him; but the general practise is to drown puppies. Finally I secured a shipping-clerk job that kept me from going insane thinking of the tragedy.

I made just enough at this work to pay my board-bill, but it kept my mind occupied during the day. Then, one day,

Jones came into the shipping-room on a story, he said; but I think he had heard of my being there.

I was discharged that night; the employer gave no reason, and I knew that my work had been all right.

During the following day I began to regain some of my old pride. The grief had eased up a little, and I began to feel a hatred for Jones and a desire to get even.

I determined to devote my time to working out the mystery that had baffled the detectives. If I could do that, there might be a chance for revenge. Jones's story would be proved incorrect, and I would be able to hold up my head again.

Besides, I still had the firm belief that Carp was not the kind of man who would commit suicide.

I had the landlady change me into Carp's old room, and every night, and mostly through the day, I sat in his chair between the gas-lights, a book in my hands, and the door and windows locked. I duplicated everything exactly, and tried to figure out how any one could have murdered him.

There were no marks on his body: there was no sign anywhere to show that any one besides himself had been in the room.

Then I worked on the theory that he might have dozed off over his book and some draft might have blown out the light. But that was impossible, for the windows and door had been closed and locked.

It is not difficult to see that a subject like this might develop into monomania in a man like myself—out of work, and denounced before the world as a coward.

The landlady noticed it first. She brought a doctor in to see me, in spite of my protestations. He was very kind, and yet very stern. He told me I must leave the room at once, quit the city, and seek something new to interest me.

I realized the force of his argument.

When he left I began slowly to pack my trunk. I'll admit that I was desperate. An overwhelming force of some kind possessed me. I was hardly myself.

I pothered over the trunk for an hour. I feared that I was going insane. Probably all that saved me from doing myself bodily violence was the fact that I burst into tears suddenly.

All my pent-up feelings gave way. I had never cried before, but I was taken suddenly with a nerve-racking siege of weeping.

I threw myself on the bed, and shook hysterically, feeling that my mind was going and the end was in sight. I had brooded too long over the tragedy and my hard luck.

Then came the thought that I was a man. I reeled unsteadily to my feet and tried to get hold of myself. A look in the mirror steadied me a little. I was fixed suddenly by the glimpse I got of my own face.

It was purple, ghastly, streaked with lines I had never seen so pronounced before. The eyes were bulging, burning; the pulses in my neck throbbed violently.

"Ugh!"

I shuddered involuntarily at the sight. What a horrid face it was—and to think that it was mine!

I rushed madly to the washstand in the room and turned on the hydrant to wash away the tear-stains and reduce the inflammation in my staring eyes. I turned the faucet again. I jerked it—the water would not come.

Then an idea struck me like a flash of lightning.

I jerked the faucet again—still no water. The idea began to impress me strongly.

Dizzily I unlocked the door and guided myself by the wall to the telephone in the hall. I took down the book, and, with difficulty, found the number I wanted.

My mind mumbled mechanically: "A chance at last. After so much defeat. It's either 'No' or 'Yes.' This decides it once for all."

I was half afraid to call the number. The possibilities were so great. If I won, the good fortune would overpower me: if I lost, I would be deeper in despair.

"Throw the dice, you fool!" I found myself crying aloud.

I jerked off the receiver resolutely and called my number.

I counted twenty-eight distinct heart-throbs before a gruff voice at the other end of the wire startled me into the realization of the present, and I stammered

out my question eagerly — the question that had flashed into my mind when the great idea came.

This time it was fifty-two dull, deadly heart-throbs I counted before that voice jolted me again.

"No; not that night," came the answer.

It was "No!" The shock was too great. My hopes had run too high that last fifty-two heart-beats. I had hoped too much.

The old despair returned like a quick curtain; my muscles relaxed; I slumped against the wall, and the receiver began to slip from my fingers.

Just before my hand relaxed its hold on the thing I was electrified by a sudden voice from the instrument. It was the same voice, continuing after a pause, and these were the words:

"But the morning after, it was off for about fifteen minutes."

I leaped to my feet.

Thank Heaven! I had clung to the receiver just long enough.

I went mad with joy. It was a sane madness. In a second I had secured a well-known number on the telephone. It was that of the city editor of the *Daily Eagle*, my old paper.

I fired the words quickly at him:

"The Carpenter mystery is solved. I just found the water turned off in my room, and it occurred to me the *gas* might have been turned off by the company the night Carpenter died.

"They do turn it off sometimes to repair the pipes, you know. I called up, and at first they told me it hadn't been turned off that night; then they said it had been off fifteen minutes the next day.

"You see, the story is evident. Poor Carp fell asleep in his chair, and when they turned the gas supply off to make the repairs, the gas-lights above him went out; he slept on until they turned the gas on again.

"Then, you see, the fumes poured out through the open jets into the room and killed him."

"Good!" cried the editor. "It's a great story! Get the affidavit from the gas company and hurry down at once, Hurst. A better job's waiting for you. It's a great scoop."

"I'll be down on one condition," I called back.

"What's that?"

"That Jones loses his job with you."

"He'll do that," cried the editor. "He'll never get a chance for newspaper work in this city again when the true facts of the story come out. You can bank on that, Hurst."

I smiled then, for the first time since poor old Carp was asphyxiated and reported a suicide.

The Ant and the Elephant.

BY HAROLD C. BURR.

A Tempest in a South American Teapot That Threatened To Exceed Its Limitations After All.

J. EDGAR SEDAM arrived in Vera del Rica bent on swallowing an elephant. He was heeled with gold to accomplish his ends. Entering the freight barge that also landed the Palm Leaf's passengers inside the shoals, he was poled aside by a native darky in simple attire of canvas trousers and woven straw hat.

And as soon thereafter as might be, Sedam besought an audience with the Yankee high-muck-a-muck of the comic-opera republic—plain Billy Smith.

Presidente Smith, product of a mushroom revolution, was the elephant in question. He was plain—but, oh, my! The good citizens of Vera del Rica will whisper to visitors fearfully behind trembling hands that his reign was despotic.

Yet it is not of Vera del Rica's past wrongs I wish to write. It is of J. Edgar's mission and of himself.

J. Edgar had annexed his little pile. One look at him would have convinced you of that. Yankee capitalist was his neckname, expansion his hobby.

He was the charter member, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer of the original Monopoly Club. Sedam was in South America to buy a toy country or two with which to amuse the children at home. But his ways were his own, and he consulted Presidente Smith. Please listen to the buzz-saw of our promoter's busy brain.

"What I want, Mr. President," he began modestly, "are concessions. I want to irrigate this country with a system of commerce that will drain the marts of the world into the reservoir of your sandy shores. Vera del Rica needs the spur of live business enterprise. Your honor, I want franchises, grants of governments lands. I desire to incorporate under your laws the Equator Fruit and Packing Company."

El presidente, who was fat enough, preposterous enough to be imposing, closed one eye, laid a stubby forefinger against a puffy nose, and grinned cunningly.

"Oh, no, you don't, Mr. Smarty!" His voice had a waddling, wheedling cadence akin to trickery. "You'd hire hands to run your plant. In two months the whole blame country would be looking to you for food and raiment. Your fruit-houses would become mere hatcheries for revolt. You'd be a trust I couldn't trust. You'd swing too many votes at election. So run on home and be nice! You'll get no favors from me. I'm one of the wise ones: too wise for you to flimflam."

J. Edgar Sedam was as emotionless as a mummy.

"Señor Smith, there are ant-hills in Vera del Rica," he remarked pleasantly, relapsing into simile. "Did you ever hear of an ant who was big enough to swallow an elephant?"

"No," returned the *presidente* tolerantly. "But I've seen elephants step on ants. Are you an ant?"

Sedam backed dramatically toward the door.

"That very thing," he nodded in farewell. "One that is going to gobble an elephant, too. *Adios.*"

And he was gone from the presence of the *presidente*.

El presidente plain Billy Smith gave a gasp of amazement. He sat in his wicker armchair dumbly staring, the iced drink on the table at his elbow neglected, and mopped his florid face with a silk handkerchief.

Sedam was moving down the sizzling tropical road, apparently oblivious to the open treason of his speech. It was high, hot noon. It seemed as if the rapid gait must either ignite him or else melt him to a grease-spot. But he disappeared intact.

Then a crafty gleam shot into the pig-like eyes of Smith. He smote the silver bell near at hand, thus summoning one Zayas, right-hand man to *el presidente* in times of stress.

Yes, he'd be harder on J. Edgar than the heat. And he guffawed at his own apt joke.

It is for you to be apprised of results only. Plain Billy's instructions were strictly private, devilish plain.

That night it was Zayas himself who haunted the dark stone corridors of the ancient Mission Hotel. And late in the evening he succeeded in covertly attracting the attention of the American.

Sedam was smoking out on the parapet overlooking the harbor. He went right over to the frantically beckoning man crouching in the shadows.

"What do you want?" he demanded bruskly.

Zayas edged farther into the darkness.

"Ah, *señor*, I am fearful of the police. But I saw you to-day at the palace. I saw you leave. You were displeased. We are all comrades—we who hate the Yankee usurper. So I told the Circle of the Loyal. They have bidden me bring you."

"What are you?" asked Sedam curiously. "Reds?"

Zayas made a stabbing movement.

"Traps are being laid," he replied noncommittally. "Soon we will have clipped every vulture's claws."

J. Edgar whistled without tune.

"Whew! that's going some. But what makes you confide in me? I should think it would be sort of a secret."

"Ah, yes, *señor*, a very great secret. But you *Americanos*—you are brave, noble, wonderful. My poor countrymen have heard of the great U. S. A. The plazas of the far south are ababble with the gossip."

Suddenly Zayas edged closer, two baleful little eyes gleaming at the Yankee in the gloom.

"And we want to enlist your aid," he went on. "We are pledged to overthrow the dictator, for honest government, for humanity. Will you join the Loyal Circle, *señor?*"

"What's the use?" came flippantly from Sedam.

Smith's trapper looked at his would-be victim craftily.

"Ah, that is for you to deduct, *señor,*" he purred. "We have heard, we suspect you want some grants of land. With the present party you can do nothing. But we will prove more amiable to requests. I swear it in the honorable name of the Circle!"

"Oh, that's been all settled, old sport." Sedam puffed at his cigar and teetered on his heels. "But Vera del Rica on a steady pull isn't exactly Broadway on New Year's Eve. I don't know as I mind buckling on a pop-gun and taking aim at *el presidente*. Bring out the ink, and I'll sign the contract by the light of the stars. You're on!"

Zayas backed toward the stairway that led into the lower regions of the hotel.

"You will be notified of our next meeting," he called back. "Be prepared."

Sedam waved a good-natured good night, and was left alone again. For two minutes he was the solitary figure outlined against the blue-black of the tropical, star-spangled heavens.

Then a solemn little cavalcade issued out on the dim, echoing roof. J. Edgar turned at the sound of their footsteps on the tiling. He made out a sergeant of the Vera del Rican army and a file of six privates.

The petty officer stepped forward.

"Pardon, *señor*, but you are under arrest. *El presidente's* orders."

But the Yankee promoter was not stumped.

"Strange," he murmured, tossing his cigar-stub to the four winds. "Won't the standing army sit down? What's the charge?"

"Aiding and abetting the enemies of Vera del Rica. You had best come peaceably, *señor*."

"That sounds like home. But suppose I'm all for a ruction, and won't go?"

The sergeant drew himself up manfully to his full five feet.

"There is no alternative," he declared pompously. "The dictator brooks no tardiness. He will throw you into prison like a dog!"

"Oh, he *will*, will he!" retorted Sedam daringly. "Well, let his minions make good first. But I promise you I'll have your jobs if you get too peevish. Won't you step right up, and I'll throw you over into the street one at a time. Think you can bluff Uncle Sammy's progeny, you rabble! I'll spank somebody in a minute."

The leader of the detachment unsheathed his sword with a flourish.

"Surrender, pig!" he bellowed, bombastically advancing, his men hard at his heels.

Sedam spat on his hands and waited eagerly.

"That's right, come straight along!" he taunted them. "You're a joke tin soldier. I'm going to pitch you back in *Puck*, where you belong. Look out for me."

Now, as heredity would have it, Sedam dearly loved a fight. Somewhere along the line of remote ancestry, good old green Irish blood must have flowed. He had naught save his bare knuckles; yet J. Edgar had learned other arts than the fostering of trade. He could swing a nifty right. Unafraid, he leaped at the odds he must vanquish.

It was dark and lonely out on that roof. Harborward, lights twinkled like captive fireflies in the spider-like rigging of anchored ships. The faint rhythm of music, the buzz of a southern town at evening-dress inspection, floated up to the combatants.

But Sedam heard not, neither did he care. He went through the little knot of soldiery like a reaper through Kansas wheat. Down they went like so many ten-pins, and up at him again just as inevitably.

Nobody thought to use firearms. It was pride with the enemy. Sedam had none.

But such a struggle could terminate but one way. The odds were seven to one. Sedam managed to get six of them

down at once, but the seventh laid him low—from behind.

And the next we see of him, he is being thrust down the hotel stairs, through a lane of staring guests, out into the street. Sedam's hands are knotted at the small of his back. Bruised little troopers march at either flank, front and rear. *Caramba!* but the filthy pig of a Yankee has fought like ten thousand demons!

To the gaping, flocking crowd without, the sergeant speaks. The prisoner has been taken in sedition. The dictator is going to make an example of him. He will be shot at sunrise, back to a wall.

Down with traitors! Long live *el presidente!* And all because Zayas was the smartest rogue in Vera del Rica.

The American deported himself proudly. Not a flicker of an eyelid to denote fear for the morrow. And indeed there was none. J. Edgar Sedam had still a trump up his sleeve. We shall see him table it presently.

So he was insultingly escorted back to the presence of plain Billy Smith. *El presidente* had moved his audience-chamber indoors. He received his bedraggled countryman in a room of the palace. He rubbed his hands in gloating anticipation. To-night he had extended his office-hours in order to greet Sedam on his return.

J. Edgar was in sorry plight between his guards. Hat gone, linen collar ripped awry, face dirt-streaked, he looked far from imposing. But there was an ease and confidence about him that boded ill for the smirking coward behind the paper-littered desk.

"Ha!" rasped Smith. "There you are. Well, I just seized you in season, it seems. Your veiled threats set me watching. At dawn I'm going to have you backed against a limestone wall and shot. *Woof!* a puff of smoke, and J. Edgar Sedam will never take any country away from me through the medium of his Equator Fruit and Packing Company."

"Smith, I must say you're about the crudest scoundrel I've ever been pitted against." Sedam's tone was conventional, easy, contemptuous. "Take the way I work, by comparison. At noon, when I left you, I hied me to the docks. I was in a quandary. And when I want to think, I seek the water. Its quiet motion soothes me.

"Well, down there I made the acquaintance of a certain outlawed citizen of Vera del Rica. We played hide-and-seek around a bale of merchandise ten minutes. But we finally got on speaking terms. It seems the gentleman needed money to uproot you. He was the pretender, Don Delamora."

Smith's insignificant eyes seemed to recede with a sickly greenish tinge that spread to his pouchy face.

"The *don* carries a playful-looking little toad-sticker for a watch-charm," pursued J. Edgar encouragingly. "When I mentioned you, he seemed desirous of inserting it in your spareribs. You see, you put across a pretty raw deal on him. But he's sneaked back to town, half-crazy from starvation, and as soon as he's fed up he's going to interview your army. You pay it four cents a day, I believe. I've instructed Don Delamora to offer eight in exchange for my concessions. Perhaps you'd better liberate me and light out."

But Smith was on his feet in impotent passion.

"You fool!" he blazed at the sergeant of the detail, who was quietly untying the prisoner's bonds. "Shoot him down where he stands. Shoot, I tell you! Vera del Rica will pay the indemnity."

The erstwhile tool of the dictator insolently lit a cigarette. His comrades of the guard broke discipline and followed suit, lolling lazily in Smith's handsome armchairs.

The fat rascal fairly strangled in his wrath. Then the officer spoke familiarly:

"The good Señor Sedam is asked to pardon our rough handling. I have been informed. Don Delamora has shown me the gold—clinked it in my hearing. On the way here we had a talk—the good, kind *señor* here and my poor self. He spoke his name, and it was enough. He is going to appoint me head of the new army. Long live the pretender!"

Smith collapsed into a chair, weak from fright.

"Don't—don't kill me!" he begged wretchedly. "I'll leave the country—any—anything you want of me. But spare me! I wouldn't hurt a cat."

J. Edgar Sedam, promoter one time seeking favors in Vera del Rica, tapped him good-naturedly on a shaking shoulder.

"Smith, I want to chat with you. You won't be killed—only sent off somewhere as an undesirable citizen. I'll intervene between the *don's* watch-charm and your ribs. But I've got a story I want to spin you in the shape of advice. It's about an ant that swallowed an elephant. Once upon a time—"

THE CASE IN QUESTION.

BY FRED V. GREENE, Jr.

What Came of Taking Matters Into One's Own Hands in an Affair of Railroad Rules and Regulations.

THERE it was, right before Burton's eyes, and as he stared hard at it while mentally determining his course of action, the great barrier of system rose before his mental vision and prevented, for the moment at least, his taking the step upon which he was deliberating.

For two weeks Harry Burton had been in the West on business for the firm that employed him, and had started the previous afternoon on the return trip to Binghamton, which necessitated a change of cars, as well as railroad, at Buffalo.

The lateness of his train for the last hour had caused him some uneasiness, but when it pulled into the station, fifty minutes behind time, he breathed a sigh of relief. It was only eight o'clock, and as the other train did not leave till eight-twenty, he walked slowly to the baggage-room, where he presented the check for his suit-case.

"I just came in on the St. Louis Limited," Burton told the man.

The latter had the check in his hand, and had already started away from the counter, when Burton's words caused him to stop suddenly, and he retraced his steps, saying: "That stuff won't be in here for at least half an hour."

"A half hour!" the other exclaimed in dismay.

"Easily that," the baggageman threw back over his shoulder as he hurried to another part of the room.

For a moment the traveler stared blankly at him, too much taken aback to speak, and helplessly unable to decide what to do. He realized only too well that he must reach Binghamton that afternoon, and that the eight-twenty train was the only one that would enable him to do so; and also that it was the last train on that railroad until eight o'clock that night.

In a dazed manner Burton wandered from the baggage-room and out to the platform, where still stood the train which had brought him into Buffalo. And far down the tracks his eyes caught sight of a huge truckload of trunks and bags.

Instinctively, his steps turned in that direction, and he pulled out his watch to find he had yet fifteen minutes in which to catch the other train. But this fact caused Burton no uneasiness. It was less than a five-minute walk from one station to the other.

He strolled aimlessly on until he reached the baggage-truck: then, as he passed it, his eye wandered over the pile in a vague way.

Suddenly he came to a stop. There, on the very end of the heap, he saw his initials on the end of a bag.

Instantly he decided what to do, but instinctively he glanced up and down the platform, as if about to commit a crime, instead of taking his own property.

His hurried look revealed no one in sight, and as his eyes again rested upon the bag, that barrier of system rose before them.

"Hang it all," he muttered, "any one has a right to his own property."

His eyes still gazing down the platform, he took a step nearer the baggage-wagon and, hastily reaching up, pulled his suit-case from the top of the heap, then ambled off in the direction of the station, throwing as much unconcern into his walk as possible.

Burton quickened his steps as he passed

through the waiting-room, and once on the street heaved a great sigh of relief and started in the direction of the other railroad terminal.

Arrived at Binghamton after a tiresome journey, he hurried in the direction of his home, and in answer to his pressure of the door-bell his mother answered it herself. As she kissed him he realized that she was laboring under excitement of some description.

"What is it, mother?" he asked.

"A surprise for you," she answered. "It was for me, too."

"What is it?" Burton inquired eagerly.

"Your Uncle Henry is on his way East, and may arrive at any moment. He must have come on the same train you did."

This was, indeed, a surprise. This was the one uncle—his father's brother—he had never seen, and after whom he was named.

"I received a long letter from him yesterday," Mrs. Burton added. "He is going to stop with us over night, and in a day or two he sails for Europe."

"Uncle Henry has quite some of the eternal necessity, hasn't he?" Burton asked thoughtfully.

"You mean—"

"Money."

"Why, Harry, he has so much—"

Mrs. Burton stopped abruptly at the ringing of the front door-bell.

"That's probably he now," she added, hurrying away.

Burton stood for a moment, his suit-case at his side just where he had dropped it when he entered, and as the expressions of joy from the front door reached his ears he stepped toward the reception-room into which the voices guided him.

"And this is Harry," Mrs. Burton announced proudly as her son entered.

"Well, I can hardly realize it," the older man said as they shook hands. Then he added, "Hang it, I can't realize anything except that I may be forced to postpone my trip to Europe."

"Why, what's wrong?" Burton inquired, his uncle's tone plainly showing that something out of the ordinary had taken place.

"Confound your Eastern railroads!" the old man burst out. "They've lost my suit-case. On *my* road—"

"Lost your suit-case!" Mrs. Burton echoed.

"That's exactly what they've done! And I've got to stay here until they find it. There are papers in it that I've got to have before I go."

"But how could they lose it?" Harry put in.

"That's what I'd like to know," the old man replied testily. "When I got into Buffalo this morning and found I'd only a few minutes to get from one train to the other I gave the baggageman a dollar to get my satchel for me, and get it in a hurry. You see, I checked it through from the West; and as I realized that if I missed the train I came on I couldn't get one till to-night, so—"

"Why, you must have come in on the same one I did," Harry interrupted.

"Don't know anything about that," his uncle retorted. "All I know now is that the man couldn't find it, and that at this moment it may be quietly resting in some baggage-room between here and the Mississippi River, with a dozen or so trunks piled on top of it."

"What had you better do?" Mrs. Burton asked.

"I know what I've *got* to do," the old man declared.

"What is that?" Harry queried coldly. For some reason he took offense at the manner of his uncle.

"Ask you to take me down-town to a telegraph station, so I can wire the steamship line in New York to cancel my passage on that boat and change it to their next Saturday's steamer."

"Why, of course, I'll do that," Burton returned. "Let's go right now."

"Perhaps you'd like to clean up after your long journey," said Mrs. Burton.

"Yes, I think I would," Uncle Henry agreed, and picking up the little hand-bag that was his only piece of luggage, he followed her to the room which she had already prepared for him.

Harry watched them as they ascended the stairs, and as they disappeared from view he muttered: "Grouchy old man! Not a bit like my poor dead father."

Then he went to the library and, picking up his suit-case, he, too, ascended to his room, calling as he passed the one his uncle was in: "Let me know when you are ready."

"I'm ready now," the old man declared.

"It makes me so blasted mad," the old man repeated as they descended the stairs a few minutes later. "I could just as well have brought it myself, but I never dreamed of a mix-up like this."

Harry did not reply, and for some moments they walked on in silence.

"Let's go to the station first," his uncle suddenly suggested. "They may have found it."

"As you say," Harry agreed. "The telegraph-office is there, anyway."

Again silence marked their walk, and continued until they reached the depot and made their way to the baggage-room, where Mr. Burton inquired regarding his property.

But he received the same reply as before. There was no such piece of baggage on hand.

This was the signal for an outburst of indignation to which the railroad employee listened patiently, and at length, realizing that it was useless to berate this man, he turned to Harry.

"Come, where's the telegraph-office?" he asked, and the other led him to where it was located, at the other end of the station.

A lengthy despatch was soon flashing over the wires to New York, addressed to the steamship company, canceling Henry Burton's passage and asking for booking on a ship that sailed the following week, ending with a request that they wire a reply to the address which he gave them.

This done, the two retraced their steps to the Burton home, with not very much to say on either side. Harry had come to the conclusion that his uncle was a crank of the first water, while the other had already decided that his nephew was a young man to whom he could not warm.

"You could find no trace of the bag?" was Mrs. Burton's inquiry as they again entered the house.

"Not a sign of it," the old man snapped as he followed his sister-in-law into the library.

Harry stared after them angrily—he felt his uncle's tone and manner toward his mother was entirely uncalled for, and he resented it.

"You'll have to excuse me, Uncle Henry," he said curtly. "I must unpack my bag. There are some papers in it that I need."

"There are some in mine that I need, too," the old man growled. "I wish I could get them."

Harry made no reply, and, hurrying up the stairs, was soon in his own room. Drawing his bag to him, he inserted the key in the lock and endeavored to turn it. But for some strange reason it refused to perform its mission.

"What the deuce is the matter with the thing!" he exclaimed impatiently as he drew the key out to make certain it was the right one.

But he quickly saw there was no mistake and again inserted it, with the same result—the lock refused to open.

Burton stared wonderingly at the bag, and his eyes rested upon the "H. B." lettered on the end of it. And as he did so a strange feeling came over him—the letters seemed larger than he had thought them, and a puzzled expression spread over his face.

He racked his brain for the address of the nearest locksmith, then heard the bell ring, and mechanically stepped to his open door to learn who was calling.

"Telegram for Mr. Henry Burton," he heard announced, and hurried downstairs to get it.

He took it from the boy, and as he did so his mother reached his side while he was in the act of signing for it.

"It's for Uncle Henry, I guess," she suggested.

A sudden light of understanding spread over Harry's face as he handed the telegram to the old man, who had now joined them.

Mr. Burton tore open the envelope and gave a grunt of disgust.

"Passage transferred to next Saturday's steamer," he read aloud. "Well, that thing's settled, anyway. Now I hope I get that blamed bag of mine by that time."

"Uncle Henry," Harry said slowly, "what kind of a bag was it?"

"Just a plain, ordinary, every-day suit-case," the old man replied. "Looks just like any other. You can see a dozen of them on any baggage-truck, and couldn't tell one from the other."

The young man gave a sudden start

that did not escape the notice of the other two.

For an instant he gazed helplessly at them, then asked hesitatingly, "Were there any initials on it, Uncle Henry?"

"My own," the old man claimed. "H. B."

"Wait here a moment," and Harry quickly left the room.

Mr. Burton turned to his brother's wife.

"What's the matter with that boy of yours?" he asked.

"Why, I don't—I don't understand you, Henry," was her reply. "What—what do you mean?"

"He acts so queerly. He's—"

But Harry's return cut short further comment upon him. They both stared hard as he advanced toward them, a suit-case in his hand.

"Is this yours?" he demanded, dropping the bag in front of his uncle.

For an instant the old man was too taken aback to reply, and he stared from his nephew to the suit-case.

"Is it?" young Burton insisted.

"Why—why it *looks* like mine."

"Then try your key and make sure." Harry directed. Mechanically the old man did as was suggested, with the result that the lock opened, and, springing back the two catches that held it, Mr. Burton saw before his astonished eyes his own belongings.

"Why—why—what does it mean?" he demanded as he looked questioningly from Harry to his mother.

"It means that it is my bag that is lost," was the former's reply.

"But—hut how did you get this one—*my* bag?" his uncle persisted.

In as few words as possible Harry told of the incident in the Buffalo station, and how he had surreptitiously taken what he thought was his bag, owing to the fact of the initials being the same.

"Well, as it turns out," was Mr. Burton's comment, "there's no harm done. But you might have caused a lot of trouble. In fact, you might get mixed up with the law if you tried it again."

"But how about your trip to Europe?" Mrs. Burton broke in, and as soon as she had spoken she realized it was a most untactful remark. The old man's face hardened as he turned to her son.

"You see what you've done for me, don't you?" he demanded angrily. "You *have* caused a lot of trouble, after all."

"No, I haven't," Harry contradicted. The thought of having this uncle visiting at their house for a week proved a most unpleasant one. "I'll hurry downtown and wire the steamship company that you'll go to-morrow, after all."

"All right, do that," the other agreed, but not in a very genial tone. "And have them wire back if it's O. K."

Young Burton was glad of an excuse to leave the house. He went directly to the telegraph-office and sent the message, after which he inquired for his own bag; but, as he was already certain, it had not come and would not be there until after the night train from Buffalo had arrived.

He then proceeded to his office, and after a long talk with his employers, with whom he went over the details of his successful trip and his explanation of the non-arrival of his bag, which held the contracts, he returned to his home, and as his mother greeted him he knew from her looks that all was not well.

"What is it, mother?" he asked.

"Uncle Henry received a reply a short while ago from the steamship company. They have sold his accommodations since receiving his first telegram. He has to wait until next Saturday, and he blames you for it."

"I do myself," Harry replied. "The very fact of having him here for a week is punishment enough for my wrong-doing."

"You shouldn't speak that way," Mrs. Burton protested, but her tone proved that, in a measure, she echoed her son's ideas on the subject.

"Do you think he'll stay a week?" Harry added.

"From what he said, I think that is his plan."

"Fine! Very fine!" the other observed in an intensity of sarcasm. Then he added bitterly "For me."

Before they could speak further Mr. Burton himself appeared.

"Well, young man, your mother has probably told you how matters stand," he sneered.

"Yes," Burton replied curtly.

"Well, it's done—so there's no use

arguing about it. But let me tell you one thing."

"What is that?" the other inquired calmly.

"Don't ever do a fool thing like this again. You might not get off as easily the next time."

"I hope there'll never be a next time," Burton remarked.

"And so do I, for your sake."

Then the old man's tone changed, and a faint smile broke over his face.

"Harry," he began, as he extended his hand, I may have seemed like a crusty old fellow to you, but I'm not, and I apologize for the way I've acted and spoken. Come on, let's be friends."

The other took the extended hand and shook it, but there was no great warmth in his grasp—he felt he could not forgive and forget so easily.

But apparently his uncle did not notice it, as he said: "After supper I'll have to go down-town and send another telegram to the steamship company, telling them to hold my accommodations for next Saturday. Will you go with me?"

"Certainly."

So after dinner they started out, but in no chatty fashion.

"Look here, Harry," began his uncle presently, "I'm sorry I spoke and acted as I did when we first met. I've said so before, and you agreed to overlook it." He stared hard at his nephew as he added: "But you haven't done so."

"Why—yes I have," the other declared weakly.

"No you haven't," his uncle corrected. "I can see that much with my eyes shut. But look here, my boy—try to do it. If we're going to live in the same house for nearly a week it'll be mighty uncomfortable for both of us if the present conditions continue. I know I'm a cranky old man, and sometimes speak too quickly, but—"

"Now, Uncle Henry, let's not talk of it again," his nephew interrupted. "We all have our faults, and if speaking quickly is yours, that's all there is to it."

The next morning Harry left early for his office and Mr. Burton went with him, saying that he intended seeing some of the town, and that evening all three went to the theater together.

The next day—Sunday—while they were at dinner the maid appeared with a telegram in her hand.

"For Mr. Henry Burton," she announced, glancing from one to the other of the two men who answered to the name.

His uncle watched him closely as Harry took it and tore open the envelope. And as he did so, the maid added: "There's a charge of two dollars and fifty cents."

Harry looked up quickly.

"Then it must be for you, uncle," he laughed, and handed it over. "That collect charge is too much for me."

Mr. Burton seized it eagerly, glanced over the sheet, his face clouded.

"Any bad news, Henry?" Mrs. Burton inquired solicitously.

"Well, I should say so!" was the emphatic reply. Then he added, as he turned to Harry: "How soon can I get a train for the West?"

"Why—what do you mean?" his nephew inquired.

"Read it," the old man directed.

The other took the message.

"Read it aloud," Mr. Burton added.

Harry read:

"'Telegram received as follows:

"'Send wireless to Mr. Henry Burton, who sailed Saturday on your steamer, to return immediately. Big strike on railroad threatened. Knew you were not sailing till next Saturday, so send this to address we sent last wire.'"

Harry looked up from the paper.

"Well, you seem to have hard luck trailing you, Uncle Henry. Do they mean the railroad you own?"

"How soon can I get a train West?" his uncle repeated, paying no heed to his nephew's inquiry.

"Must you really go?" Mrs. Burton broke in.

Some of the old man's former impatience returned as he replied curtly: "Does that sound as if I could stay?"

Harry had already drawn from his pocket a time-table, and a quick study of it brought forth the information that there was a train leaving for Buffalo in thirty-five minutes.

This brought the old man to his feet with a jump.

"That's the one I must get!" he declared.

"But how about your trip to Europe?" Harry queried.

"All off!" his uncle rejoined. "At least for the present. I'll wire the steamship company to that effect from the train."

He was about to dash to the door when he faced about quickly.

"Young man," he began in a stern tone, "when I found you were the cause of my putting off till next Saturday the trip I had looked forward to for so long, I—well, when I say I was sore puts it too mildly. But if I find things on the railroad as I judge them to be from this telegram, I'm forced to admit your action was of some good after all, and worthy of—of—"

He paused, and a faint smile played about his mouth as he added: "My thanks, and perhaps more."

Without another word he dashed out and up the stairs to his room.

"What can he mean?" Harry queried of his mother.

"I haven't the slightest idea," was the reply.

After a brief silence Burton remarked: "He's a queer customer, anyway."

But the sound of Mr. Burton's approach cut short further comments upon their visitor, and the next instant he bustled into the room.

"Come on, Harry," he said, as he extended his hand to his brother's wife. "I want you to see me to the station.

Then to Mrs. Burton:

"I'm sorry I have to hurry away in this manner, just when I was beginning to realize what a nice week we had before us. But I may come back soon—in fact, I will do so as soon as I get that confounded strike settled."

Five days after the sudden departure of the old man the postman delivered a letter addressed to Harry.

"Who can this be from?" he mused. "I don't know the writing." Then, tearing it open, he drew out the sheet it enclosed, and added to his mother: "Why, it's from Uncle Henry."

As he made the announcement a piece of paper that had been folded in with the letter slipped from it, and would have fallen to the floor had Harry not snatched at it quickly.

"What's this?" he asked in astonishment, as he saw that it was a check for five thousand dollars, drawn to his order.

In utter amazement he turned to the letter. He began:

"'My Dear Nephew:

"'The enclosed is your reward for stealing my suit-case. If you hadn't done so I would have been on my way to Europe, and could not have got back here, as I did, in time to break up a strike that would have cost me many times the amount of the enclosure. But don't think from this that I encourage your action, and advise you to do it again. As a railroad man, let me warn you that it may not turn out the next time as it did in this case. So don't repeat the performance. Hope to arrange matters so I can come East again soon. Best regards to yourself and your mother.

Sincerely,

"'Uncle Henry.'"

FOOLED ALL ROUND.

BY BURKE JENKINS.

What Went on Just Across the Border in Mexico When the Man after a Job Found One He Never Had To Hunt for.

WHEN I stepped down on to that dirty little old railroad station platform of that dirtier little old dried-up Mexican town, the actions of a man who stepped ahead of me switched my mind from myself and my troubles.

The fellow was American in every line—wiry, angular, tall but stoop-shouldered, with a shrewdness written all over him.

He strode off ahead of me at a gait marvelous for the climate. Then, sud-

denly, he came to a full stop, and I followed his gaze as it riveted itself upon another man who had just descended leisurely from the car ahead of ours. And that gaze of his bore disgruntlement a plenty, not uncoupled with actual malice.

But the leisurely man was not allowed to catch sight of the tall American; for, from a full stop with its second of recognition, the latter whirled promptly to keep his face away from the other. This, of course, brought him face to face with me.

And then, what struck me rather peculiarly, his expression shot from indifference as our eyes met to a quickened interest as he proceeded to take me in searchingly.

The directness of his stare indeed was upon the point of raising my ire, when at once it broadened into a good-humored smile and nod. Then, without a word having been interchanged between us, he strode past me.

I watched him make a circle around the platform's end; then lost him as he disappeared behind a hut that began the town's principal street.

But I soon dismissed the occurrence from my mind, for my own interest was far more centered in myself. I sought out the one hotel, where I hoped I could get the information I desired.

I found the hostelry to be distinctly above the average; but any cheer I might have experienced was quickly snuffed out by the tidings I received from the little, oily-haired clerk. I could handle Spanish well enough, so I asked him in that lingo:

"Has Ormsby's Circus played here yet?"

"Ormsby's Circus, *señor?* Why, it has broken up. No funds, you see. It didn't even get within a hundred miles of here."

Well, this was all I had to find out: but it blasted my hope completely, for in Ormsby's Circus I had centered my only chance.

This is how it was. I had been in a "rep" troupe in Texas, and we had got along well enough till we struck the Rio Grande region; then the entire show had gone to smash, and we troupers had scattered, each fellow for himself.

Now, like every stranded actor, my whole hope consisted in another sight of old Broadway; but, sure thing, the Rio is a long walk therefrom. Then I had heard of that Ormsby's Circus playing over in Mexico.

Now, in the old days I had done a tumbling turn, and so I cheerfully paid my last coin to reach this town, which I had figured would be the nearest spot I could catch up with Ormsby. I felt sure they would take me with the show, for circus folk are a clannish lot, and, besides, I was willing to work for my keep and traveling expenses.

But here, disgust upon disgust, the circus, too, had busted!

And so, with about the sickest heart that ever thumped inside of me, I turned to leave the hotel: for I hadn't even the price of a room.

But at that second the man in whom the tall, mysterious American had evinced such interest walked in at the door and stepped up to the register to enter his name.

Every line of him, now that I had a better view, showed him up for an Englishman: and an Englishman, at that, who couldn't speak one word of Spanish; for he had the merriest kind of a tussle with the oily-haired clerk, who finally, in desperation, sent for a fellow who, it appeared, was the only man in the shop who could handle English.

My own sickness of heart, though, had crumpled up every bit of stray curiosity, so I turned once more to quit the building, only catching a few words the Englishman was exchanging with the "interpreter."

"I shall want you but for perhaps two hours," said he earnestly, "between six and eight o'clock: and the pay will be liberal."

This was all I heard, which, of course, had no interest for me; at least, it didn't until things began to happen afterward.

I left the hotel and crossed the sun-baked street, in search of some shady spot where I could sit down and think. Immediately upon my reaching the farther sidewalk I felt a hand laid upon my shoulder, the hand of a man who had just stepped from behind a pillar; and as he fitted his strides to my more diminutive step—for I am distinctly undersize—I looked up and recognized the tall American.

The cordiality of his former nod to me was more than matched by another as he remarked cheerily, and without the slightest hint of a prelude:

"A man who wears the look I see upon your face, my friend, is in some difficulty. Now I, too, am in need of assistance. Odd enough it is, but I believe you are the only man to help me out; and so, as a sort of exchange, are you willing to talk things over long enough for us to find out if we can be of *mutual* benefit?"

Somehow, I liked his tone; and, besides, it did kind of warm me to get even this much sympathy.

"I'm afraid I'm in about the last position in the world to be of use to anybody," I said as I stepped along beside him. "The fact of the matter is, you see in me that sorriest of all personages, a stranded actor."

"An actor, eh?" he cried delightedly. "Better and better. Which goes to prove further that you are the very man to help me."

"How?"

"Well, to begin with, you have exactly the right stature; added to that, you are Mexican, though you speak English splendidly."

"You're a bit out there," I broke in. "My mother, though, was Spanish old peninsular stock; but I hail from Virginia.

"Only a detail. But, come now, you would entertain a proposition from me?"

"My dear sir," I replied firmly, "I fairly yearn for your words. The fact is, and I might as well out with it, I'm wolf-hungry this very minute."

"The deuce you say!" he exclaimed. "Well, we'll talk over some plates, eh?"

And with that he whirled suddenly around a corner and led the way into one of those dingy but cool Mexican restaurants.

And then, after I had gulped at the first assuaging morsels, he inquired:

"Money, I take it, would appeal to you?"

I quick-shifted him a glance, for I thought I scented sarcasm; but I was wrong. He was in dead earnest. Evidently he had met men to whom money did *not* appeal.

"Well," I laughed, "my present disease, I think, would yield to the gold-cure. Fact is again, the only thing left in this old grip of mine is my battered tin make-up box."

"But you still have that?"

"Yep. But every time I smell those cursed grease-paints I rue the day I first thought of going on the boards."

"Great!" he cried gleefully, springing to his feet.

With a nod to me to stay where I was and continue eating, he made his way to the front of the room. There, as is usual in such restaurants, was the desk, displaying the never-failing collection of picture post-cards: views of the region, personages of note in the locality, and so on.

He wasn't a moment making his selection. He paid for it; and then put some further query to the proprietor, a greasy old codger of crafty mien. The answer appeared to satisfy my new-found friend immensely. But I, at my distance, could hear neither question nor reply.

Then he returned to his seat in front of me, and forthwith passed me over the card he had just purchased.

I took it from him, and found it to be the photograph of a heavily-mustached worthy who, to all appearances, was well enough known even to dispense with being named: for the card contained no writing.

My man appeared greatly interested in my scrutiny. Then he asked quietly:

"Would you and could you be able to look like that for two hours for five hundred dollars?"

As I have intimated, I am an actor by profession: but I had sorry work to keep my face at this.

"Would I?" I gurgled way down in my throat as I looked the closer at that easily faked mustache. "And could I? It's a cinch!"

II.

"You appear confident," remarked my new friend, seemingly a little perturbed at what he probably took for *over*confidence.

"You can see for yourself as soon as you like," I replied, pointing toward the grip at my side, wherein was the make-up box, which was supplied, by the way, with plenty of crape hair.

"Good enough," he cried, "and, in

anticipation of just that, I have arranged for a room for you right up-stairs here. I find that our genial host is more than agreeable."

"To the tip?" For I had seen money pass.

"Certainly. And so, if you have finished your meal, suppose we go right on up. You see"—and here he consulted his watch—"it is half after four already and, as I have some other few matters to arrange, there is little time to be lost."

"All right," said I cheerfully, for I already felt the confidence of that money I was to corral so easily.

I picked up my grip and followed him, while he, in turn, followed the landlord up a rickety flight. The room was small, but clean enough; and, what was more to the point, contained a window that actually let in a little light.

I lost no time in proving my point. Propping my small mirror before me on a table, I set alongside it the picture of the man; and, as I really am no slouch at a make-up, it was not ten minutes before I whirled around and faced my companion, who had been watching my progress from a near-by chair. And his verdict was decisive.

"Splendid! Better than I could have hoped. Come, now, you might as well just keep to that character. You can stay right in this room until I bring you a coat a bit better suited to the man."

"But look you, Mr.——?" I said.

"Simpson," he supplied.

"See here, Mr. Simpson, you must remember that I am entirely in the dark about the thing. What am I to do? I want that money bad enough, Heaven knows, but what does earning it mean?"

"The simplest thing in the world!" he cried enthusiastically. "Absolutely all you'll have to do is to be driven in a hack to the hotel at five minutes to six. You are to answer, as though it was your own, to the name of Señor Paolo Carrejo; but, and mark this well, you are unable to understand one word of English.

"Now, beyond these few points there is not a thing necessary for you to know. Indeed, considering the pay, I doubt if I ever will enlighten you fully."

But, Mr. Simpson—" I broke in, but got no further.

His tone took on a sharpness that I had not before noted.

"You are getting cold feet already," he snapped.

"Not I," I answered, warming a bit myself; "but it certainly looks like a rather blind trail you're sending me on."

"Well, blind or not, you'll just have to take my word that you will experience absolutely not one difficulty if you bear those points I have just mentioned in mind, and strictly; for every one of them is of the utmost importance. You remember them?"

"Easily enough," said I. "At five minutes to six I become Señor Paolo Carrejo, who knows not a word of English. What then?"

"Nothing, that I know of. After perhaps a period of two hours you will be free. Come back here to me and there will be four more of these to follow."

Here he passed me over a crackling hundred dollar bill; good old U. S. stuff.

"I'm just to trust myself to chance?" I cried. "Simply bearing in mind that I understand no English?"

"There you are," he replied, "and you will find it the plainest kind of sailing, I'll warrant. The fact is, you are really bound for a distinctly good time."

He eyed me keenly and then, apparently discovering that my purpose was fixed to see the thing through, he smiled in a relieved fashion as he sprang to his feet.

"Well, now," said he, "I'll send you the coat I spoke of, and remember, you're to be ready promptly at a quarter to six. Your arrival at the hotel must not be either one way or the other a minute off the hour."

"Right!" I replied lightly, for I had thrown conservatism to the winds at the crackle of that bill.

So he left me, and twenty minutes thereafter the greasy old proprietor handed me in the coat, which fitted splendidly.

I gave one more assuring comparison of my own altered features with those of the photograph, then sat myself for the wait until the carriage should arrive.

Of course, I wondered what this thing

could mean; but then again, I could understand that Simpson wouldn't want to have his secret too widely known, and considered my pay sufficient to make me forget even what I did know.

Of course, I had long since parted with my watch, and accordingly had no means of judging the time; but after a wait that seemed surprisingly short I heard a vehicle bring up before the little restaurant, and directly thereafter the shambling gait of the proprietor on the stairs.

I went to the door and threw it back. One glance at me he made and his jaw hung in astonishment; but he caught himself quickly and gave his message:

"The carriage is waiting, *señor*."

"All right," I replied in my newfound dignity.

The fellow who drove the hack stared, too, but tipped his hat reverently; and already I began to be vastly tickled with the sport of the adventure.

Evidently Simpson was a master hand at timing things, for, as we were passing the square directly alongside the hotel entrance, a public clock pointed to six minutes to six. Within the next minute I had stepped down from the hack and entered the hotel.

I was not allowed even to cross the office before a man hastened up to me, stretched out his hand in warm greeting, addressed me cordially as Señor Carrejo, and led me immediately up a broad flight of stairs to a room on the second floor. It was the Englishman.

The appearance of that room was certainly one to cheer the soul. It was well removed from any interruption, the entrance-door being set back some four feet from the corridor, and the privacy thus attained was accentuated by a heavy hanging.

A table, set out with a bounty that would have sent me crazy if I had not already eaten less than two hours before, graced the center, and, what was more to my liking, sundry buckets of cracked ice hugged in cooling embrace sundrier gilt-topped bottles.

A fellow who bore every trace of being an excellent waiter stood in attendance upon the three seats that were placed about the festive board.

Upon entering the room the Englishman cast a hasty and worried glance around. He lost none of his most careful politeness as regards myself, for whom he held one of the chairs, but after I had thanked him therefor in my choicest Spanish, he simply bowed as understandingly as he could, and with even greater worry on his countenance, he brought out a most audible "aside" to himself:

"Darn that interpreter!"

Whereupon I guessed who it was that was supposed to form the third party at this splendid spread.

Then it was, for the first time, that I remembered I had heard him tell the clerk he would require the services of the one man in the hotel who could speak both languages; and that, from the hours of six to eight.

But I simply smiled affably while my host sat himself in front of me, and we started in on those things which it takes no language other than signs fully to comprehend.

III.

For the first half hour the Englishman kept eying the door in momentary anticipation of the return of the interpreter, but by the end of that time, of course by way of companionship to me (for I had lost no time in downing about the best champagne I ever smacked my Thespian lips over), he, too, had slid enough amber bubbles down his insular throat not to care the proverbial continental tinker's whoop whether we ever got down to so tame a level as mere word interchange or not.

Through the iridescence that glowed about us we saw each other to be the best fellows south of the Rio Grande, and, for some reason unknown to me to this very moment, we simultaneously arose and embraced. By this time darkness had fallen.

I believe it was I who suddenly became imbued with a strong desire to take a walk. Somehow I had an idea that the moon was full this evening. But by the time we had, link-armed, left the room and found our way down a small staircase which I never could have even suspected was there in the daylight of reason, we discovered we were out in the blackest night since January.

There was a sort of court-yard out there, and by some chance we found the exit from it to the street. But even this larger thoroughfare was dark enough to please a chicken-thief; and then it was that I forgot myself for just one second.

For, coming into contact with a figure crouching beside a wall we were passing, I was upon the point of letting out about the prettiest bit of cussing in my vocabulary (in English, mind you), when I felt myself seized from behind; the quick flash of one of those convenient little electric torches glared its filament right before my face, and the voice of its wielder grunted an order in Spanish.

My grasp had first been torn from the shoulder of my English cousin, and immediately I found myself being hustled at top speed up the dark street. Four muffled figures were my captors.

The smart trot, coupled to the suddenness of the surprise, had gone far to sober me, and by the time a halt was made somewhere on the outskirts of the little town, where I was thrown bodily across a horse in front of the largest of my captors, I was in as full possession of my wits as might be expected of a man in like predicament.

But there was nothing I could do but think; and think as I might, I could come to no conclusion except that there was an exceedingly dusky personage somewhere in the vicinity of the wood-pile. The way I indulged in profanity with that lanky Simpson as a subject wasn't confined to English; every language I knew entered into the lingo.

That I was being made the victim of some plot seemed quite evident.

But an end was soon put to conjecture; for, after a canter of perhaps three miles, the party swerved somewhat to one side of the trail and a halt was made.

This halt was timed to a challenge which rang out from a thick growth of trees dead ahead; and we once more started on, but now at a walk.

The flare of a fire lit up a circling group of figures clustered in waiting attitude about it, and we came into its glow quite suddenly.

I was dumped unceremoniously to the ground, quickly unbound, and led before a shaggy-browed man of forbidding aspect in the center of the group.

He shot me a searching look, in which I could read the greatest satisfaction, and then he said in Spanish:

"Do you think, Señor Paolo Carrejo, there is any necessity for us to go into lengthy discourse? Of course, you know what you have done and what you have refused to do. You are a sensible enough man to realize when you are the loser. In other words, I suppose the quicker the thing is done the better."

Now, suddenly it occurred to me that Simpson might, after all, be treating me fair; that he really meant for me to stand for all this, which certainly was more like a fair payment for the five hundred dollars. So I just kept my mouth shut.

But the speed with which those fellows set about preparations made me throw all promises to the winds; for they backed me toward a tree, and while two of them replenished the fire to a brighter blaze, three others caught up glistening carbines and took position before me.

Then it was that I sang out lustily:

"You are making a mistake!"

The unexpectedness of my cry, after such persistent dead silence, seemed for a moment to surprise the leader, but he quickly assumed a sarcastic tone.

"So, brought to the actual test, the Señor Carrejo, like all other cowards, shows his metal, eh?"

"Nothing of the kind," I yelled, "and I am not Carrejo. You are making a mistake."

"Not Carrejo?" At this several of those about me laughed. "Why, every boy in the streets could recognize you.."

"Then look here!" I cried.

Apparently, when we had once arrived at this camp, or whatever it was, they had not deemed it necessary to bind my hands again, so that I was able to reach toward my face and sweep the disguising mustache from my trembling upper lip.

As one man they sprang forward and pressed around me, and disappointment and disgust sat on every face.

Finally the leader waved them back, then beckoning one of their number toward him, he retired a few paces.

I now have some idea of what the conference treated, but two minutes after I had revealed my identity I was conscious of some one stepping up toward me from

behind, and not two seconds after that I felt a cloth clapped to my nose and mouth, and while I was held by strong hands I slid from consciousness.

IV.

ALL that I know about the nature of the drug that was used on me is that it was something that was quick in having its effect and equally quick in losing it; for when I next began to realize who and where I was I found myself lying, half-propped, against a tree that formed one of a row flanking the public square of the town. Overhead, faintly lit from behind, was the dial of the clock I had noted when I was being driven to the hotel.

It sometimes takes little time for much to happen. It was not yet ten o'clock.

I felt about my person to see if I had sustained any injury. Then I slid my fingers into my fob-pocket to see if that hundred-dollar bill had been weakened in any way. Everything was intact. Even the bill's crispness was unimpaired.

I was ruminating as to my next move, when I heard the patter of a soft-soled shoe, and the next second recognized as its owner the greasy, portly proprietor of the murky little restaurant where I had assumed my disguise.

He came up to me forthwith.

"The *señor* told me to look for you. You are late!"

"Oh, he told you to look for me, did he?" I replied in rising wrath. "And where is he?"

"At my place. He sent me while he waited, so as to run no risk of missing you. Come; can you stand?"

The fellow was actually grinning.

"I'll soon show you!" I cried vehemently, jumping to my feet.

This beat my top notch. Here I had been subjected to the worst kind of manhandling and danger; now I was laughed at! Yes, I certainly would go with him to see that man Simpson.

The fellow left me at the foot of the stairs, up which I mounted, growing madder by the second.

Even the dim light in the room was sufficient to reveal the keenest of satisfaction overspreading the angular features of the American.

"Well, Señor Carrejo," he cried banteringly, "our friend, the Englishman, was a bit too heavy for you, eh?"

"What do you mean?" I snapped out.

Something in my tone seemed to tell him that his own was ill chosen. He hastened to change it to the conciliatory.

"Why, I simply meant that the Englishman was something in the nature of what is vulgarly known as a 'tank.' I meant to imply that possibly you had a little difficulty in keeping pace—"

"You mean that I got a bit overseas?"

"Why, yes; and so I just sent our friend down-stairs out to hunt for you."

"Look here, Simpson!" I cried excitedly, stepping toward him. "You can't pass the thing off this way. I want to know what this whole thing is about."

"Well," he replied after a moment's thought, "I didn't expect to tell you at first, but since the affair has turned out even better than I expected, I can see no harm coming from your knowing the truth about the affair."

"Go on," said I.

"Well, this is how it stands. This here Señor Paolo Carrejo is a high muck-a-muck down here in officialdom; has the granting of darned near everything in the region. Now, there's going to be a railroad run clear across this greasy country, and I just wanted to get the contract to build it; and what's more, get it before that blooming Britisher could have even a chance at landing it.

"Now, when I arrived here this afternoon on the same train with you, I spotted my rival and jumped to the conclusion that he was after the same game.

"Nosing around the hotel proved that I was right; and I found out that he had a dinner all planned, an interpreter ordered, and everything arranged as smooth as oil.

"Then I doped out the scheme in which you helped me. I just sent you five minutes ahead of the time the real Señor Carrejo arrived; I bribed the interpreter a little heavier than your host had, and while you and he were popping corks in one private dining-room, myself and the real Carrejo, in another, were arranging every detail of the railroad I have here the contract to build.

"Fine, eh? Not a hitch. And you've won out, too. Five hundred bucks made by simply eating a good meal and drink-

ing excellent liquid, with the only drawback the possibility of a headache in the morning."

"A headache in the morning!" I cried.

"Perhaps you count as pleasant pastime being bound, gagged, drugged, and aimed at by three carbines. Is that your idea of having a good time?"

"What the dickens are you talking about?"

I stepped over and looked him eye to eye. His astonishment was evident and genuine.

Then I told him the whole adventure.

His answer was a prolonged whistle. Then his brow cleared.

"What do you make out of it?" I asked.

"Why, I make out of it just a little more of these Latins' methods in politics, secret societies, and what not."

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Oh, we've simply just got ourselves mixed into the affairs of the real Señor Paolo Carrejo a little over strong. You stacked up against what was intended for him, and it would seem that he's been doing something he 'hadn't oughter.'

"And, moreover," he continued jocularly, "it looks to me that Señor Carrejo owes you the rest of the days he can manage to live and avoid his cutthroat compatriots."

"But he'll never know it!" I cried.

"It does seem a shame," he replied in mock wistfulness, "but won't these go to solace you for keeping silent—that is, some?"

He passed me four other crisp C bills.

I was thinking hard as things began to shape themselves from out the general tangle.

"So you knew nothing of what was in store for me? I mean the kidnaping."

"Not *I!*" he assured me.

"And the grand *señor* knew nothing?"

"Why, no; and he never will, I take it."

"Why, even the murdering kidnapers hadn't a hint of such a development."

"Well, I should rather fancy *not!*"

"And shore thing *I* didn't," I cried; "and it certainly looks as though no harm's been done to anybody."

"That's the way it frames up to me."

And we shook on it, myself with visions of dear old Broadway, as I patted my fob-pocket.

SWEET SPRING.

Sweet spring is but a little way
Ahead;
The lambs will soon begin to play;
The dead
Old form of winter soon will lie
O'erspread
By green grass, and the April sky
Will stretch above us, by and by;
The dandelion's face will glow,
The winds will gladden as they blow,
And Cupid's darts will freely fly.

The wafting buds will soon begin
To sprout;
The brooks will laugh as, winding in
And out,
They hurry onward to the sea;
The shout
Of him who tills the soil will be
Reechoed back from hill to lea,
And then the man who golfs once more
Will sclaff and foozle as of yore
And vent his feelings horribly!

F. L. in New York Times.

AN UNHATCHED CLUE.

BY ROBERT KEENE.

A Note of Protest, Followed by a Happy Chance, Capped In Turn by a Horrible Predicament.

DEAR SIR:

It has come to my notice that you are seeing rather more of my wife than I care to permit.

Please take this, therefore, as a positive refusal on my part to allow you to continue in her friendship.

RICHARD WHARBURTON.

WHEN I read the above, I exclaimed:

"Poor Florence!"

Her husband was a prey to jealousy. That was too bad; all kinds of disagreeable things might fall to her lot through the presence of a green streak in the man she had jilted me to marry.

I didn't feel as cut up over being forbidden to see her as I might if I hadn't been madly in love with another girl. All Florence Wharburton meant to me was a friend at court with Edith Sedley.

You see, six months after Flo and I had terminated our engagement, on the mutual discovery that we were the only two people in the world who were *not* meant for each other, she married this Wharburton fellow. At the same time, I had become affianced to her chum, Edith.

Now, Edith and I had quarreled. It was one of those fool rows that start over nothing, grow on less, and terminate in a deadlock that pride won't allow you to break—neither one knowing the least thing of what it is all about.

I stood it for a week. Then I went to Mrs. Wharburton, my old sweetheart. I pleaded for her intercession with Edith. She promised to do all she could to straighten out our difference. And I haunted her house while I waited for her to patch up the rift in my lute.

Somehow, though I had visited Florence over a dozen times, I had never met her husband. I had never seen him; didn't know the first thing about the man—and was too upset just then to care.

But now—here was this curt note from him. He had ignorantly put a wrong construction on my attentions to his wife, and forbidden me to have anything more to do with her.

The jealous idiot!

Sitting in the theater that evening—I had come to a musical comedy in the endeavor to take my mind off my tangled love-affair for an hour or two—I wished the man wasn't such a fool.

For the first time I realized that his letter meant a severe setback to me. If I couldn't see Flo, how was I going to find out what progress she was making toward adjusting matters for me with Edith?

I wanted to see Mrs. Wharburton badly this very night, too. For to-day she had called on my fiancée, and important developments in my case were expected.

I knew that my friend wouldn't send for me. I would have to go to her to get news. And her husband—imbecile that he was!—had made that impossible.

He wouldn't be apt to tell her that he had written me that letter. His high-handed interference in the matter of selecting her friends would meet with her strong disapproval, he must know.

So she would expect to see me on the morrow, or the next day, at least. And when I didn't come—what would she think!

Perhaps that I had given up trying to win Edith back. That I was discouraged, and had dropped out. Perhaps she would tell Edith that!

My heart turned sick at the thought. Yet I was powerless to prevent it.

A thousand dollars I would have given right at that moment for a chance to see Florence—

With an exclamation, I half rose from my seat.

There, sitting four rows in front of me, on the other side of the aisle in the

orchestra, was the very woman I wanted to see.

And the man beside her, I supposed, was her husband—the writer of the note that had made all future correspondence with her out of the question.

So near and yet so far!

If I could only get the chance to whisper in her ear for a moment! Some way, somehow, I *must* tell her that I was still as anxious as ever to regain my lost footing with my Edith. If I didn't, she would tell Edith that I hadn't been near her. Two and two—confound them!—would be put together. And it would be the end of me with the only girl in creation.

But how was I going to get around the fact that Wharburton was sitting right beside the woman I wanted to speak with for only a moment? I couldn't risk creating a scene—not knowing what the jealous brute would do if I disobeyed his orders under his very nose—by going forward and greeting his wife boldly between the acts.

The curtain was even now descending on act one of the "song show." And—now I saw a way out of the situation.

The man beside Florence rose quickly and stepped out into the aisle. He was leaving her: going out, presumably, for a cigarette smoke.

I waited until I was sure that he was out in the lobby. Then I advanced swiftly down the aisle and dropped down in the vacated seat beside his wife.

Florence greeted me with surprise—but my sudden appearance seemed to give her no alarm. I was right. She did not know that her husband had ordered me to cut her acquaintance.

As quickly as I could, I got out of her what she had said to Edith, what Edith had said to her, how she had said it, etc.

And then I ducked back to my seat. Not a minute too soon. For Wharburton almost immediately passed me as he came down the aisle and rejoined his wife.

I thrust my hand beneath my seat to return my hat to the wire frame there.

And then I nearly swooned.

In the excitement of barely escaping detection by the man who had passed me, I hadn't noticed that the hand I thrust under me was—empty!

I didn't have my hat. It wasn't hanging on the bottom of the chair, either.

I was sure I had taken it with me when I stepped down the aisle to Mrs. Wharburton, and must have tucked it *under her husband's chair.*

My initials were in the hat!

When it was discovered, as it would be the moment he tried to put away his own head-piece, he would ask his wife to whom the alien hat belonged. And she would tell him at once.

Then what would happen? There would be a scene, I knew. Just what that green-eyed monster would do when he discovered that I had flown in the face of his commands, I wasn't certain. But it would be something awful—awful!

I looked down toward him. He hadn't put his hat away yet, I saw. With it twiddling between the tips of his fingers, as though worried over something, he sat talking to Florence.

But in a minute, now, the damage would be done. Under the seat would slide his hat, bumping mine, and then—wow!

Fascinated, I watched for the moment when the fireworks would begin. I wouldn't have remained to be the center of a scene that would shame me before the crowd—only I couldn't leave the place with a bare head.

In an agony of suspense, I waited for the dreadful instant when he would bend down to put away—

Snap! The lights had gone out. The curtain was up on the second act.

For a time, then, I was saved. The man couldn't read my initials, even if he discovered my hat. He wouldn't accuse his wife, therefore, of having seen me, and so the row that I saw in the near distance was averted—for a little while.

When the lights went up again, as the curtain came down on act two—I saw that Wharburton was still sitting there, apparently unperturbed.

Then, I saw him rise once more, cover his head, and leave Florence. I must be cautious now. It wouldn't do to risk his seeing me go to his seat. I turned around to look toward the lobby.

There he stood, his back to me, talking to a couple of men at the end of the aisle.

Impatiently I waited for him to go

outside. It seemed to me that he would never do so.

And then—turning for the seventh time, I saw that he was gone.

Now was my chance. I stepped out into the aisle, and moved toward the empty seat beside Florence.

One row away from my goal, I half turned, guiltily, at a step behind me.

It was Wharburton!

It hadn't been he that I had seen with those men, after all. A stranger of his general height and build, whose back had looked to me like the man's I was trying to avoid, had been the object of my previous observations.

What excuse had I for being out in the aisle? The man must have been behind me and seen me leave my chair. What would he think if he saw me turn around and go back—unknown, by sight, to him even though I was—without accomplishing anything by my move?

If only I knew somebody else in the place beside his wife!

But I was in no such luck. And it was up to me either to turn back in the fellow's face, or go past his seats, running the risk of his wife seeing me and calling out to me, as I walked on ahead toward—nowhere!

Happy accident came to the rescue. Beside a woman, two rows ahead of me along the aisle, lay a handkerchief.

I went forward and picked it up, returned it to its owner, and came back to my seat—out of an unpleasant hole by the skin of my teeth!

And now my nervousness, as I watched Flo's husband sit and twirl his hat in his fingers again, was ten times greater than it had been before.

The theater was darkened once more for the curtain-raising, and still he had not tried to put his hat under the seat.

But this was the last act. Even if he didn't put his hat away during the scene, he would discover mine when he pushed up the top of his chair to let his wife pass out.

Swiftly—so it seemed to me—the performance drew toward its close. I was doomed. Nothing could save me from the discovery of my hat where it had no business being, once the play was over.

And then, watching Wharburton and not the stage, I saw an usher come down the aisle. He tapped Flo's husband on the shoulder, whispered a word in his ear, and—

The man whose jealous wrath I feared got up quickly and followed the boy out of the theater.

Stunned with surprise at seeing him leave that seat for the third time, I sat still for a full minute.

Then I came to myself. Now—now or never. I must get to that vacated chair and recover my hat.

I skulked down the aisle. And, with my hand on the back of his seat, I turned with a gasp.

"What do *you* want?" said a voice beside me.

The curtain had dropped, the crowd in the theater had risen to leave, and I stood face to face with—Wharburton.

"I'm—I'm after my hat!" I stammered.

"This isn't your seat!" he said sharply. "Your hat isn't here, sir."

"Yes, it is!" I protested. "You don't understand."

"Dick!" said his wife, rising. "Let me introduce you to Mr. Fanning."

"What!" Wharburton stared at me. "This—this is the gentleman to whom I wrote a letter this morning?"

'And you—" I began tremulously.

"This is my husband," supplied Florence, "Dr. Wharburton."

Dr. Wharburton. I had quite forgotten that he was a doctor. So *that* was why he had left his seat during this last act? I remembered having seen a line in the programs at various theaters announcing the fact that physicians could be summoned on urgent business by leaving their chair-numbers at the box-office.

"This is a queer meeting!" he was saying.

I felt my heart sink at his words. What was going to happen now?

"Here you've been in the same theater with us all the evening," he went on, "and I never knew it. I've been going out between all the acts to try to reach you on the phone. I wanted to apologize to you for the note I sent. My wife explained to me this evening why you had been seeing her so often!"

"Though I didn't know till now why

Dick asked me about your calls at dinner to-night!" Flo broke in. "Nor did I know to whom he was telephoning. What was the letter you wrote to Mr. Fanning, dear?"

Her husband laughed.

"I was too ashamed to take you into my confidence, when you explained your friendship with him this evening!" he said. "But I'll tell you about it later."

"Then I can get your wife to help me all she can in arranging my affairs with her chum?" I asked eagerly.

"Any worry you've had about my attitude in the matter," he assured me, "has been wasted ever since I learned the true facts this evening, and you can depend upon my hearty cooperation!"

"Then I'll take my hat out from under your seat," I said, "without any anxiety over your knowing it's there!"

I lifted the chair.

The hat wasn't there.

Suddenly it all dawned on me. I only *thought* I took it with me when I went to speak to Florence. Then, going back to a vacant seat in front of the one that was really mine, I hadn't felt my hat there, and in consequence had suffered a bad hour and a half—

All for nothing, in more ways than one!

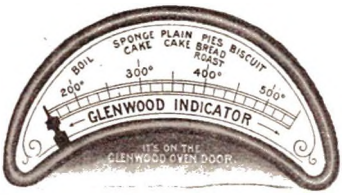
THE BLOOD HORSE.

(GAMARRA is a dainty steed,
Strong, black, and of noble breed,
Full of fire, and full of bone,
With all his line of fathers known;
Fine his nose, his nostrils thin,
But blown abroad with pride within!
His mane is like a river flowing,
And his eyes like embers glowing
In the darkness of the night,
And his pace as swift as light.

Look—how round his straining throat
Grace and shifting beauty float!
Sinewy strength is on his reins
And the red blood gallops through his veins;
Richer, redder never ran
Through the boasting heart of man.
He can trace his lineage higher
Than the Bourbon dare aspire—
Douglas, Guzman, or the Guelph,
Or O'Brien's blood itself!

He, who hath no peer, was born
Here, upon a red March morn;
But his famous fathers dead
Were Arabs all, and Arab bred,
And the last of that great line
Trod like one of a race divine!
And yet, he was but friend to one
Who fed him at the set of sun,
By some lone fountain fringed with green;
With him, a roving Bedouin,
He lived—(none else would he obey
Through all the hot Arabian day)—
And died untamed upon the sands
Where Balkh amidst the desert stands!

Barry Cornwall.



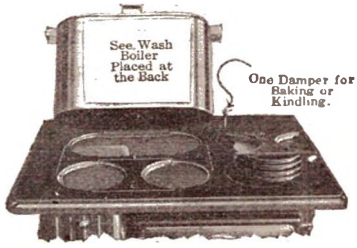
Glenwood Patent Oven Heat Indicator.

Cabinet Glenwood

Combination Coal, Wood and Gas Range.

No fussy ornamentation or fancy nickel on the Plain Cabinet Glenwood. Just the natural black iron finish. "The Mission Style" applied to a range. A room saver too—like the upright piano. Every essential refined and improved upon.

The Sectional Top prevents warping, and is so planned that by changing the cross-shaped castings that hold the covers (see illustration) a wash-boiler may be placed at back of range, leaving all front holes free for cooking.



The Oven, Damper, Grates and Clean-out are each worthy of special mention.

This range is also made with elevated gas oven instead of end style, shown above, or if gas is not desired, with or without reservoir on right end.

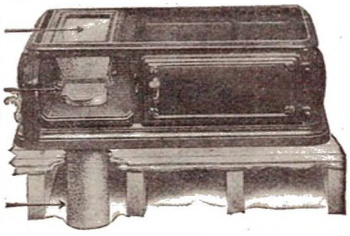
The Glenwood Gas Range Attachment consisting of Oven, Broiler and Three Burner Top is made to bolt neatly to the end of the coal range when a combination coal and gas range is desired.

The heat in both coal and gas ovens is registered by the wonderful Glenwood patent oven heat indicator which shows at a glance when to put food in the oven.

If a large amount of baking is required, both the Coal and Gas ovens can be operated at the same time using one for meats and the other for pastry. Being very compact it saves room in the kitchen and

"Makes Cooking Easy."

The Glenwood Ash Chute may be used instead of a pan, when kitchen is on first floor. This wonderful convenience saves lugging ashes, as they are dropped direct to ash barrel in basement without a particle of dust or dirt in kitchen (see illustration).



Write for handsome booklet of the plain Cabinet Glenwood Combination Coal, Wood and Gas range, mailed free.

WEIR STOVE CO., TAUNTON, MASS.

Manufacturers of the celebrated Glenwood Ranges, Parlor Stoves, Furnaces, Water and Steam Boilers.

Young Men Wanted

to earn $25 to $50 weekly in the AUTOMOBILE BUSINESS

CHAUFFEURS, automobile salesmen and repairmen get big pay for pleasant, congenial work, *because the demand for trained men exceeds the supply.* We have taught hundreds of young men without previous mechanical experience, and we can teach you in ten weeks if you study a few hours a week. The work is interesting. You see everything worth seeing on tours—you go everywhere. Our simple co rse by mail guarantees efficiency because all our instruction is personal. Our graduates are everywhere, earning $25.00 a week and up. Ask *them* about us and about the positions they have secured.

To Automobile Owners and Garages

When you want competent chauffeurs or men for any class of automobile work, write to us. We can put you in touch with the man you want.

Answer This Ad Today

Ask us for the first lesson. We will send it without any charge, and from it you will get an idea of how we train you in every phase of automobile knowledge. You will be impressed at once with the remarkable thoroughness of the instruction outlined even in this preliminary lesson. Write today—now!

Empire Auto. Institute
940 Dake Bldg.
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

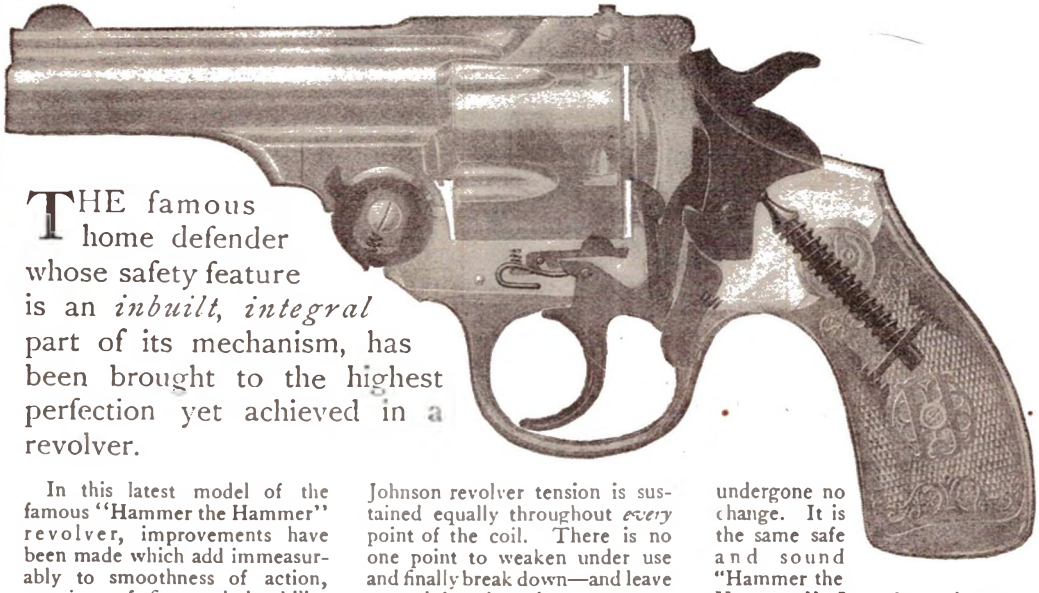
The Original Automobile School.

2

Announcement

The NEW IVER JOHNSON

Safety Automatic Revolver



THE famous home defender whose safety feature is an *inbuilt, integral* part of its mechanism, has been brought to the highest perfection yet achieved in a revolver.

In this latest model of the famous "Hammer the Hammer" revolver, improvements have been made which add immeasurably to smoothness of action, certainty of fire, and durability of mechanism in a small arm.

Every spring in the New Iver Johnson Revolver is made of finest piano wire, drawn tempered, replacing the old flat springs. Coil springs are insisted upon by the United States Government in its rifles wherever possible. Note these coil springs in the "ghost picture" above.

The flat, or "kick" spring of old type revolvers is always at greatest tension at one point, and after long use fatigue attacks the metal at that point and the spring weakens or breaks down.

In the coil springs of the Iver Johnson revolver tension is sustained equally throughout *every* point of the coil. There is no one point to weaken under use and finally break down—and leave you defenseless in a moment when possibly life depends upon action. It is positive, trustworthy and practically good for the life of the revolver itself.

The Iver Johnson is the first and only revolver equipped with this type of spring at every possible point. It is positively the highest type of small arm ever made. And while fitted to work as smooth as velvet, the action of the Iver Johnson is simple, strong and dependable for a lifetime.

The safety action of the Iver Johnson Revolver is as impossible to improve upon as it is impossible to imitate and has therefore undergone no change. It is the same safe and sound "Hammer the Hammer." It safeguards you from accident without your having to remember any directions how to use, to push a slide or press a button when you want to shoot—say in an emergency. It is *always* ready to shoot, instantly, accurately and hard.

The accurate, splendid shooting qualities and high penetration of the Iver Johnson are unsurpassed because the barrel (drop forged from the finest steel made for the purpose) is rifled as accurately as in revolvers that cost several times as much. The bullet flies fast and true. The Iver Johnson is in a class all its own.

Our Booklet, "Shots," mailed FREE with catalogue, explains the superior features of our revolvers, including the new models:

Iver Johnson Safety Hammer Revolver
3-inch barrel, nickel-plated finish, 22 rim-fire cartridge, 32 or 38 center fire cartridge **$6.00**

Iver Johnson Safety Hammerless Revolver
3-inch barrel, nickel-plated finish, 32 or 38 center-fire cartridge..... **$7.00**

Nearly all sporting goods or hardware dealers carry, and will gladly demonstrate Iver Johnson Revolvers and their safety features.

Where our Revolvers are unobtainable locally, we ship direct on receipt of price. The Owl's head on the grip and our name on the barrel mark the *genuine*.

IVER JOHNSON'S ARMS & CYCLE WORKS, 140 River St., Fitchburg, Mass.

NEW YORK—99 Chambers St. HAMBURG, GERMANY—Pickhuben 4. PACIFIC COAST—717 Market St., San Francisco.
LONDON, ENGLAND—17 Mincing Lane, E. C.

Makers of Iver Johnson Single Barrel Shot Guns and Iver Johnson Truss Bridge Bicycles

Yes, You Can Refinish Any Piece of Furniture

We Will Send the Materials and Illustrated Book—FREE

We want to prove to you, at our expense, how simple—how easy it is to make an old piece of furniture like ***new***—what beautiful, lasting results you can get from Johnson's Materials.

You will enjoy going through your home—dressing, coloring and polishing the worn chairs, woodwork, bric-a-brac—giving a needed touch here and there—brightening everywhere.

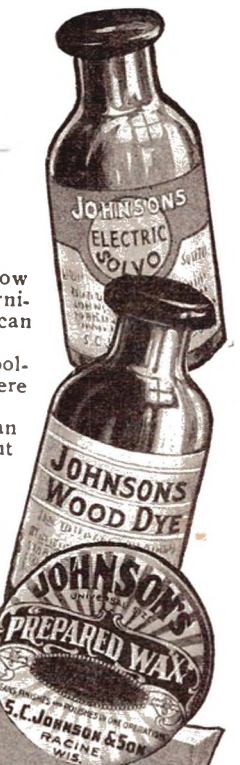
We will send a complete wood-finishing outfit, free—enough for an ample test—enough to restore and beautify some worn and discolored, but valued piece of furniture.

Here is what we send:

A bottle of Johnson's Electric Solvo to instantly remove the old finish.

A bottle of Johnson's Wood Dye—choose your shade from list below—to beautifully color the wood.

A package of Johnson's Prepared Wax to impart that beautiful hand-rubbed effect—protect the finish against heel-marks and scratches. It will not catch or hold dirt or dust.



Johnson's Wood Dye

is not a mere stain—not simply a surface dressing. It is a real, deep-seated ***dye,*** that goes to the very heart of the wood—and stays there—fixing a rich and permanent color.

Johnson's Wood Dye is made in 14 standard shades:

No. 126 Light Oak	*No. 130 Weathered Oak*
No. 123 Dark Oak	*No. 131 Brown Weathered Oak*
No. 125 Mission Oak	*No. 132 Green Weathered Oak*
No. 140 Manilla Oak	*No. 121 Moss Green*
No. 110 Bog Oak	*No. 122 Forest Green*
No. 128 Light Mahogany	*No. 172 Flemish Oak*
No 129 Dark Mahogany	*No. 178 Brown Flemish Oak*

Our book, "The Proper Treatment of Floors, Woodwork and Furniture," Edition A. R. 4, tells you how in every case, and will show you how to carry out other decorating ideas you may have in mind.

Send for the free trial packages today. Let them demonstrate what Johnson's Materials will do in your home. Use the coupon. Fill it out now, while you think of it. Address

S. C. JOHNSON & SON

Racine, - - - - Wisconsin

"The Wood Finishing Authorities"

Please use Coupon—Cut on dotted Line.

S. C. Johnson & Son
Racine
Wisconsin

Please send me Free Booklet, Edition A.R. 4, sample bottle of Electric Solvo, sample bottle of Johnson's Wood Dye, Shade No. ..... and sample of Johnson's Prepared Wax.

Name.....

Address.....

I usually buy my paint at store of

Name.....

Address.....

Look for this Trade Mark on

Outing Shirts. Negligee Shirts. Men's and Women's Pajamas. Office Coats. Athletic Summer Underwear. Women's Shirt Waists, Etc.

SOIESETTE is the ideal summer fabric for men's ready-to-wear garments. Looks like silk, feels like silk. Much more durable—at a fraction of the cost.

Look for this label SOIESETTE REGISTERED ***on each garment***

Retains its fresh, snappy, lustrous appearance and rich coloring after repeated laundering. Always fashionable, cool, healthful.

By the yard in over 50 shades at all retail stores.

***SOIESETTE* stamped on selvage of every yard**

CLARENCE WHITMAN & CO., Mfrs., 39 Leonard St., New York

OUR EASTER PRIZE OFFER

A Prize for 100 Persons Who Write a Reason for Preferring

SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS

Your letter, giving one reason "Why a Man Should Prefer SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS" **may** win one of the 100 Prizes.

THE PRIZES:

1st prize	$50.00 in money
2nd prize	40.00 in money
3rd prize	30.00 in money
4th prize	25.00 in money
5th prize	20.00 in money
6th to 10th prizes	10.00 in money
11th to 20th prizes	5.00 in money

21st to 50th Prizes
1 pair silk SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS, with gilt trimmings, value $1.

51st to 100th Prizes
1 pair SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS (Regular 50c. stock).

We want a letter from everyone in every walk of life telling what he believes to be the **one best reason** "Why a Man Should Prefer—

SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS."

We will pay $50.00 in Cash for the Best Letter of 200 words **or less**, answering this query. And $215.00 more will be apportioned among the 19 next closest competitors.

Besides these cash prizes, we will distribute 80 pairs of SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS to eighty other contestants.

This contest is wide open to anyone, anywhere. There is no fee, no condition, no obligation. Simply state on one side of your paper what you consider the One Best Reason "Why a Man Should Prefer SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS."

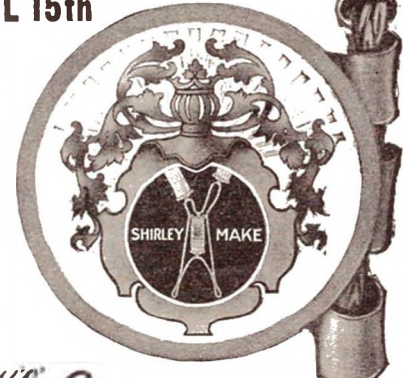
Then sign your name, indicate plainly your address, and give the name of your Clothing Dealer, or Haberdasher, and **his address.** It is essential that we have the dealer's address, for the prizes will be distributed through him **whether he sells SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS or not.**

Give one reason only. Make your letter short—not more than 200 words. (Date, Address, Signature and Dealer's Name **not** being counted as words.) Forget grammar and avoid "advertisy" adjectives. What we want is a simple expression of your reason for preferring SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS to all other kinds.

CONTEST CLOSES APRIL 15th

—and all letters postmarked after midnight of the 15th will be disqualified. Watch our advertisements closely after that date. P. F. Collier & Son and The Frank A. Munsey Company will each furnish an expert to assist Mr. C. F. Edgarton, of The C. A. Edgarton Manufacturing Company, in selecting the Best Letters. The names of the winners will be announced and prizes awarded about May 10th.

There are plenty of Reasons for preferring SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS, but what particular feature appeals to you—and why? Tell us in a Contest Letter.



The C. A. Edgarton Mfg. Co.
SHIRLEY PRESIDENT SUSPENDERS

1708 MAIN STREET, SHIRLEY MASS.

Hawes, von Gal HATS

The very newest shapes for spring wear—the style leaders of them all—are shown in Hawes, von Gal Hats. Note especially the beauty of the telescope soft hat—a style becoming to almost every man.

Compare a Hawes, von Gal Hat—either stiff or soft—with a hat of any other make—the quality is apparent. Ask your dealer about the guarantee. Prices, $3, $4 and $5.

We are Makers of the Hawes Celebrated $3.00 Hats

If not at your local dealer's, write for our new Spring Style Book "O." We will fill your order direct from the factory if you will indicate style wanted and give your hat size, your height, weight and waist measure. Add 25 cents to cover cost of expressage.

Hawes, von Gal
INCORPORATED

FACTORY:
DANBURY, Connecticut

1178 Broadway, New York

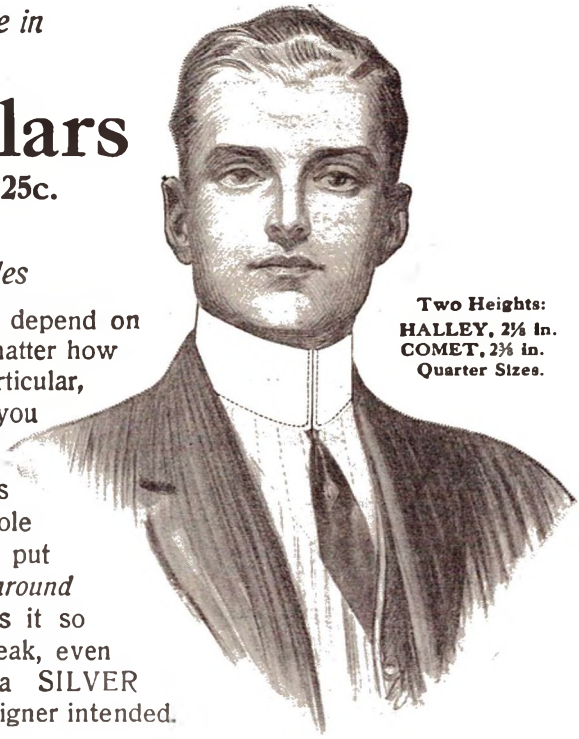
Wholesale Offices:
CHICAGO BOSTON

A New and Becoming Style in

Silver BRAND Collars

2 for 25c.

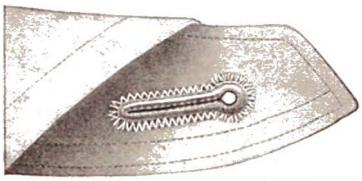
The Only Collars with Linocord Endless Buttonholes



Two Heights:
HALLEY, 2⅛ in.
COMET, 2⅜ in.
Quarter Sizes.

In collars the *Style, Fit and Comfort* depend on having strong, sound buttonholes. No matter how good the collar may be in every other particular, once a buttonhole is stretched or broken, you have a gaping, slovenly, ill-fitting collar.

THE LINOCORD BUTTONHOLE is made with an eyelet like the buttonhole in your coat, hence is pliable, easy to put on and off. It is *reinforced all around* with a *Stout Linen Cord,* which makes it so strong it can't possibly stretch or break, even with the hardest or longest wear—a SILVER Collar will always fit and look as the designer intended.



Linocord Endless Eyelet Buttonhole.

SEND FOR "WHAT'S WHAT."

The latest word in Men's Fashions. It embodies the dicta of the foremost fashion authorities with reference to every item of men's apparel. It not only tells what to wear but also what not to wear. Fully illustrated. Invaluable for reference. Yours for the asking.

GEO. P. IDE & CO., 484 River Street, Troy, New York.

BEVERLY

GRISWOLD

HARBORD

HARMON

CARTER'S UNDERWEAR

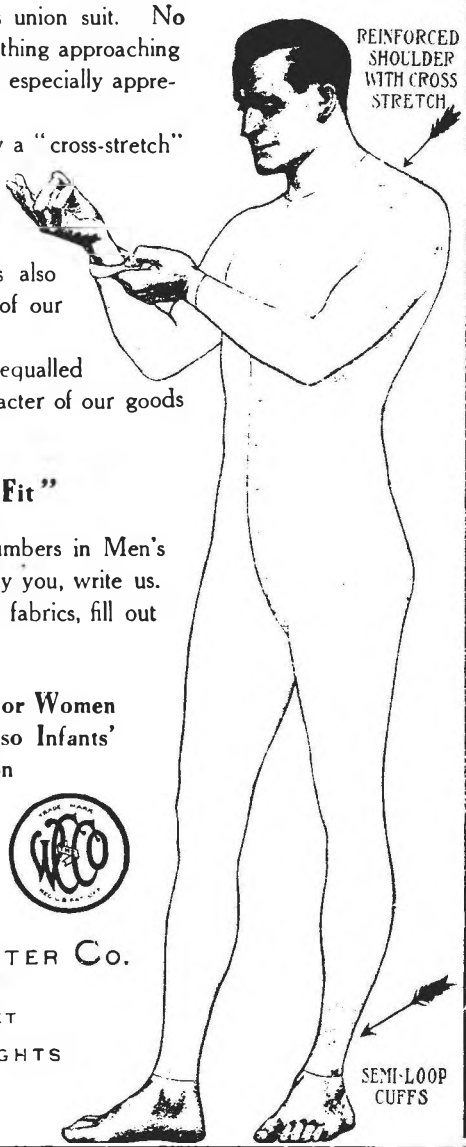
REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

Here is something absolutely new in a man's union suit. No other manufacturer, to our knowledge, has made anything approaching it. Strenuous men, who are hard on underwear, will especially appreciate it.

The garment is reinforced at the shoulder by a "cross-stretch" — a piece of fabric set in in the **opposite way.** This prevents both ripping and sagging.

It also has semi-loop cuffs with French stocking-seams which always lay flat and smooth. Cuffs also have silk lisle tips. These are exclusive features of our Men's Union Suits.

This is only one of a dozen numbers in the unequalled Carter line, but it will serve to emphasize the character of our goods and the quality and workmanship.



"Quality-Knit" and "Quality-Fit"

Ask your dealer to show you these special numbers in Men's Union Suits: **571, 592, 580.** If he cannot supply you, write us. If you would like to see samples of our light-weight fabrics, fill out coupon below and we will send them at once.

Made in Union Suits and Two-Piece Suits for Women and Children. Union Suits for Men. Also Infants' Shirts and Bands, Silk, Wool and Cotton

For sale by nearly all first-class dealers. Insist on the genuine. Look for the Carter Trade-Mark here shown.

THE WILLIAM CARTER CO.

Sole Manufacturers

68 MAIN STREET

NEEDHAM HEIGHTS

MASS.

Cut or tear off this coupon and mail it to us

WILLIAM CARTER Co., Needham Heights, Mass.

Please send me samples of the light-weight fabrics you mention

.....

.....

.....

68

All the New Colors in Holeproof Hose

We have taken pains to reproduce in Holeproof Hose all of the newest popular shades.

There are eleven to choose from. No matter what color you prefer, you will find it in Holeproof Hose.

Every color is guaranteed sanitary and fast.

No Darning Till October

Those who buy six pairs of genuine "Holeproof" now will have absolutely no darning to do until October.

That is guaranteed. You get a regular printed guarantee, signed by the dealer when you buy.

FAMOUS
Holeproof Hosiery
FOR MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Only the finest of Egyptian and Sea Island cotton is used, costing us this year an average of 70c. per pound.

The hose fit like silk gloves.

We will spend $33,000 this year simply for inspection, to see that each finished pair is perfection.

No One Can Buy Finer Hose Than These

Our famous 25c hose have never been equaled at the price.

But our 50c hose (Holeproof Lustre Hose, Mercerized) and our 75c hose (Holeproof Silk Hose) are the very finest hose to be had regardless of what hose cost.

All that you pay over these prices is waste. You can't get hose any better.

Although made in the lightest weights and with the softest yarns we still guarantee the wear.

Six pairs of Holeproof Lustre Hose in a box—**guaranteed six months**—Price $3.

Three pairs of Holeproof Silk Hose in a box—**guaranteed three months**—Price $2.25.

Write for free book "How to Make Your Feet Happy."

THE HOLEPROOF HOSIERY CO., 431 Fourth St., Milwaukee, Wis.

Holeproof
TRADE MARK
Hosiery
Reg. U. S. Pat. Office, 1906

Look for "Holeproof" on the toe

If the hose have something else printed on them they are not the original guaranteed hose — not **genuine Holeproof Hose** with 32 years of experience knit into every inch of them.

They are not what you want—if you want the best hose ever made.

The genuine "Holeproof" is sold in your town. We'll tell you the dealer's name on request or we'll ship direct where we have no dealer, charges prepaid, on receipt of remittance. (42)

Are Your Hose Insured?

The Car That Captured The Country

The Overland—as some of you know—is the greatest sensation in motordom. In two years the demand has grown from almost nothing to 20,000 cars—our orders for the present year. All without advertising—solely because there was never a car that compared with the Overland.

An Enticing Story

Every man should know of the Overland. For here is a story of quick success such as never before has been written.

A story of a man—Mr. John N. Willys—who took a bankrupt concern whose only asset was a car created by a mechanical genius. And, because of this wonderful car, built the sales in two years to a monthly sale exceeding $2,000,000.

How he operates four factories—employs 4,000 men—ships 30 carloads of automobiles per day—to supply the call for Overlands.

You don't know the best about motor cars until you know the car which—in two years' time—has captured a large share of the whole trade of the country.

Cost Cut 20 Per Cent

This tremendous production has cut the cost of Overlands 20 per cent. Overland Model 38 sells for $1,000 now. It is considerably better than the $1,250 Overland last year. Power, 25 horsepower — speed, 50 miles an hour.

A 40 horsepower Overland this year sells for $1,250. And for $1,500—in the Overland - one gets the equal of any $3,000 car.

No other maker attempts to give what the Overland gives for the money. For no other maker turns out daily—as we do—125 standardized cars.

And the price of each Overland includes lamps and magneto—a car all ready to run.

Simplicity

The key to the Overland's astounding success has been largely simplicity. For the early Overlands—when the output was small—were not such bargains as now.

A ten-year-old child in five minutes can master an Overland car. It is all done by pedal control. An amateur can run one—the first time he tries it—from Chicago to the Pacific.

Never was a car so simple, so staunch, so easy to keep in order. And never was a car—within range of the price—so large, so attractive, so powerful.

One Overland car has, again and again, sold from 15 to 30 others. The 4,000 Overlands sold last year brought us orders for this year—before the year opened—for 20,000 cars.

Get the Whole Story

All this wonderful story is told in a book. Send me this coupon for it. You can't know the best about automobiles until you know this remarkable car.

F. A. Barker, Sales Manager, 1137
The Willys-Overland Company, Toledo, Ohio
Licensed Under Selden Patent.

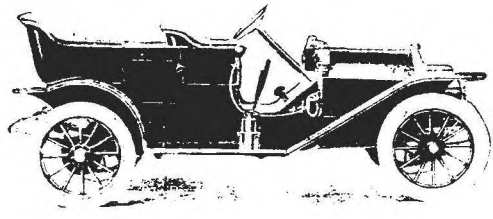
Please send me the book.

_____

_____

The Overland

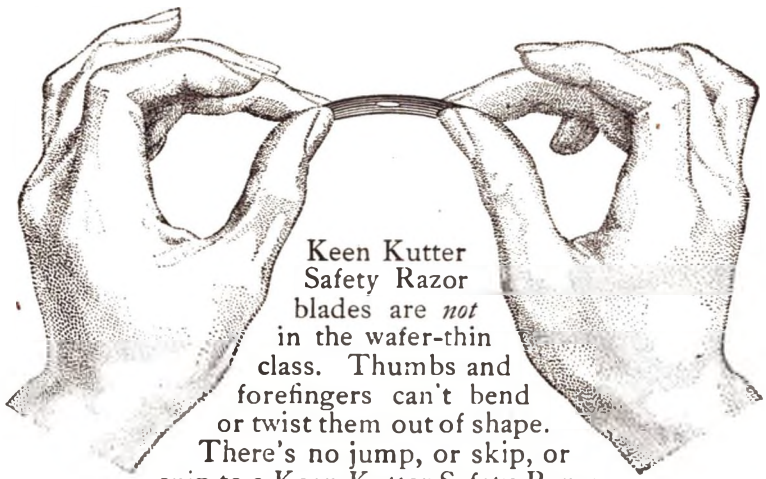
Made in Six Styles of Body



(8)

You Can't Do This

With a Keen Kutter Safety Razor Blade



Keen Kutter Safety Razor blades are *not* in the wafer-thin class. Thumbs and forefingers can't bend or twist them out of shape. There's no jump, or skip, or snip to a Keen Kutter Safety Razor. It passes over the face almost by its own weight; takes off the stiffest beard smooth and clean and leaves an unruffed skin behind it. The

KEEN KUTTER
Safety Razor

is a true "Safety Razor." You don't have to practice caution for fear of an accident, nor spend thirty precious seconds every morning "getting ready."

E. C. SIMMONS KEEN KUTTER TRADE ST. LOUIS MARK U.S.A.

No. K-1—Silver plated in genuine Black Leather Case, $2.50.

No. K-3—Gold plated in genuine English Pigskin Case, $5.00.

A Keen Kutter Safety Razor is *always* ready. It's simply a matter of soap and brush, three or four minutes before the glass and a clean face, free of beard till next day.

It comes fully guaranteed in a neat leather case with twelve "ready to use" blades of best Norwegian steel.

"The Recollection of Quality Remains Long After the Price is Forgotten."

Trade-Mark Registered. —E. C. Simmons.

If not at your dealer's, write us.

SIMMONS HARDWARE COMPANY, Inc.
St. Louis and New York, U. S. A.

Before You Try

To make the first cup of

POSTUM

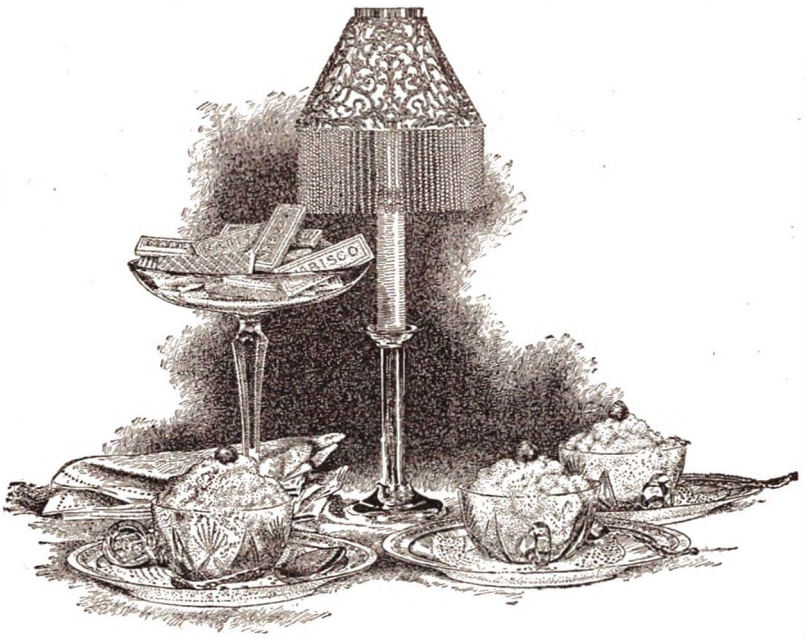
read directions on the package carefully. They are simple and easily followed. **Postum must be boiled**—not simply steeped.

Postum contains no coffee or other harmful substance; is made of clean, hard wheat, including the bran-coat which is Nature's Storehouse for the Phosphate of Potash, the "cell-salt" for rebuilding brain and nerve tissue.

Coffee ails disappear when **Postum** is the daily beverage.

"There's a Reason"

Postum Cereal Company, Ltd., Battle Creek, Michigan, U. S. A.



NABISCO

Sugar Wafers

Dainty serving is intimately associated with dainty edibles. Time, place and occasion may determine the elaborateness of the successive courses, but desserts of all descriptions, ices, creams and sherbets, mark the climax of the art of cookery and refined service, when accompanied by NABISCO Sugar Wafers—the consummation of the ideal dessert confection.

In ten cent tins

Also in twenty-five cent tins

TRY CHOCOLATE TOKENS—A dessert sweet with an outer covering of chocolate and a center suggestive of dainty Nabisco.

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY

Warm as the summer beach

If anybody needs or deserves rooms just right to live in, to play in, to sleep in, it is the little folks. In spite of all precautions, the old-fashioned heating methods soon begin to leak or force ash-dust and coal-gases into the living rooms, and the loved ones are made to breathe burned, devitalized air, totally unfit for the lungs. Whereas Hot Water or Low Pressure Steam heating with

AMERICAN RADIATORS & IDEAL BOILERS

will supply pure, warm air to every room in the house in all kinds of weather. These outfits are used exclusively in hospitals, sanitariums, laboratories, colleges, greenhouses, etc., where correct heating and ventilation are an absolute necessity. IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators are made in such small sizes, yet with equal completeness, that they are now put into thousands of cottages, houses, stores, etc., at prices easily within reach of all. These outfits soon save their cost by cutting down the fuel bills and absence of repairs; while their cleanliness halves the housework and saves much wear on carpets and furnishings.

Do not wait until you build that new house which you may have in mind. See that your present home is warmed as you know it should be, and it will rent for 10% to 15% more, or sell quickly at a higher price when you leave it. IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators are a high-paying investment—not an expense.

A No. C-241 IDEAL Boiler and 555 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner **$250**, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage.

A No. 3-22 IDEAL Boiler and 400 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner **$195**, were used to Hot-Water heat this cottage.

At these prices the goods can be bought of any reputable, competent fitter. This did not include cost of labor, pipe, valves, freight, etc., which installation is extra and varies according to climatic and other conditions.

Prices are now most favorable, and you get the services of the most skillful fitters. Don't put it off till the soon-coming Fall—write us to-day for free valuable book which tells fully all the hows and whys of IDEAL-AMERICAN heating.

Public Showrooms all large cities

AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write to Dept. A34 CHICAGO

Himalaya Cloth

TRADE MARK

An Exact Reproduction of the Fashionable Rough Silks at about One-quarter of Their Cost

27 inches wide ***35 cts. per yard*** **75 shades and colors**

Women everywhere have recognized the excellence of Himalaya Cloth for Suits, Coats, Evening and Automobile Wraps, Evening Gowns, Shirt Waists, Children's Dresses and for every purpose where real silk is desirable.

It is far preferable to silk because it launders perfectly, never wears fuzzy and has great durability. It is a favorite with the most discriminating ladies' tailors, modistes and dressmakers.

Every woman who examines this wonderful cloth realizes at once that it is as beautiful as the real Rough Silks, and it is no over-statement to say that an expert can hardly distinguish between "Himalaya" and silks that cost $1.00 to $1.50 per yard.

The excellence of Himalaya Cloth is due to three things: the peculiar character of the rough yarns, the care used in weaving, and the perfect finish which insures the permanent brilliancy.

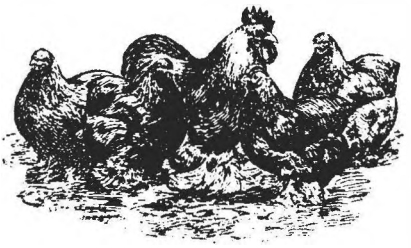
Your guarantee of perfection and assurance of the genuine is the word "Himalaya" stamped on the selvage. Do not accept any cloth claimed to be just as good. There are many cheap imitations. See the word "Himalaya" for yourself on the selvage.

Ask for Himalaya Cloth at the wash goods counter of your dealer. If it is not in stock, write us giving his name

FRED BUTTERFIELD & CO.,

725 Broadway, New York **Bradford, England**

Beginning With 24 Hens You Can CLEAR $1440 PER YEAR



GUARANTEE

WE do hereby agree to refund the full purchase price of the MILLER SYSTEM BOOK by return mail to any purchaser at the regular price, who, having followed the system as directed therein, fails to realize the results claimed below. This guarantee is good for one year.

Show this guarantee to your lawyer.

Claims Included in Guarantee

1. Men and women alike can operate the Miller System without previous experience and secure the full results.

2. The hens can be at free range or penned up.

3. Only a garden plot of ground is necessary for 24 hens.

4. No specially built coops are needed.

5. Cost for Miller feed for each hen, 5 cents per month. Number of eggs laid not less than 220 per hen per year.

6. Cost of feed for maturing a broiler, 5 cents. Time required, seven weeks.

7. Cost of feed for maturing a laying pullet, 15 cents; time required, five months.

8. The **Miller Brooder** is heated by spontaneous combustion. Fuel costs ¼ cent a month. It requires refilling once in 2 months. The result is heat of same "feeling" and temperature as body heat of a hen. And it is uniform regardless of weather conditions. Ninety per cent. of chicks will positively mature. Almost no attention is required.

9. The Miller System will compel each hen to net not less than $25.00 a year, and if the system is completely obeyed $120.00 a year—$60.00 per hen a year being easy to attain.

EVEN A TEN DAY TEST will show a high increase in egg production and decrease in expense. Hens respond immediately to our method. Thirty days will suffice to demonstrate the value of our foods and feeder in speedy maturing of chicks. If not satisfied with the results you get from either or both of these tests, return book and we will refund purchase price.

There is a reason why the Miller System brings these wonderful results. It will all seem "so simple" when you read

THE MILLER SYSTEM BOOK

It is in three books or volumes, the regular price being 50c. per volume. These three volumes bound under one cover make a work of over 150 pages.

VOL. I. contains the illustrations and plans for the construction of the Miller System Coops and Devices and for Setting Up and Operating the "Poultry Plant" (24 and 32 hens being taken as units).

VOL. II. is a hand-book of Miller System Secrets. It is a condensed encyclopedia arranged for ready reference.

VOL. III. contains symptoms and cures for the poultry diseases, including Roupe, Cholera, White Diarrhea, etc.

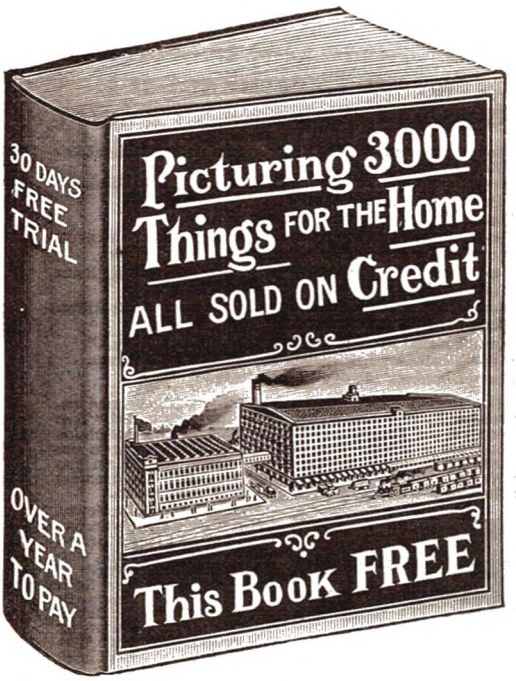
SPECIAL OFFER *Send $1.50 for Miller System Book (the three complete volumes bound in one), and your name will be placed on subscription list for twelve months of Poultry Monthly, the official organ of the Miller System, which contains the Miller System Monthly Supplement, and keeps the system up to date. It is a place for questions and answers and for discussions of Miller System users.*

ADDRESS

MILLER SYSTEM COMPANY, Department T. A. I. **BINGHAMTON, N. Y.**

THIS DOLLAR BOOK SENT FREE

Our 1910 Book—Newer Styles—Lower Prices



SAVING OF 15 TO 50 PER CENT

We guarantee on every article a saving of 15 to 50%. We don't refer to your local store prices, for they are enormously high. We refer to catalog houses, selling for cash, and claiming to undersell us. Get our goods on trial. If you don't find that we undersell everyone else, simply send our goods back. Ask others to send goods on approval, as we do, and keep those which cost the least.

CAPITAL $7,000,000

This is the largest concern of its kind in existence. Our combined capital is $7,000,000. We have 500,000 customers. Our mail order buildings cover six acres of ground. In addition, we own 25 mammoth retail stores, in the heart of the largest cities, where we meet the fiercest competition in America. The only way in which we have grown to this size is by underselling all competition. Now we dominate the field. We control the output of scores of factories, and our enormous buying power enables us to practically fix our own costs. It would bankrupt any lesser concern to attempt to meet our prices.

You may pay cash if you want to, but we have no discount for cash. You may as well buy on credit, as half of the world is doing. You gain nothing by paying cash.

FOUR FREE CATALOGS

Our General Catalog gives pictures, prices and descriptions of everything for the home—of 3,000 things like these: Furniture, Chinaware, Sewing Machines, Carpets, Rugs, Silverware, Washing Machines, Draperies, Lamps, Clocks, Baby Cabs, etc.

Our Stove Catalog shows 70 styles of Empire stoves and ranges, costing from 89c up. Any one of these stoves will pay for itself in fuel saving before you finish paying us.

Our Piano Catalog shows the very finest grades of pianos, as low as $175.00. We accept no money down, but simply send the piano and let it sell itself. This book will save you at least $100 on any piano you want.

Columbia Graphophones are shown in a separate catalog—all styles and all records. We will send you a machine with 12 records on 30 days' free trial. (35)

SEND NO MONEY—NO STAMPS

Simply mail us the coupon printed below. Or write us a postal, if you prefer. We will then mail you this great book, now fresh from the presses, picturing more than 3,000 new-style things for the home. A part of the pictures are in actual colors. This book shows a greater variety of Furniture, Carpets and Housefurnishings than is shown in any retail store in Chicago. On each article it quotes a price lower than you ever saw. It shows the newest creations in furniture, draperies, etc. And it offers you credit on everything. Have whatever you want, at our lowest cash prices, and pay us a little each month.

WE TRUST YOU FOR

Furniture	**Sewing Machines**
Carpets—Rugs	**Washing Machines**
Silverware	**Pianos—Stoves**
Chinaware	**Talking Machines**
Lamps—Clocks	**Baby Carriages**
Refrigerators	**Draperies, Etc., Etc.**

We sell goods on credit at lower prices than ever were quoted for cash. You can have these home comforts now and begin at once to enjoy them. No need to wait for the money. Simply pay as you can. We charge no interest and ask no security. Our dealings are all confidential. Any person who wants to make home more attractive is the right sort of person, and his credit is good with us.

OVER A YEAR TO PAY

Pay a few cents down on each dollar. Then take the goods, use and enjoy them, and pay us a little each month. On the average we allow a year to pay. On pianos, two years. If misfortune comes, or loss of work, we do what we can to help out. Our whole effort, from the time you first deal with us, is to make you a permanent customer. And you will be. You will never buy housefurnishings elsewhere, and pay others' prices, after you once deal with us.

30 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

Whatever you select can be used for one month before you decide to buy it. Every article is sent on approval. You not only see it, but use it. You compare it with other similar articles, and compare our prices with others. If the article, for any reason, is unsatisfactory, simply send it back. You are under no obligation. The month's use will not cost you one penny.

FACTORY CASH PRICES

Cash mail order houses will try to convince you that credit costs more than cash. See for yourself if it does. Get our catalog and compare the prices. See who sells the lowest. The fact is, we sell on credit exactly as low as for cash. Our cash customers get not a penny of discount. To all we sell at factory prices, plus our one small profit. No middlemen of any kind get profit on our goods. We defy any other mail order house to show one price as low as we offer on a similar piece.

CUT OUT THIS COUPON

and mark which catalog you want. Please do it now—before you forget it. Let us prove at once that credit costs you less than cash.

SPIEGEL, MAY, STERN CO. 3447 Fisk St., Chicago

Please mail me the catalogs marked.

——General Catalog. ——Piano Catalog.

——Stove Catalog. ——Graphophone Book.

Name _____

Postoffice _____

State _____ R.F.D. _____

SPIEGEL, MAY, STERN CO., 3447 Fisk St., Chicago

PEGGY
Highest Scoring Bird in the World.

Money in Poultry
$3,600.00

Net Profit From 30 Hens in One Season on a Lot 24 x 40. It is Not an Experiment, it Has Been Done on the KELLERSTRASS FARM

MY NEW POULTRY BOOK

Covers all branches necessary for Success with Poultry. It tells you what I have done. It was written from actual experience.

IT TELLS YOU

How I made $3,600.00 in one season from thirty hens on a lot 24 x 40 by feeding them the scraps from my table three times a day. The test was made to show what can be done on a city lot as well as on a farm. I also furnish you the names of the parties who paid me over $2,000.00 for the eggs alone from these thirty hens, for reference, which is evidence undisputable. Remember this book is written by a man who has had the actual experience.

How I make my chickens weigh two and one-half pounds when they are eight weeks old.

How I prepared my chickens for the show room so that I won over 90 per cent of all the blue ribbons that were offered during 1907 and 1908, the last season that I showed A "secret" that has never been published before.

How I built my indoor and outdoor brooders for 85 cts. each, to be used either as fireless or with heat in them and plans for the same.

How I raised ninety-eight chickens out of a hundred that I batch.

How I took a flock of chickens and made them lay $68 worth of eggs per hen in ten months!

Try My Way and You Can Raise Them by the Thousands.

How I keep my male birds from fighting without injuring them.

How I raised the five chickens I sold to Madame Paderewski for $7,500.00.

How I feed my chickens for egg production.

How I keep my chickens healthy and free from sickness.

How I select a good laying hen from the poor layer.

How I break up my broody hens without injuring them.

How I pack my eggs so they will stay fresh.

How I mate up my chickens for breeding and fertility.

How I run my incubators and supply moisture.

How I raised my famous $10,000.00 hen "Peggy."

How I build my hen houses and plans for the same.

How I bred my big egg-laying strain.

It also tells about broiler plants, egg plants, and remember there is also an article in this book called "Two Years on the Kellerstrass Poultry Farm," which explains hundreds of things—just what we do in two years on the farm, or in other words, a two years' course on the "World's Greatest Poultry Plant." This is the greatest article ever written by a real practical poultryman.

Remember, this book was written by a man who has sold the highest priced chickens in the world, who also sold $68.00 worth of eggs per hen from a flock of hens in one season, in fact, if you breed a chicken of any kind, you know my reputation as a breeder. This is the first time I have ever offered to sell any of my "methods or secrets" to the breeder or to the public.

Please Read All These Letters:

263 Eggs in 272 Days

ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: I herewith inclose you affidavit, also trap nest record of the Kellerstrass Strain Crystal White Orpington Hen register No. 503, that laid two hundred and sixty-three (263) eggs in 272 days.

Signed P. J. HARTLEE. Chattahoochee, Ga.

Saves Thirty Million Chicks' Lives Annually

The simplest sort of things—common black dirt—has solved the problem of eradicating a chicken disease which cost thirty million chicks' lives annually, a disease which scientists of the National and State Experiment Stations have been studying without success for ten years. Ernest Kellerstrass, the Kansas City poultry fancier, found the secret.—*St. Louis Republic.*

Good, Sound Logic

Winchester, Kans.

Dear Sir: Received your book all O. K. this A. M. and find same very interesting and full of *good, sound logic.*

Yours truly, CHAS. FORSYTHE.

231 Eggs Per Bird

My Dear Mr. Kellerstrass: I have sixteen of your hens that averaged two hundred and thirty-one (231) eggs per bird in 12 months.

LAWRENCE JACKSON, Pittsburg, Pa.

Worth $1,000.00

KELLERSTRASS FARM, Kansas City, Mo. Burnett, Cal.

Dear Sir: I received your book sent me Saturday A. M. It would have been worth to me $500.00 if I had had it last Spring. "Good Book!" Common Sense, backed by hard-earned experience. Worth $1,000.00 to me.

Respt. (Signed) L. R. HAYWARD.

Best Dollar's Worth

MR. E. KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo. Oct. 16th, 1909.

Dear Sir: Received your book all right. Am well pleased with book; best dollar's worth I have ever received.

Yours truly. Signed CHAS. P. GOETZ, Buffalo, N. Y.

Best Book on Poultry

Adah, Pa., Oct. 20th, 1909.

MR. ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Friend: The book at hand. It is the best book that I ever opened on poultry talk. I think every person that has a bird on his lot or farm should have one of these books. I was surprised when I read where you opened those chicks and found bath nails and tacks in their craws. I never heard of such a thing; it stands to reason that would kill them.

Yours truly, (Signed) H. M. GROVER.

$68.00 Worth of Eggs Per Hen

ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: Congratulations on the splendid showing you have made by selling $68.00 worth of eggs per hen from thirty hens in one season. G. M. CURTIS, Editor, Reliable Poultry Journal, Quincy, Ill.

Worth Many Times the Price

195 Orange Ave., Irvington, N. J., Nov. 8th, 1909.

ERNEST KELLERSTRASS.

Dear Sir: Received your poultry book. It is worth many times the price and should be in the hands of every one handling chickens, as it contains information that would take many years to learn.

I remain yours very truly, Signed JOHN SENFELDER.

Common Sense Methods

Springfield, Ill., Jan. 29th, 1910.

MR. ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: I received your poultry book the 27th inst. It is full of good common sense methods, that one can acquire in no other way than by actual experience in breeding and caring for fowls. I am very well pleased with it.

Yours truly, W. H. HARRISON, 538 So. Douglas Ave.

More Than My Money's Worth

Cincinnati, Ohio, Dec. 31st, 1909.

MR. ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Kansas City, Mo.

Dear Sir: I consider your book chuck full of valuable information for any one, especially a beginner. I have already received more than my money's worth and have only read about one-third of the book.

Yours respectfully, (Signed) GEO. W. BENCKENSTEIN.

Send $1.00—and a Copy of the Latest Revised Edition of the Book will be Sent You by Return Mail.

Address, ERNEST KELLERSTRASS, Publisher, 525 Westport Road, R. F. D. No. 1, Kansas City, Mo.

NOTE—Ask any editor of any Poultry Journal or any "Licensed" poultry judge as to my reputation as a breeder.

INVEST YOUR SAVINGS
Remarkable Profit-Sharing Offer

NEVER before has the small investor had a better opportunity to place his savings where they will be amply protected and at the same time produce for him a **guaranteed income.**

If you have $50, $100 or $1,000, or if you can save a few dollars each month, which you would invest where it will provide you with a large immediate income, with the opportunity for still greater profits, you will be interested in reading a book we have just issued and which we will send to you free on request.

In this book we have outlined the story of **the foremost business of its kind in America,** of the splendid success of the business, of its unusually large profits, and of the stability of its earnings.

In this book we have also outlined, as a part of its plan for handling its large and increasing business, an offer made by this Company by which you may share, on an unusual basis, in the greater profits which this Company will make.

Please Note These Facts:

1. **Your investment is guaranteed by ample assets of great value.**
2. **You will receive dividends from the very start.**
3. **The business is firmly established.**
4. **It is in a thriving and prosperous condition.**
5. **It has very great prospects for the future.**

In addition to the **guaranteed income paid at once,** the opportunity offered is extraordinary because of **the profit-sharing feature,** by which you may share **permanently** in **all** the future profits of the Company, in its large and rapidly increasing business.

The Departments of the United States Government, leading professional and business men in every State in the Union, and in the Provinces in Canada, purchase and endorse the product of this Company, which is of world-wide interest in its character.

This most interesting book, fully explaining our "Profit-Sharing Offer," will be mailed to you promptly on request.

Cut Out the Coupon and Mail It To-day

Argosy
4-'10

R. S. PEALE
President

225 Fifth Ave.
New York

Please send me book explaining your "Profit-Sharing Offer" without obligation on my part.

Name_____

Address_____

Salary Increases

Voluntarily Reported Every Month

If one thing more than another proves the ability of the International Correspondence Schools of Scranton to raise the salaries of poorly-paid but ambitious men and women—to raise YOUR salary—it is the monthly average of 300 letters VOLUNTARILY written by students telling of salaries raised and positions bettered through I. C. S. help.

YOU don't live so far away that the I. C. S. cannot reach you. Provided you can read and write your schooling has not been so restricted that the I. C. S. cannot help you. Your occupation isn't such that the I. C. S. cannot improve it. Your spare time isn't so limited that it cannot be used in acquiring an I. C. S. training. Your means are not so slender that you cannot afford it. The *occupation of your choice* is not so high that the I. C. S. cannot train you to fill it. *Your salary is not so great that the I. C. S. cannot raise it.* To learn how easily it can be done, mark the attached coupon.

A Salary Increase For You

Add to the three hundred students heard from every month, the other successful students not heard from, and you have some idea of the tremendous salary-raising power of the I. C. S. During January the number of students who reported success was 426. Mark the coupon.

Marking the coupon costs you nothing, and does not bind you in any way. An I. C. S. training can be acquired in your *spare time.*

Mark It N-O-W!

SALARY-RAISING COUPON

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 806 Scranton, Pa.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I have marked X.

Bookkeeper	Mechan'l Draftsman
Stenographer	Telephone Engineer
Advertisement Writer	Elec. Lighting Supt.
Show Card Writer	Mechan. Engineer
Window Trimmer	Plumber & Steam Fitter
Commercial Law	Stationary Engineer
Illustrator	Civil Engineer
Designer & Craftsman	Build'g Contractor
Civil Service	Architect'l Draftsman
Chemist	Architect
Textile Mill Supt.	Structural Engineer
Electrician	Banking
Elec. Engineer	Mining Engineer

Name _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

This 3-Piece Outfit On Credit $6.75

It consists of a beautiful Panama skirt, Hyde grade petticoat, and charming lawn waist—easily the biggest value for the money ever offered. Our New Spring Style Book—just out—shows 500 bargains like this, in everything for women's wear. Suits, skirts, waists, petticoats, hats, lingerie, etc., are shown pictured on living models. And all our garments are man-tailored to fit—all of the highest quality and best workmanship obtainable.

Six Months to Pay

No need of waiting until you can spare the cash to buy them elsewhere. We open an account with you. You get the goods now, wear them and pay a little each month—so small an amount you'll hardly notice it. **No publicity—no red tape. No security—no interest.** Just your promise to pay is all we ask. And, besides that, all goods are

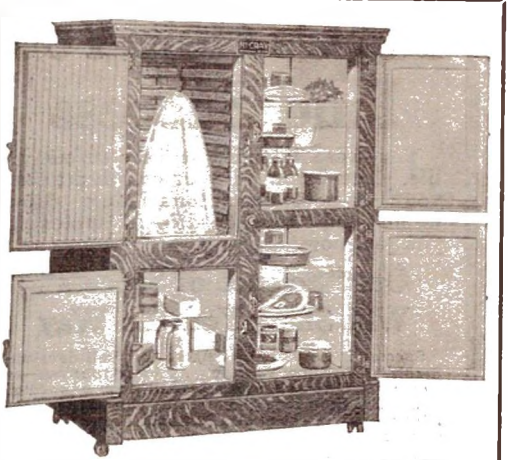
Shipped on Approval

If anything you get from us is not satisfactory in every way, simply return it. We'll refund every penny of the money paid—**even pay the express charges both ways.** No offer could be fairer—none more liberal.

Send for Our New Style Book

You owe it to yourself to at least see these bargains we offer. All we ask is the opportunity of proving every word we say. So write us **today**—if you want to save money and pay as you can—and our New Spring Style Book, containing over 500 illustrations of all that is newest and best in women's dress, will be sent you **FREE** at once—**all charges prepaid.**

Bernard Mayer Co., 3764 Mosprat St., Chicago



What do you find when you open your refrigerator? Do you find clean, sweet, wholesome food and nothing else; or do you find partially spoiled food, moisture and unpleasant odors? If you find the latter it means your refrigerator is unsanitary—a possible source of sickness to yourself or family. Do not temporize if you have this kind of a refrigerator. Investigate at once the merits of the famous

McCRAY Refrigerators

—the kind that are clean and wholesome because there is always a constant circulation of cold, dry air through every food compartment as long as a pound of ice remains. Ordinary refrigerators cannot keep food the way the McCray does, because ordinary refrigerators do not have the McCray patented construction. TRY YOUR ICE BOX by placing salt in it for a few hours. Note how quickly the salt becomes damp and lumpy; then write for booklet which tells why it will keep dry in a McCray, and why it is the safest as well as the most economical refrigerator you can buy.

Write for the Free Book

"How to Use Leftover Foods"—by Elizabeth O. Hiller, and for any of these free catalogs:—No. A. H., Built-to-order for Residences; No. 87, regular sizes for Residences; No. 67, for Groceries; No. 59, for Meat Markets; No. 48, for Hotels, Clubs and Institutions; No. 72, for Flower Shops.

McCray Refrigerator Company

96 Lake Street Kendallville, Indiana

AGENTS, HURRY! IT'S GREAT!

GET AN APPOINTMENT--$50 TO $100 A WEEK

SENSATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MAKING MONEY—MEN AND WOMEN

Every home needs—wants—must have it. Women buy eagerly. Agents excited. Orders coming thick and fast. Brand new. Field untouched. Nothing ever like it before. **Never such a seller.** Never such a wonderful invention. Be quick—don't wait—experience unnecessary. Just listen! One woman made **$24 first half day.** W. H. Morgan, Pa.: **"Sold 45 Cleaners in 25 hours.** Have sold 2 out of 3 persons canvassed." Marvelous results reported from every state. Read on about this great modern household invention. Millions have wanted—needed—for years. Only enjoyed by rich. But here at last for rich and poor. **New Home Vacuum Cleaner**—Blessing to all. **Rushing, whirling, sucking air draws dirt, dust, germs from carpets, rugs, mattings,** while they remain on floor. Strange—bewildering—phenomenal. No electricity—no motors—no power. Operated in any home by child or frail woman. Weighs 8 lbs. Different from anything ever seen. Purifies atmosphere—wards off disease—stops doctor bills. Sucks dirt from **carpets, rugs, mattings—from crevices, beneath radiators, furniture, behind doors, closets, etc.** Sold on demonstration. Women can't resist. Shown in three minutes. Sold in five. Then on to the next. Women praising, make sales easy. **Saves drudgery, cleaning, dusting.** Saves taking up carpets—saves time and money. No more brooms, brushes, dust cloths. No more backache. Never such a money maker—never such a blessing to women. Never such a chance to make money easy—quick. Big profit on every sale. But you must hurry. Agencies going. Everybody on the jump. C. E. Goff, Mo.: **"Sold 5 Vacuum Cleaners last Saturday.**—my first attempt." Gustave Anderson, Minn.: "Enclosed find order for 12 Vacuum Cleaners. Ship prompt. **One man sold a dozen 3 days."** F. I. Pierce, N. Y.: "Wife more than pleased with Home Vacuum Cleaner. It does all and more than you claim for it." Prof. Geo. S. McDowell, Pa.: **"Took 8½ ounces fine dirt from carpet 10 x 13 feet."** L. Banville, Ohio: "The New Home Cleaner greatest ever. Have arranged for demonstrations in stores." And so it goes—all eager, all say "It's great." So hurry. You can't fail. Get busy now. Grand invention—great seller. **(Hurrah! Join the money makers.)** Get this money. Don't be satisfied with small wages. Don't just exist. **How splendid to always have money in abundance. Break away!** Send today. Don't write a letter—just a card. Only write—that's all. Begin now to make money. Frank Williams, Nebr.: "Home Vacuum Cleaner a dandy; **works to perfection,**—without raising dust."

FREE SAMPLE TO AGENTS

READ HOW THE MONEY ROLLS IN

DON'T WORK FOR WAGES

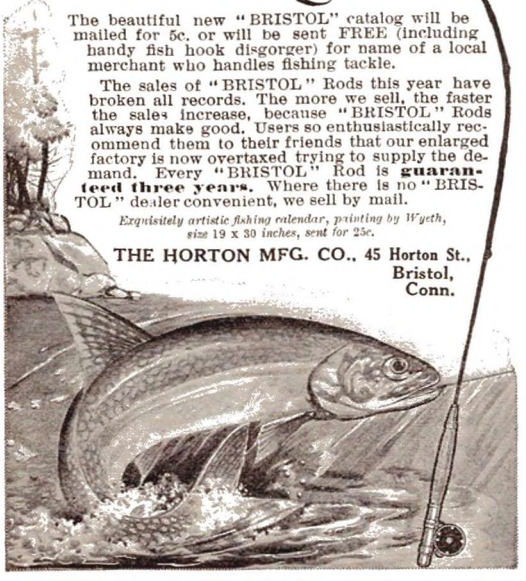
Gain freedom from drudgery, long hours, bossism, job hunting. We want more Agents, Salesmen, Managers—Men and women, at home or traveling, all or spare time, to fill orders, appoint, supply, control sub-agents. You can't make a mistake. Listen! John Logan gave up $12 job driving team, now makes $50 weekly. Writes "Sold 15 cleaners today. Success is sure." That's the way they all read—So hurry and write. **SEND NO MONEY**—Just your name on a card. We'll send full instructions and offer good territory. We'll help; we'll start you making money. **Write.**

R. ARMSTRONG MANUFACTURING CO., 658 Alms Building, CINCINNATI, OHIO

"Bristol"

TRADE MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

Steel Fishing Rods



The beautiful new "BRISTOL" catalog will be mailed for 5c. or will be sent FREE (including handy fish hook disgorger) for name of a local merchant who handles fishing tackle.

The sales of "BRISTOL" Rods this year have broken all records. The more we sell, the faster the sales increase, because "BRISTOL" Rods always make good. Users so enthusiastically recommend them to their friends that our enlarged factory is now overtaxed trying to supply the demand. Every "BRISTOL" Rod is **guaranteed three years.** Where there is no "BRISTOL" dealer convenient, we sell by mail.

Exquisitely artistic fishing calendar, painting by Wyeth, size 19 x 30 inches, sent for 25c.

THE HORTON MFG. CO., 45 Horton St., Bristol, Conn.

SHIPPED KNOCK DOWN **BROOKS BOATS** EASILY PUT TOGETHER

GUARANTEED TO BE SATISFACTORY

YOU WANT A BOAT

Build It Yourself and Save Two-Thirds

We will furnish you with all the parts of a boat machined, cut to shape, and accurately fitted together prior to shipment, so that with a little labor on your part, you can own your own boat, at a price that is ridiculously low, or we will furnish you with instructions and full-sized paper patterns, from which you can build a boat yourself, by purchasing the material locally. You want to know how it can be done? Then send today—not tomorrow—for

OUR NEW CATALOG No. 24—IT'S FREE

The exceedingly low prices will amaze you

For the year 1910 we have made the enormous cut of 33⅓ per cent. from our regular prices—just one-third less than they were last year.

Do you know that local boat-builders all over the country purchase our frames—build the boats and sell them at a handsome profit? You can do this yourself and save that profit. Anyone can put our Knock-Down boats together—no skill is required. The work is a clean, instructive form of recreation—a mighty good thing for you or your boy.

We save you (1) the boat-builder's profit; (2) labor expense; (3) big selling expense; (4) seven-eighths the freight.

OUR GUARANTEE

is that you will be perfectly satisfied with everything you purchase of us, or your money will be instantly refunded.

BROOKS MANUFACTURING CO.

604 Ship Street

SAGINAW, MICH., U. S. A.

Originators of the Pattern and Knock-Down System of Boat-Building. Established 1901

VOSE

Direct From Our Factory To Your Home

The **Vose** is the ideal home piano. Over 65,000 can now be found in music loving homes. We deliver, when requested, direct from the factory free of charge and guarantee perfect satisfaction. ***Liberal allowance for old pianos and time payments accepted.***

The **tone, touch** and **magnificent wearing qualities** of the

Vose Pianos

are only explained by the exclusive patented features, the **high grade** material and superb workmanship that enter into their construction.

FREE—If you are interested in pianos, let us send you our beautifully illustrated catalogue, that gives full information.

VOSE & SONS PIANO CO.
155 Boylston Street Boston, Mass.

Wonderful

EDISON
Phonograph Offer

This is Mr. Edison's latest supremely fine phonograph—a musical wonder—unsurpassable in clearness and beauty of tone. The new outfit with the new **AMBEROL RECORDS** circulars sent **FREE**

Mr. Edison says: "I WANT to see a Phonograph in every American Home."

FREE TRIAL

Free Trial Means Free Trial
No Money Down — No C. O. D.

Try this great latest style phonograph in your home; play the beautiful Edison gold moulded and Amberol records, and if *then* you do not care to keep the outfit, return it at our expense. We do not charge you one cent for the trial.

$2.00 a Month now buys a genuine Edison phonograph, easiest possible payments at rock-bottom prices—*and no interest on payments.* Our beautiful catalog quotes absolutely rock-bottom prices—the magnificent latest style Outfit No. 10—at about *one fourth* the cost of inferior imitations.

Write for Our Catalog

Do not bother with sending a letter; merely sign and mail coupon, writing name and address plainly. *Write now.*

Remember free trial—*no money down.* You cannot imagine how old and young enjoy the Edison—the endless variety of stirring music, the comical minstrel shows and songs. Send for our free catalog and free trial certificate anyway.

Sign the Coupon

FREDERICK BABSON,
Edison Block,
Dept. 1074
Chicago,
Illinois

FREDERICK BABSON, Edison Phonograph Distributors
Edison Block, Dept. 1074, Chicago, Illinois
Without any obligation on me, please send me free, prepaid, your catalog of Edison phonographs, your free circulars of the great Outfit No. 10 and terms of payment.
Name .....
Address .....

The Mattress That is Built—Not Stuffed

Ostermoor $15.

THE keynote of Ostermoor superiority is "Built—not stuffed." A stuffed mattress can't be of uniform evenness—your own good sense tells you that.

But take eight interlacing sheets of sanitary cotton, hand-sew them under uniform pressure, and cover with an attractive yet sturdy ticking, and you have a mattress to sleep on for the rest of your life and then leave to your heirs. Some Ostermoor Mattresses have been in use for fifty-two years. Reason? *Honest quality* and *scientific* making. A better mattress doesn't exist. A cheaper one isn't worth the price.

144 Page Book and Samples Free

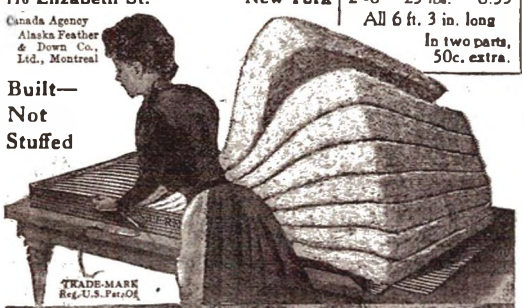
Our book "The Test of Time"—contains over 200 illustrations about beds and sleep. Tells all about the various style Ostermoor Mattress, Church Cushions, etc. Free including ticking samples, for a postal.

The Ostermoor Mattress is not for sale at stores generally, but there's an Ostermoor dealer in most places. Write us and we'll give you his name. We will ship you a mattress by express, prepaid, when we have no dealer in your town or he has none in stock. Try it 30 days—money back if you want it.

OSTERMOOR & CO.
110 Elizabeth St. New York

Canada Agency
Alaska Feather & Down Co., Ltd., Montreal

MATTRESSES COST Express Prepaid	
4'-6"—45 lbs.	$15.00
4'-0"—40 lbs.	13.35
3'-6"—35 lbs.	11.70
3'-0"—30 lbs.	10.00
2'-6"—25 lbs.	8.35
All 6 ft. 3 in. long	
In two parts, 50c. extra.	



Note the trademark securely sewn on the end and the name Ostermoor woven continuously in the binding.

The Man Wanted

There is a place *any* time for the man who is master of business—for the man who *knows* not only the task under his hand but the things that depend upon it. Your value to your employer or your business—the number of places ready for you, is in exact proportion to the *definite*, practical knowledge you can bring with you.

No Matter What Branch of Business You Are In

the American School's new Cyclopedia of Commerce—a complete reference library of practical Business Knowledge in ten big volumes—will put within your reach at any moment all the facts connected with your work. It will perfect you in the closer knowledge of *your* department, will familiarize you with the work of other departments—will give you a broad survey of general business procedure. For the man who is ambitious to be a *big* business man—for the executive who desires to more intelligently check and guide the work of those below him this great

Cyclopedia of Commerce
Accountancy and Business Administration

consisting of ten handsome volumes, over 3,500 pages, 1900 illustrations, page plates, etc.,

is an ever reliable, always dependable help in every problem. No such complete and yet instantly accessible digest of Business Knowledge was ever compiled before. The question that puzzles you, the emergency that confronts you, can be quickly solved with the help of these books.

WHAT YOU CAN GRASP

Business Organization — Advertising — Sales — Collections — Credits — Purchasing and Stores — Catalogues — Records — Cost Analysis — Commercial Law — Banking — Clearing House Methods — Partnerships — Corporations — Securities — Contracts — Methods of Bookkeeping — Principles of Accounting — Trial Balance — Special Accounting — Systems — Inventories — Stock Brokerage — Recording and Billing — Auditing — C. P. A. Requirements — Corporation Accounting — Banking — Savings and Safety Deposit Accounting — Publishers' Accounting — Installment Sales and Collections — Brewers' Accounts — Retail Store Accounting — Mail Order Business — Follow-up Systems — Stock-keeping — Insurance — Real Estate — Loans — Contractors' Accounts — Cost Keeping — Department Store Accounts — Store Management — Hotel and Club Accounting — Commission and Brokerage, etc.

Free Examination Test the value of these books in **your** work—take no risk, but simply send this coupon. Examine the 10 big volumes thoroughly for 5 days—measure for yourself the benefits **you** can derive from them—the new avenues to power and position they open up for you. If you are not convinced, you need not spend a single penny on them. If you do need them, the payment is made easy and convenient for you—and in addition you will receive, as a monthly supplement, the Technical World Magazine for one year. Read the coupon, then sign and mail it today.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE,
CHICAGO, U. S. A.

INTRODUCTORY OFFER COUPON

American School of Correspondence:

Please send set Cyclopedia of Commerce, Accountancy, and Business Administration for 5 days' free examination. Also Technical World for 1 year. I will send $2 within five days and $2 a month until I have paid $24.00, or notify you and hold the books subject to your order. Title not to pass until fully paid.

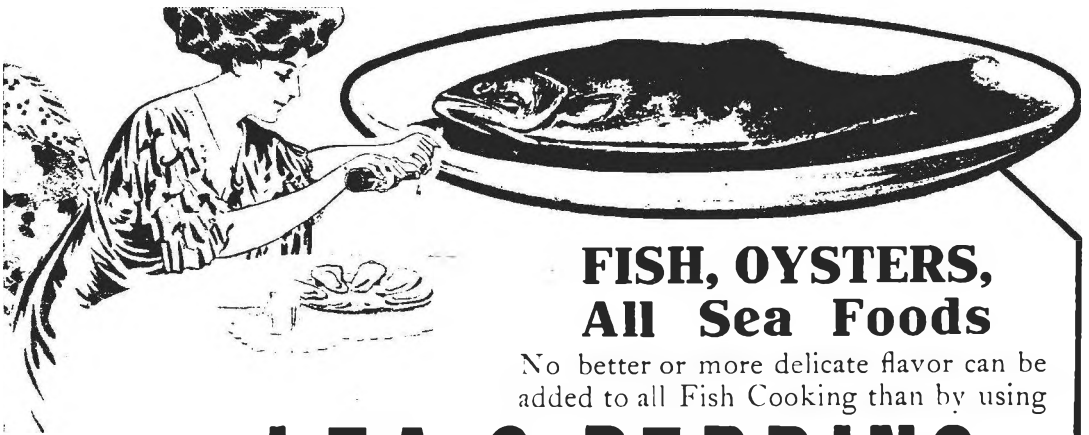
NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

OCCUPATION .....

EMPLOYER .....

Argosy, 4-'10



FISH, OYSTERS, All Sea Foods

No better or more delicate flavor can be added to all Fish Cooking than by using

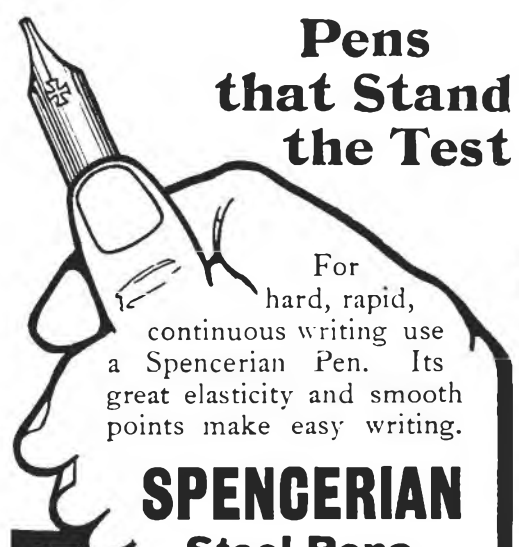
LEA & PERRINS SAUCE

THE ORIGINAL WORCESTERSHIRE

Soups, Stews and Hashes, Steaks, Roasts, Chops, Game, Gravies, Chafing Dish Cooking, Salads, Welsh Rarebit and many other dishes are improved by its use.

See that **Lea & Perrins'** Signature is on Wrapper and Label.

Avoid Imitations. JOHN DUNCAN'S SONS, Agents, New York.



Pens that Stand the Test

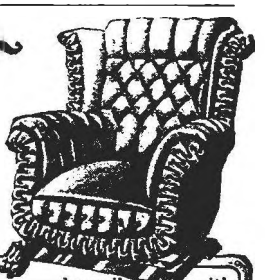
For hard, rapid, continuous writing use a Spencerian Pen. Its great elasticity and smooth points make easy writing.

SPENCERIAN Steel Pens

outlive others because of the fine workmanship and the high quality *Spencerian Pen Steel* from which they are made. Sample card of 12—all different—sent for 6c postage.

SPENCERIAN PEN CO., 349 BROADWAY, N. Y.

ON SMALL MONTHLY PAYMENTS



You can open a Charge Account now by mail with the largest furniture institution in Chicago and settle for your purchases in small amounts from month to month as suits your convenience. We give our customers from 10 to 30 months on every purchase. It's the same high class credit that we're extending to the best families in Chicago today. We offer it freely to *you*--no matter where you live or what your position or income may be. We charge absolutely nothing for this credit accommodation--no interest--no extras of any kind.

Catalog No. 39 Free

Our Big New Catalogue tells all about this most worthy plan of monthly payments. Write for the catalog at once. It is an immense volume listing everything to furnish and beautify the home--is handsomely illustrated, most of it being reproduced in colors. It quotes factory prices on Furniture, Rugs, Carpets, Curtains, Pianos, Sewing Machines, Crockery, Silverware, Go-Carts, Refrigerators, Washing Machines, Stoves, etc., etc.

OVERSTUFFED ROCKER No. 33 **$12.75**

A sample bargain (see illustration) large roll arms, large pillow head, large ears, deep tuftings and ruffles, upholstered guaranteed Imperial leather--has the wearing quality of genuine leather--best steel construction, substantial platform in mahogany finish, heavy carved claw feet.

Terms $2.00 cash, $1.00 monthly until paid.

Hartman Furniture & Carpet Co.

Dept. C8 223 to 229 Wabash Ave., Chicago, U. S. A.

Largest, oldest and best known homefurnishing concern on the American continent--established 1855--55 years of success--22 great retail stores--capital and resources larger than any similar institution in the country.

The Howard Watch

AS soon as a man owns a motor-car he begins to take a new account of time. And as soon as a man appreciates precision in a timepiece he is in line for a HOWARD Watch.

There are 450,000 automobile owners in the United States and they are rapidly learning that there is no watch for their use like a HOWARD.

Its hard-tempered balance will not knock out of true with the jar and jolt of travel. It is unhurt by changes of temperature or the vibration of the machine. Its adjustment is permanent. Englishmen say it's the most sporting watch in the world.

A HOWARD Watch is always worth what you pay for it.

The price of each HOWARD is fixed at the factory and a printed ticket attached—from the 17-jewel (double-roller escapement) in a "Jas. Boss" or "Crescent" gold-filled case at $40 to the 23-jewel in a 14-K. solid gold case at $150.

Not every jeweler can sell you a HOWARD Watch. Find the HOWARD Jeweler in your town and talk to him. He is a good man to know. Drop us a postal card, Dept. E, and we will send you a HOWARD book of value to the watch buyer.

E. HOWARD WATCH WORKS

BOSTON, MASS.

Come! Quick! Anger!

Are you prepared for this call—no matter from which department it comes? Just think what it would mean to have constantly at your elbow for consultation, an expert on the very problems that puzzle you. That's just what you would have in the

CYCLOPEDIA OF APPLIED ELECTRICITY

Six Big Volumes—Bound in Half Morocco—2,800 Pages 7 x 10 inches—Printed on special paper in large, clear type—2,000 full page plates, diagrams, formulas, etc.

Written by thirty expert Electrical Engineers, the biggest men in the profession. It is a working guide for the student or practical electrician, or a ready reference work for the expert.

Examine the Books at Our Expense

So confident are we that the books are just what you want, that we will send them to you by prepaid express—you keep the books 5 days—examine them carefully, test them, apply them to your every-day work. If satisfied that the books are the most complete and comprehensive work ever published on electricity, keep them, send $2.00 within five days and $2.00 a month until you have paid $18.80, the special introductory price—the regular list price is $36.00. If not suited to your needs, notify us. We will send for them at our expense. Fill in and mail the coupon today—the books will be sent you at once.

—IMPORTANT SUBJECTS TREATED—

Electric Wiring—Electric Telegraph—Wireless Telegraphy—Telautograph—Theory, Calculation, Design and Construction of Generators and Motors—Types of Dynamos and Motors—Elevators—Direct Current Motors—Direct-Driven Machine Shop Tools—Electric Lighting—Electric Railways—Management of Dynamos and Motors—Power Stations—Central Station Engineering—Storage Batteries—Power Transmission—Alternating Current Machinery—Telephony—Automatic Telephone—Wireless Telephony, etc.

For a short time we will include, as a monthly supplement, for one year, the TECHNICAL WORLD MAGAZINE. This is a regular $1.50 monthly, full of Twentieth Century Scientific facts, written in popular form. Also contains the latest discussions on timely topics in invention, discovery, industry, etc.

FREE OFFER COUPON

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE

CHICAGO, U. S. A.

Please send set Cyclopedia of Applied Electricity for five days' free examination. Also T. W. for one year. I will send $2 within five days and $2 a month until I have paid $18.80; or notify you and hold the books subject to your order. Title not to pass until fully paid.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

OCCUPATION.....

EMPLOYER .....

Argosy, 4-'10

Pay as You are Able

Write for Free Book

Send at once — today — for Woolf's Inc. magnificent value encyclopedia, picturing and describing hundreds of up-to-the-second spring styles, in "classy" men's and women's spring and summer garments.

Get the book, and take your time about paying for anything you need.

One-Half Year to Pay

You can buy any article of clothing—no money down — and take your time about paying for it. *You* have credit and should use it. You need have no hesitancy. Your dealings with us are forever confidential.

We are the original and largest concern selling merchandise to the people on terms to suit their incomes. Don't hesitate another minute—send a postal for the big, handsome encyclopedia. Our prices are lower than cash stores; our terms are the most reasonable to be found anywhere, our dealings fair and square.

Our business aggregates millions annually, so you can buy from us cheaper than from any similar establishment.

Special

Finest, man-tailored spring, 1910 model, nobby business suit; values double; extra special; on half year's credit—

$12.50

Send No Money

We do not ask a penny of your money until you have examined, tried on and compared our garments with any to be found anywhere in the world. You take no risk, for your own eyes judge our values.

Lose no time in writing for the book—you will be interested and pleased when you see it. Write at once, addressing as follows:

WOOLF'S, Inc., 2202-4 W. 12th St., Chicago, U. S. A.

The world's largest and original mail-order credit establishment. Founded 1874.

Caution: We have no agents or local representatives.

Learn by Mail to MOUNT BIRDS

Be a Taxidermist. Join our school and learn at home to Mount Birds, Animals, Game Heads, Fishes, Tan Skins, Make Rugs, etc. Easily, quickly learned. Best methods, expert instructors. **Success guaranteed. SPORTSMEN and NATURALISTS**—mount your own specimens. You can save hundreds of dollars and beautifully decorate your home or your office. **FREE**—Beautiful Taxidermy Books and full particulars of this work. **Write today.**

Northwestern School of Taxidermy, 1074 Elwood Bldg., Omaha, Neb.

We Will Sell You at Wholesale Agents' Price, one

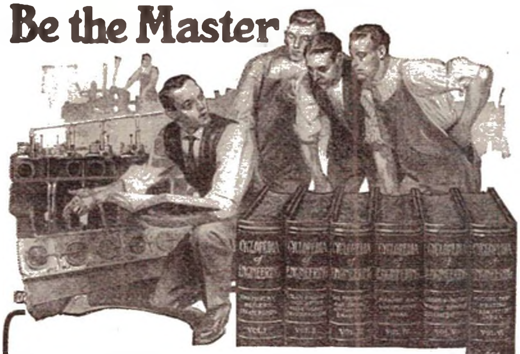
American Motorcycle

if we haven't an agent in your city. We want our machines introduced in every town. We also want live agents and offer the best money-making proposition on **American Motorcycles** and **American Bicycles**. Write us—do it now.

American Motorcycle Co.

1355 Wells St. (4) Chicago, Ill.

Be the Master



Complete Cyclopedia of ENGINEERING

Only the man who is "The Master"—**master** of himself—**master** of his trade or profession, wins great success.

You can educate yourself—you can prepare for advancement by using a portion of this Great Specialized Engineering Library.

The Cyclopedia of Engineering

is a practical, general reference work on steam boilers, steam, gas and oil engines, marine and locomotive work, mechanical drawing, management of dynamos and motors, electric lighting and wiring, etc.

These six volumes contain 3,200 pages, size 7 x 10 inches, and over 2,000 full-page plates, drawings, diagrams, formulas, tables, etc. Also contains a series of practical test questions, with solutions, and is carefully indexed for ready reference.

Read This Liberal Offer

$2.00 Down — $2.00 a Month

Upon receipt of coupon we will send you a set of this great Cyclopedia, by prepaid express, without deposit or guarantee of any kind. Keep the books five days, examine them carefully, give them every possible test. We want you to be the judge—you are under no obligations.

If you decide the books are not what you want, advise us and we will have them returned at our expense. If you keep the books, send us $2.00 within five days, then $2.00 a month until you have paid the special price of $18.80. The regular list price is $36.00.

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS COVERED

Steam, Gas and Oil Engines, Calorimeters, Pumps, Elevators, Indicators, Valve Gears, Turbines, Compression and Absorption Refrigeration, Gaseous and Liquid Fuel, Condensers, Navigation, Air Brakes, Machine Shop Work, Ventilation, Heating, Air Compressors, Principles and Management of Direct Current Dynamos and Motors, Storage Batteries, Automobiles, etc.

Special Offer If You Mail Coupon Promptly

For a short time we will include, as a monthly supplement, for one year, the TECHNICAL WORLD MAGAZINE. This is a regular $1.50 monthly, full of Twentieth Century Scientific facts, written in popular form. Also contains the latest discussion on timely topics in invention, discovery, industry, etc.

FREE OFFER COUPON

AMERICAN SCHOOL of CORRESPONDENCE
Chicago, U. S. A.

Please send set Cyclopedia of Engineering for 5 days' free examination, also Technical World for 1 year. I will send $2 within 5 days and $2 a month until I have paid $18.80; or notify you to send for the books. Title not to pass until fully paid.

NAME ....

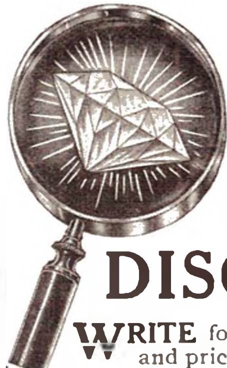
ADDRESS ....

OCCUPATION ....

EMPLOYER ....

Argosy, 4-'10

DIAMONDS!



Highest Grade DIAMONDS AT SPECIAL DISCOUNTS

WRITE for special discount sheet and price list (together with the complete Marshall catalog). The house of Geo. E. Marshall is known for its first quality goods and our **special** discounts on **rarest** values may **surprise** you. Write now.

Marshall's

"F" Grade—

"F" irst and finest grade—diamonds are gems of the rarest beauty — — perfect in cut and color, pure white; of dazzling brilliancy. Not one jeweler in ten ever carries in stock a diamond equal to the Marshall "F" irst grade; and the jeweler's so-called first grade is generally about equal to Marshall's second or even third grade.

HERE are shown three rings of rare beauty, all "F" grade diamonds — $25 for the pretty Tiffany; $85 for the superb Cluster and $48 for the Tiffany Belcher. We allow terms of $2.50, $8.50 and $4.80 a month respectively. Or for **all cash, 8 per cent off.** *Any diamond shipped prepaid on approval—not one cent in advance, nothing to pay unless completely satisfied AFTER full examination.*

Catalog on Request

Price List & Special Discount Sheet

Send name & address on coupon —that is all!

Now be sure to get this catalog and discount sheet and our approval-shipment offer **BEFORE** you buy a diamond or jewelry. Write today.

Geo. E. Marshall,
(Inc.)
W. S. Hyde, Jr., Pres.
S. E. Marshall, V-Pres.
A. S. True, Sec'y.
Suite 1074,
103 State St.,
CHICAGO
ILL.

CUT OR TEAR OFF THIS COUPON

GEO. E. MARSHALL (Inc.), Suite 1074, 103 State St., Chicago, Ill.
Without any obligations please send me at once, free, your Marshall Catalog and Special Discounts Sheet, with full explanation of your no money-down approval offer.

Name..

Address..

No letter necessary; the coupon will do.

WANTED AGENTS - SALESMEN MANAGERS WANTED

STARTLING OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MONEY FAST. AT HOME OR TRAVELING---ALL OR SPARE TIME

Experience not necessary. Honesty and willingness to work all we ask. We will give you an appointment worth **$50 to $75 every week** You can be independent. Always have money in abundance and pleasant position selling **greatest labor saving household invention brought forth in fifty years.** **LISTEN:**—One man's orders **$2,650.00 one month,** profit $1,650.00. Sylvester Baker, of Pa., **a boy of 14** made $9.00 in 2½ hours. C. C. Tanner Ia., **80 years old,** averages five sales to seven calls. See what a wonderful opportunity! **Room for YOU,** no matter what your age or experience, or where you are located—if you are square and will act quick. But don't delay—territory is going fast. Read what others are doing and be influenced by their success. **WORK FOR US AND GET RICH.**

"I do not see how a better seller could be manufactured," writes Parker J. Townsend, Minn. "Called at twenty homes, made nineteen sales,"—E. A. Martin, Mich. "Most simple, practical, necessary household article I have ever seen" says E. W. Melvin, SanFrancisco. "Took six dozen orders in four days."—W. R. Hill, Ill. "Went out first morning, took sixteen orders,"—N. H. Torrence, New York **"Started out 10 a. m., sold thirty-five by 4 o'clock,"**—J. R. Thomas, Colo. **"Sold 13† in two days,"**—C. W. Handy, New York. "I have sold goods for years, but frankly, I have never had a seller like this."—W. P. Spangenberg, N. J. **"Canvassed eleven families, took eleven orders,"**—E. Randall, Minn. **"SOLD EIGHTEEN FIRST 4½ HOURS.** Will start one man working for me today, another Saturday,"—Elmer Menn, Wis.

These words are real—they are honest. Every order was delivered, accepted and the money paid in cash. Every letter is right here in our office, and we will give the full postoffice address of any man or woman we have named if you doubt. This is a big, reliable, manufacturing company, incorporated under the laws of the State of Ohio, and every statement we make is **absolutely sincere and true. YOU CAN MAKE THIS MONEY:** You can make

$3000.00 in 3 Months

TURNCRANK TO WRING

THE NEW EASY WRINGER MOP

selling this great invention—**The Easy-Wringer Mop**—the biggest money maker of the age. Think of it! **A Self-Wringing Mop.** No putting hands into the dirty water. No aching backs. No slopping against woodwork. No soiled clothes. No contracting deadly disease from touching hands to filth and germs that come from floor. Can use scalding water containing strong lye. **Two turns of crank wrings out every drop of water.** Makes house-keeping a pleasure---Makes the day happy. Simple, practical, reliable, it lasts for years. Every woman is interested---and buys. **No talking necessary--it sells itself.** Simply show it and take the order. **Could you imagine an easier, quicker, better way to make money than supplying this demand already created!**

New Low Priced Household Article.

The above cut shows mop wrung up dry and pictures the good, strong, substantial material used thruout. When mop is raised from floor it automatically straightens out ready for wringing

This smaller picture shows mop on floor. It spreads out and is held down to floor at all points.

We want more **agents, salesmen, managers,** to fill orders, appoint, supply control sub-agents, **150 per cent profit.** No investment required. **We own patents and give you exclusive territory, protection, co-operation, assistance. You can't fail,** because you **risk nothing. HUNDREDS ARE GETTING RICH.** Act quick. Write for your county today. **WE WANT A THOUSAND MEN AND WOMEN.**

Send no Money: Only your name and address on a postal card for information, offer and valuable booklet **FREE** Tomorrow belongs to the one behind--**the opportunity is open TODAY.** Write your name and address clearly, giving name of county.

THE U. S. MOP COMPANY, **911 MAIN ST., LEIPSIC, OHIO.**

FLAT FOOT TIRED ACHING FEET CORRECTED

The Scholl "TRI-SPRING" Arch Support is guaranteed to correct all foot ailments, as flat foot, weak ankles, rheumatism, pains in limbs and back. Supports the arch of the foot, eliminates muscular and nervous strain. Made of German Silver, patented "Tri-Spring" and leather top, for men and women. Ask your shoe dealer for Scholl's "Tri-Spring" Arch Supports or write for free booklet.

Scholl Mfg. Co., 80 Market St. Chicago, Illinois.

COPY THIS SKETCH

and let me see what you can do with it. You can earn $20.00 to $125.00 or more, per week as illustrator or cartoonist. My practical system of personal individual lessons by mail will develop your talent. Fifteen years successful work for newspapers and magazines qualifies me to teach you. Send me your sketch of President Taft with 6c in stamps and I will send you a test lesson plate, also collection of drawings showing possibilities for YOU.

The Landon School of Illustrating and Cartooning
1429 SCHOFIELD BUILDING, CLEVELAND, O.

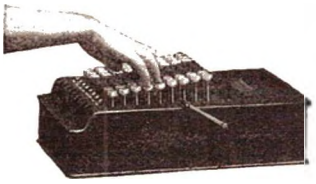
PAY NOW AND THEN

We will send for your approval a genuine ¼ **karat, commercial white, perfect diamond,** in any style 14 karat solid gold mounting, **express prepaid, for $30—$5 down and $3 per month;** or a ⅜ **karat diamond** of like quality for **$60; $10 down and $5 per month.** ¶ If you are interested in a reliable watch, we offer a **gentleman's** O. F. 12, 16 or 18 size, or **lady's** 6 size, plain or engraved, **20-year guaranteed gold filled case,** fitted with genuine **Elgin** or **Waltham movement at $12.50; $3 down, $1.50 per month.**

Write to-day for free catalog No. A24. Remit first payment with order or have goods sent by prepaid express C. O. D. for your inspection.

Herbert L. Joseph & Co.
217 STATE ST. CHICAGO.

Same movement as above, with hunting case, **$16.75.**



For Rapid Adding and Figuring

the Comptometer is as indispensable to a bookkeeper or bill clerk as a typewriter is to a correspondent. With very little practice any bookkeeper can add 100 items a minute more easily than he can write 30 items without adding.

It makes figuring a real pleasure. Takes care of all drudgery. Does all thinking for you. It gives you that peace of mind, comfort and satisfaction in feeling certain your figures are always correct. It assures a trial balance on time. Prevents errors in pay roll and bill extending.

It is the only machine rapid enough for bill extending and checking, chain discounting, estimating, extending and denominating pay roll.

It does not take many minutes saved or errors prevented during the week to make the Comptometer a profitable investment.

Let us send you a book about it, **free?** Or, let us send you a Comptometer on free trial, prepaid, U. S. or Canada?

Felt & Tarrant Mfg. Co., 1734 No. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Near-Brussels Art-Rugs, $3.50

SENT TO YOUR HOME BY EXPRESS PREPAID.

Sizes and Prices	
9 x 6 ft.	$3.50
9 x 7½ ft.	4.00
9 x 9 ft.	4.50
9 x 10½ ft.	5.00
9 x 12 ft.	5.50
9 x 15 ft.	6.50

Beautiful and attractive patterns. Made in all colors. Easily kept clean and warranted to wear. Woven in one piece. Both sides can be used. Sold direct at one profit. Money refunded if not satisfactory.

New Catalogue showing goods in actual colors sent free.

ORIENTAL IMPORTING CO., 960 Bourse Bldg., Phila.

$3.50 FOR TH.S New Turban Braid

Ordinary Shades—Regular $7.50 value. Very fashionable and largely worn with the new turban hats. Made of fine natural wavy hair; can be braided, puffed or curled. **Special Sale Price only $3.50. Wavy Switch,** 22-in., 1¼ oz., Retails $4. Sale Price..... **$1.85**

Beautiful and stylish Billie Burke Cluster, finest natural wavy hair ordinary shades—Regular price $5.00. **Sale Price only** **$2.85**

Send sample of hair and describe goods desired. **Money back if not satisfactory.**

FREE Large illustrated catalog of numerous hair goods, bargains and invaluable "Hints on Care of Hair." **WRITE TODAY.**

MRS. H. NEGRESCOU, Dept. 354, 182 State Street, Chicago, Ill.

$1.85 EACH

WE TRUST YOU 10 DAYS
SEND NO MONEY

Write today for this handsome 14-inch, beautifully curled, carefully selected Ostrich Feather, any color. If you find it a big bargain remit $1.85 each, or sell 3 feathers and get your own Free. Enclose 6c postage. Write for catalogue of high grade feathers.

ANNA AYERS
Dept. 177, 21 Quincy St., Chicago.

Geisha Diamonds

THE LATEST SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Bright, sparkling, beautiful. For brilliancy they equal the genuine, standing all test and puzzle experts. One twentieth the expense. Sent free with privilege of examination. For particulars, prices, etc., address

THE R. GREGG MFG. & IMPT. CO.

Dept. 15. 52-58 W. Jackson Boul., - Chicago, Ill.

PRINT Your Own

Cards, circulars, book, newspaper. Press $5. Larger $18. Rotary $60. Save money. Print for others, big profit. All easy, rules sent. Write factory for press catalog, TYPE, paper, etc.

THE PRESS CO., Meriden, Conn.

Testimonials from customers. A merchant writes *"I never saw a printing press in my life, before, but printed good circular first day."* A pastor writes *"It helps my church work."* Young man says *"I made $12 evenings in one week."* Also many from railroads, educators, doctors, druggists, photographers, and others.

25,000 Women Use It

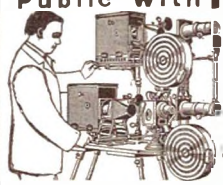
25,000 women know that the Imperial Self-heating Flat-iron makes ironing comfortable because of less heat, and saves its cost in fuel. Uses gasoline or alcohol. No wires, tubes or strings—just a plain iron—heats itself—satisfaction guaranteed. Without question the most satisfactory self-heating iron made. 25,000 in use already. One salesman has sold 3,000 in California.

Write for booklet and address of nearest agency—no charge.

The Imperial Brass Manufacturing Co., 455 Jefferson Street, Chicago

NOTE: Agents wanted everywhere. Easy sales—good profits—satisfied customers. Sell a woman an Imperial Iron and you need not be afraid to go back.

IT PAYS BIG To Amuse The Public With Motion Pictures



NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY as our Instruction Book and "Business Guide" tells all. We furnish Complete Outfit with Big Advertising Posters, etc. Humorous dramas brimful of fun, travel, history, religion, temperance work and songs illustrated. One man can do it. **Astonishing Opportunity** in any locality for a man with a little money to show in churches, school houses, lodge halls, theaters, etc and to Operate **Five Cent Theatres** in store rooms. **Motion Picture Films and Song Slides rented. Profits $10 to over $100 per night.** Others do it, why not you? It's easy; write to us, we'll tell you how. **Catalog free.**

AMUSEMENT SUPPLY CO., 817 Illinois Bank Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

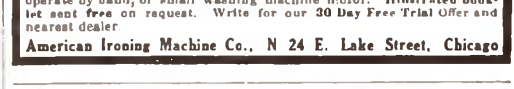
IRONING MADE EASY.

Your bed and table linen, plain clothes, flat pieces, 80 per cent of family wash, can be ironed **Easier** (no backache or tired feet), **Quicker** (in 1-5 the time), **Better** with finish, far superior to hand work, by using the

SIMPLEX IRONER
THE BEST IRONER

1½ ct. per hour to heat by gas or gasoline. **Price within reach of all.** Sizes for small homes and large; operate by hand, or small washing machine motor. **Illustrated booklet sent free** on request. Write for our **30 Day Free Trial Offer** and nearest dealer.

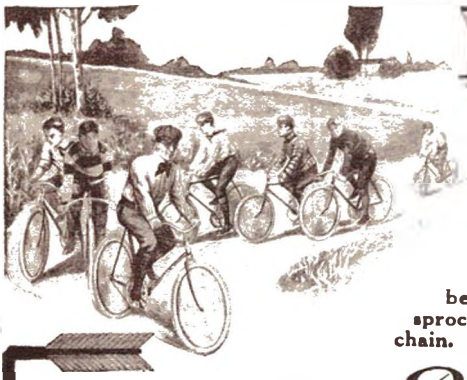
American Ironing Machine Co., N 24 E. Lake Street, Chicago



Best grade cedar canoe for $20

We sell direct, saving you $20.00 on a canoe. All canoes cedar and copper fastened. We make all sizes and styles, also power canoes. Write for free catalog giving **prices with retailer's profit cut out.** We are the largest manufacturers of canoes in the world.

DETROIT BOAT CO., 176 Bellevue Ave., **Detroit, Mich**



RACYCLE
SILENT RIDEABOUT

The RACYCLE RIDEABOUT, the sensation of last year—its first season—is out in bright, new 1910 dress—French Gray frame with Green spiked head and Red striping. An easy riding, high-grade beauty, equipped with 70-tooth, one-half inch pitch front sprocket, Musselman Armless Coaster Brake and roller chain. Silent in action. Runs like a belt.

The World's  Best Bicycle

The "Bond Behind the Factory" offers $10,000 cash and $50,000 worth of stock in The Miami Cycle & Mfg. Co. to any one who can prove that the solution of the Crank Hanger Problem—as published in our Pamphlet—"The Three Reasons"—has been incorrectly figured. Send for copy of Bond.

It's All in the Crank Hanger

The Racycle's easy running, hill climbing qualities are the result of this Evenly Balanced Crank Hanger. New cone sleeve is a 1910 feature which gives tremendous strength and efficiency.

Beautiful 1910 Catalog AD and pamphlet—"The Three Reasons," giving Prize Problem condition, with neat Racycle watch charm and booklet "The Armless Wonder," sent for 2c stamp—*free* if you mention Bicycle Dealer in your town.

THE MIAMI CYCLE & MFG. CO. Middletown, Ohio, U. S. A.

RUNS LIKE A BELT

MEYERS'
PUTZ CREAM
METAL POLISH
FREE

A LEADER AMONG METAL POLISHES FOR OVER 20 YEARS

FOR SALE BY GROCERS HARDWARE, HARNESS & DEPARTMENT STORES EVERYWHERE

SEND POSTAL WITH NAME OF YOUR DEALER AND WE WILL PRESENT YOU WITH A SAMPLE OF PUTZ CREAM ABSOLUTELY FREE

WE ALSO MAKE SILVA PUTZ THE ONLY PERFECT SILVER POLISH

NO BETTER SILVER POLISH CAN BE MADE

AMERICAN METAL POLISH CO
97 WINSLOW AVE., WEST SOMERVILLE, MASS.

Boston Garter

Velvet Grip

Boston Garters are made of best materials in a clean factory, by well-paid help.

Every pair warranted—penalty, a new pair or your money back.

BOSTON GARTERS
RECOGNIZED THE STANDARD, AND WORN THE WORLD OVER BY WELL DRESSED MEN.

Sample Pair, Cotton, 25c., Silk, 50c.
Mailed on Receipt of Price.

GEORGE FROST CO. MAKERS
BOSTON, MASS., U.S.A.

See that BOSTON GARTER is stamped on the clasp.

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

This Massive Rocker Sent for $1.00

J-5875—One motion collapsible **Go-Cart.** Full size. Chase, leather hood and body in Maroon, Green or Tan. ⅜ inch rubber tires.

$1.00 cash. 50c monthly payments. Total price.....$5.50

H-1152—This **Elegant Rocker,** solid Golden Oak frame, nicely carved and upholstered with Boston leather, spring construction.

$1.00 cash. 50c monthly payments. Total price.....$5.45

Credit Given to Everybody

We are pioneers in the mail-order **buy-on-credit** furniture business; we ship the goods to any place in the United States—furnish your home in part or complete, and we will **allow the use of the goods while you are paying for them.** Remember, this gigantic furniture house has the proud record of **every promise fulfilled for over twenty-five years,** and right now guarantees to **save you money** on all kinds of housefurnishings. Never before in the history of the mail-order furniture business have such astonishing bargains been offered you as we are now offering.

FREE Three Great Buy-On-Credit Catalogs

Our Big Catalog A gives all information and tells you how to save money on **Furniture, Carpets and Rugs in actual colors, Curtains, Stoves and Ranges, Washing Machines, Crockery, Silverware, Office Desks, Baby Carriages, Fireless Cookers.**

Catalog B is complete with illustrations, descriptions and prices of **Pianos, Organs** and all kinds of **Musical Instruments. Catalog C** illustrates and tells all about our big line of Peerless **Sewing Machines.** Simply say which you want—all are Free.

CLOTHING FOR MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN. CREDIT GIVEN. CATALOG FREE. ASK FOR IT

Buy this Elegant Couch on Our Easy Terms

H-2576—This elegant, **massive Couch,** upholstered with heavy figured velour, unequaled in value and distinctive design, of superior construction, nicely carved. American quarter sawed oak frame. Greatest offer ever made. **$1.50** cash, **75c** monthly payments. Total price.....$9.75

See this handsome Kitchen Cabinet at these easy terms.

H-1833—This **Kitchen Cabinet,** entirely new design—the best low priced cabinet ever offered by any concern anywhere, extra strong, made of hard maple. Certainly a grand value. **$1.00** cash, **75c** monthly payments. Total price.....$6.95

STRAUS & SCHRAM, Inc. 1070—35th Street, Chicago, Ill.

WE WILL TRUST YOU TEN DAYS. $1.50

SENT ON APPROVAL. SEND NO MONEY. Hair Switch

Send a lock of your hair, and we will mail a 2½ oz. 22-inch short stem fine human hair switch to match. If you find it a big bargain, remit $1.50 in ten days, or sell 3 and GET YOUR SWITCH FREE. Extra shades a little more. Inclose 5c postage. Free beauty book showing latest style of hair dressing—also high grade switches, pompadours, wigs, puffs, etc.

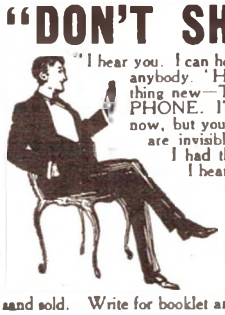
ANNA AYERS, Dept. 768, 17 Quincy St., Chicago.

Remoh Gems

Looks like a diamond—wears like a diamond—brilliancy guaranteed forever—stands filing like a diamond—stands heat like a diamond—has no paste, foil or artificial backing. Set only in solid gold mountings. 1-20th the cost of diamonds. A marvelously reconstructed gem. Not an imitation. Sent on approval. Write for our catalog. It's free. No canvassers.

Remoh Jewelry Co., 418 N. Broadway, St. Louis

"DON'T SHOUT"



"I hear you. I can hear now as well as anybody. 'How?' Oh, something new—THE MORLEY PHONE. I've a pair in my ears now, but you can't see them—they are invisible. I would not know I had them in, myself, only that I hear all right." The

MORLEY PHONE

makes low sounds and whispers plainly heard. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless. Anyone can adjust it. Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

THE MORLEY CO., Dept. 700, Perry Bldg., Phila.

BARODA DIAMONDS.

Flash Like Genuine

ANY STYLE

DIAMONDS

at 1/40 the cost—IN SOLID GOLD RINGS

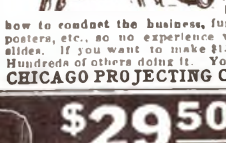
Stand acid test and expert examination. We guarantee them. **See them first—then pay.** **Special Offer** — 14k Tiffany ring 1 ct. $5.98. Gents ring 1 ct. $6.98. 14k Stud 1 ct. $4.86. Sent C.O.D. for inspection. **Catalog FREE,** shows full line. Patent ring gauge included, 10c. The Baroda Co., Dept. 418 848 N. State St., Chicago

---

MOVING PICTURE MACHINES

MAKE BIG MONEY

Stereopticons

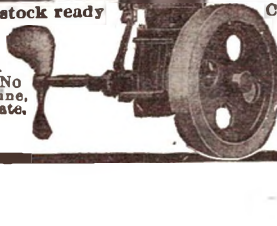


A wonderful opportunity for men with a little money, no matter where located, to make big money entertaining the public. Motion pictures always will pay because they show the public life, funny dramas bubbling over with humor, history, travel, adventure, temperance work and illustrated songs. Almost no limit to the profits showing in churches, school houses, lodge halls, theatres, etc., or operating **FIVE CENT THEATERS.** We show you how to conduct the business, furnish complete outfit with bills, advertising, posters, etc., so no experience whatever is necessary. We rent films and slides. If you want to make $15 to $50 a night send for full particulars. Hundreds of others doing it. You can, too. Write today and learn how.

CHICAGO PROJECTING CO. 225 Dearborn St. Dept. 6, Chicago

---

2 H. P. DETROIT ENGINE



$29.50 Engine only, without Electrical or Boat Equipment

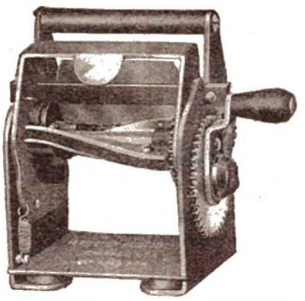
Other sizes at proportionate prices in stock ready to ship. Single cylinder engines, 2 to 8 h. p.; double cylinders, 8 to 20 h. p.; four cylinders, 50 h. p. Engines start without cranking. No cams, no sprockets, only three moving parts. All engines counterbalanced. No vibration. Special fuel injector burns gasoline, kerosene, coal oil, alcohol, naphtha distillate. Plastic white bronze bearings (no cheap babbitt used).

Crankshaft drop forged steel. Bearing surfaces ground. Adjustable steel connecting rod. Waterproof ignition system. For your launch, sailboat, rowboat, sternwheel boat or railroad track car. 20,000 satisfied users. Free catalog and testimonials. **Demonstrating Agents wanted in every boating community.** Special wholesale price on first outfit sold. **Sent on 30 days' trial.** [49]

DETROIT IRON WORKS

1200 Jefferson Ave., Detroit, Mich., U. S. A.

HC



Sharpen Your Blades

with the

Perfection Automatic Razor Strop

For Safety or Ordinary Blades

You will be amazed at the difference in the edge. It's easy too. Just turn the crank—every revolution gives ***six complete stroppings.*** It is just like the ***expert's twist of the wrist***—the true principle of good stropping. It makes the old blades better than new and new blades better than ever. Write for free trial offer. If you desire, send name of your dealer. ***Name style of razor, if safety.*** Satisfaction positively guaranteed or money back.

Perfection Razor Strop Company

95 Dearborn St., Room 52, Chicago

Pacific Branch
Dyas-Cline Company
Los Angeles, California

Eastern Branch
1 Madison Avenue
Metropolitan Life Ins. Bldg.
New York City

SHIPPED IN SECTIONS **BROOKS** FINISHED AT HOME

FURNITURE

GUARANTEED TO BE SATISFACTORY

DO YOU KNOW

What our knock down furniture is?
That it is easy to put together?
That it is shipped in sections from factory to you?
That it is made of solid oak?
That it saves you over half?

Why? Because
You do not pay exorbitant freight charges;
You do not pay expensive crating charges;
You do not pay high finishing costs;
You do not pay jobber's profit;
You do not pay dealer's profit;
You pay but one profit only—our profit.

In fact, do you know that retail furniture dealers purchase our furniture—set it up—and sell it to you at a handsome profit?

Send today—not tomorrow—for our

Catalog No. 10—it's free

As you receive it, with cushions made, ready to drop in place.

Just six joints to put together in the grooves provided.

Davenport No. 6—Height 35 inches—Depth 30 inches—Length 88 inches—Legs 3 inches square. Ordinary Retail Price, $50.00—**Our Price, $19.25.**

Can be assembled by any woman. No skill required; the only tool necessary is a screwdriver; and the holes are bored. Each piece can go together but one way, and that is the right way.

Our best customer is the United States Government. We furnished one of the buildings at the Seattle-Yukon Exposition. We just furnished a large new building for the State of South Dakota. These orders run up in the thousands—purchased at catalog prices. **The point is,** you can buy one piece. If desired, at exactly the same price and terms.

Our Guarantee

You take no risk.—We absolutely guarantee that you will be satisfied with everything you purchase of us, or your money will be instantly refunded—can we make it stronger?

BROOKS MANUFACTURING COMPANY
604 Ship St., Saginaw, Mich., U. S. A.
Established 1901. Originators of the knock down system of home furnishing

---

Write Today for This Superb

Piano Catalog

IT CONTAINS cardboard easels of the various styles of pianos, besides a full and complete account of how superior excellence in a piano is achieved. It explains the acoustical, grooved sounding board and other features that add vastly to the tonal purity of the Lyon & Healy Piano.

Lyon & Healy

PIANO

$350 and Upward

This piano is so different from others that only by reading the catalog can you understand its advantages. Will you not fill out this coupon and mail it today?

LYON & HEALY

Makers of the Lyon & Healy Piano and the Lyon & Healy Harp

COUPON TO BE FILLED OUT

Messrs. LYON & HEALY,
20-30 Adams Street, Chicago

Gentlemen:—Please send Souvenir catalog containing easel-back illustrations, etc.

Name _____

Street _____

Town and State _____ [60]

LABLACHE

FACE POWDER

BEAUTIES OF SPRING

are the women, everywhere, whose skin is smooth and velvety, unmarred by the lines of time or by exposure to wind and sun. *They* are the users of **Lablache.** *Their* complexions rival in delicacy of coloring the fragrant blossom of the peach.

Refuse substitutes. They may be dangerous. Flesh, White, Pink or Cream, 50c. a box, of druggists or by mail. *Send* 10c. *for sample box.*

BEN. LEVY CO., French Perfumers
Dept. 41 125 Kingston St., Boston, Mass.

KEEP BABY'S SKIN CLEAR

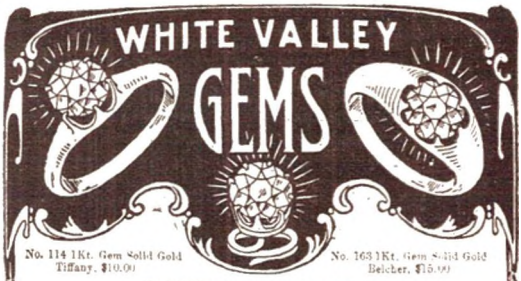
By the Constant Use of

CUTICURA SOAP

Assisted, when necessary, by Cuticura Ointment. These pure, sweet and gentle emollients preserve, purify and beautify the skin, scalp, hair and hands of infants and children, prevent minor eruptions becoming chronic, and soothe and dispel torturing, disfiguring rashes, itchings, irritations and chafings. Peace falls on distracted households when Cuticura enters.

Sold throughout the world. Depots: London, 27, Charterhouse Sq.; Paris, 10, Rue de la Chaussee d'Antin; Australia, R. Towns & Co., Sydney; India, B. K. Paul, Calcutta; China, Hong Kong Drug Co.; Japan, Maruya, Ltd., Tokio; So. Africa, Lennon, Ltd., Cape Town, etc.; U. S. A., Potter Drug & Chem. Corp., Sole Props., 133 Columbus Ave., Boston.

☞Cuticura Book, post-free, 32 pages of valuable information on Care of the Skin, Scalp and Hair.



See Them Before Paying

These gems are Chemical White Sapphires and **can't** be **told** from diamonds except by an expert. So **hard** they **can't** be filed, so will wear **forever** and retain brilliancy. We want you to see these gems—we will pay all expenses for you to see them.

Our Proposition—We will send you either rings or stud illustrated—by express C. O. D. all charges **prepaid**—with privilege of examination. If you like it, pay the express man—if you don't, return it to him and it won't cost you a cent. Fair proposition, isn't it? All mounted in solid gold, diamond mountings. ☞ **Send for Booklet.**

WHITE VALLEY GEM CO.
902 HOLLIDAY BUILDING, INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

That Unwrapped Roll

of toilet-tissue accumulates dust and irritating elements from the time it leaves the factory till it reaches your home, but you will find that

Sani-Tissue

is the one hygienic toilet paper, wrapped by machinery in dust-proof parchment paper and packed in germ-proof boxes; care has made it sanitary and hygienic.

The solution of Canada Balsam, with which the paper is processed, gives a soothing, healing quality to the soft, cloth-like fabric.

10 cents East and 15 cents West of the Mississippi.

The finest Toilet-Tissues come from the

Scott Paper Co. 639 Glenwood Ave. Philadelphia

A sample packet free on request. Send Dealer's name.

Story of the Pay Envelope

Whether young or old, if you're untrained, your pay envelope will tell the same old story—skimping along on a small salary—living expenses advancing year by year—no hopes of a raise—Why? Because you lack the *training* that makes promotion sure.

Training makes the difference in men and in salaries. The untrained man of sixty, in spite of his years of service, can earn no more at a common job than the untrained youth beside him.

The American School of Correspondence trains men to fill well-paid positions in business and engineering. If you want to get ahead—to get bigger pay—check, in the coupon below, the position you want to hold—and mail today.

The coupon will bring *no agent*—we employ none; it will bring specific information and sound advice. Tell us frankly your condition—your ambitions—and let us show you how to get a better position and better pay.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE
CHICAGO, U. S. A.

FREE INFORMATION COUPON

American School of Correspondence:
Please send me your Bulletin and advise me how I can qualify for position marked "X."

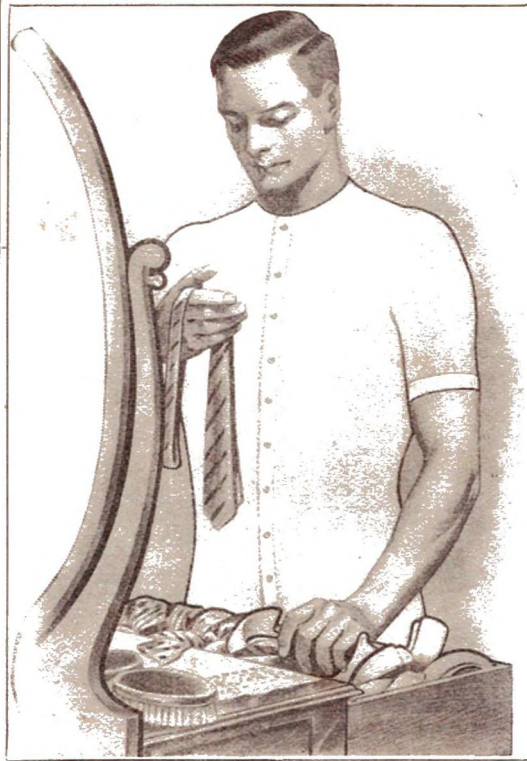
....Book-keeper	....Draftsman
....Stenographer	....Architect
....Accountant	....Civil Engineer
....Cost Accountant	....Electrical Engineer
....Systematizer	....Mechanical Engineer
....Cert'f'd Public Acc'nt	....Sanitary Engineer
....Auditor	....Steam Engineer
....Business Manager	....Fire Insurance Eng'r
....Commercial Law	....College Preparatory

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

OCCUPATION.....

Argosy, 4-'10



DON'T BE FOOLED

into buying something purported to be "just as good," because there is only one genuine

"COOPER'S"

Spring Needle Derby Ribbed underwear for men. Others use the name and represent themselves as manufacturers of Cooper's, because Cooper's is the standard of perfection and because Cooper's gives most wear, most comfort and most satisfaction. Get the genuine. Try a suit of Silk Lisle for spring. Write us for Booklet of particulars and liberal samples.

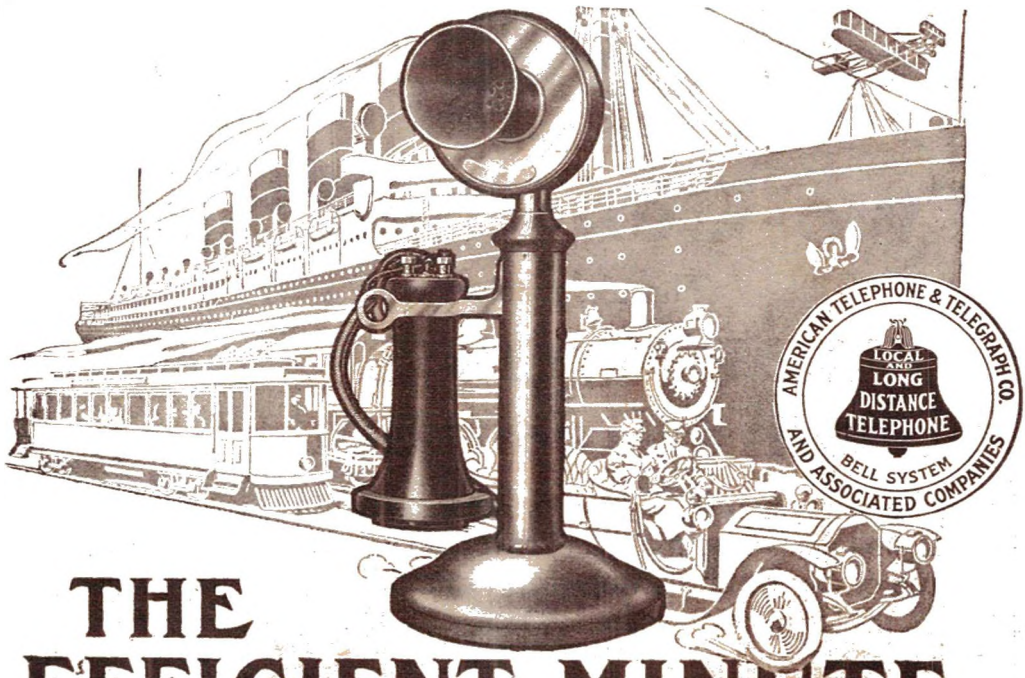
COOPER MFG. CO.
Bennington, Vt.

Sole manufacturers of a new "Gauzrib" fabric for women. **Tell your wife.**

A stomach builder.

Of course, Pape's Diapepsin *really does* relieve your indigestion quickly. Misery making gas, heartburn, and all stomach distress go at once. And, in addition, it builds up your weakened stomach. Large case at druggists, 50c.

Upset? Pape's Diapepsin will put you on your feet



THE EFFICIENT MINUTE

We have speeded up our ships and railways; we have made rapid transit more and more rapid; we have developed a mile a minute in the air and much faster in an automobile.

But the Bell Telephone is quickest of all. It is *instantaneous.* No weeks or days or minutes wasted in waiting for somebody to go and come; no waiting for an answer.

It is the most effective agency for making minutes more useful, more efficient.

In almost every field of work men are accomplishing more in less time with the Bell Telephone than they could without it. They can talk with more people, near and far; they can keep the run of more details; they can buy or sell more goods, and to better advantage; they can be active in more affairs.

The Bell Telephone has placed a new and higher value upon the minute—for everybody. It has done this by means of One Policy, One System, and Universal Service.

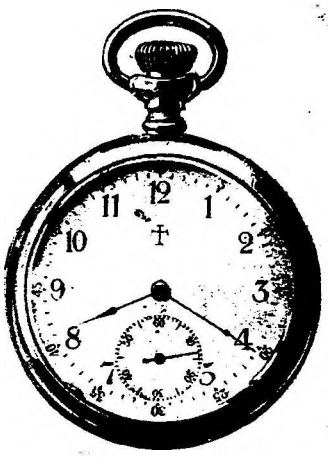
Bell Long Distance Telephone service not only gives an added value to a man's minutes—it accomplishes business results which would be absolutely impossible without it. Every Bell Telephone is the Center of the System.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

Ingersoll-Trenton

The elite Watch for critical users; an accurate timer jewelled with seven jewels and beautifully cased.

The INGERSOLL-TRENTON solves the watch-problem for the man who wants to be told the exact time by a handsome and honestly-built watch which he can buy at a moderate price.



Every Ingersoll-Trenton *watch* is enclosed in an original Ingersoll-Trenton *case* and *time-tested* at the factory before shipment; watch, case and time-keeping—*all three*—are guaranteed by the *same maker*. This fact is of the utmost importance to the buyer and is the *only instance* of the kind in the history of watchmaking.

The Ingersoll-Trenton rivals in accuracy *any other high-grade watch*. It is sold by 6,000 responsible jewelers at a factory-fixed price which pleases the purchaser and puzzles other watchmakers who make their product in smaller quantities, employ expensive and (sometimes) unscrupulous selling-methods, and are obliged thereby to make the watch-buyer pay unnecessary and fictitious prices.

Here are the Ingersoll-Trenton prices:

$5 in solid nickel case

$7 in 10-year gold-filled case

$9 in 20-year gold-filled case

Each watch fitted at Friction-points with seven ruby, sapphire and garnet jewels. The popularity of the Ingersoll-Trenton is sweeping the country.

The Widely-known *Ingersoll* Models

The famous Ingersoll *Dollar* Watch (together with the other Ingersoll models at $1.50 and $2) has turned the watch-world upside-down and made millions of people carry watches who never carried them before. More than *seventeen millions* of these watches have been sold. *Twelve thousand* are now being sold every day in the week. 60,000 Dealers sell them.

Ingersoll watches tick everywhere—tick truly and tell time. Ask anywhere for an Ingersoll; the dealer will know exactly what you mean.

We have published a little book, bound in an embossed cover. It contains *five facts* worth *five dollars* to anyone who is ever going to buy another watch. The title of this book is *"How to Judge a Watch."* What is your address? We would like to send you a copy with our compliments.

Robt. H. Ingersoll & Bro. **46 Frankel Bldg., New York City**