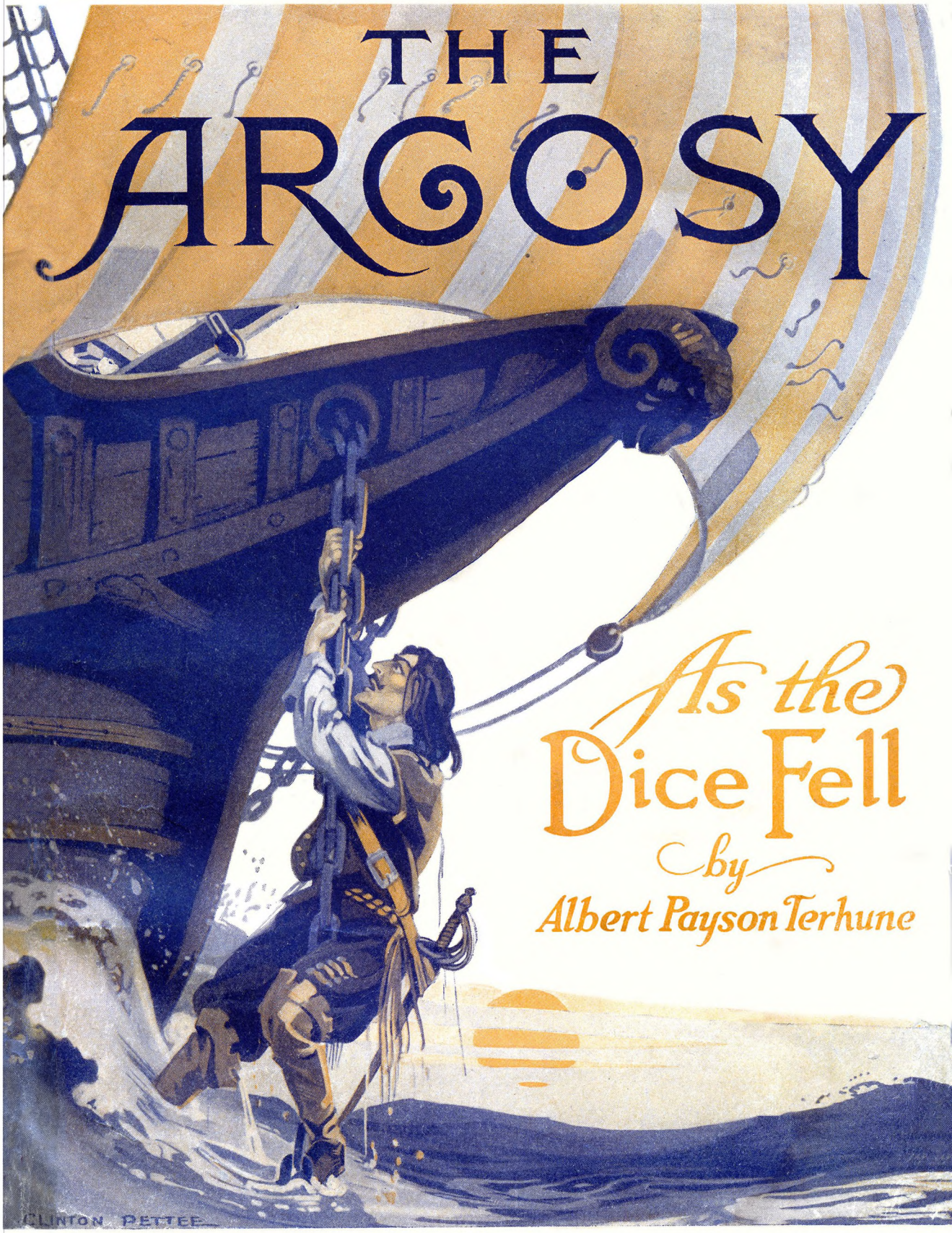
DON'T MISS "BETWEEN TWO ALIBIS"

APRIL, 1912

THE ARGOSY



As the Dice Fell

by

Albert Payson Terhune

THE ARGOSY

APRIL, 1912

APRIL THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY NEW YORK AND LONDON 10 CENTS

The Latest Style of Beauty

The latest style of beauty is the *natural complexion* style, and it is acquired by the use of PEARS' SOAP.

It is a revival of the very charming fashion of a former time, when the dainty pink and white bloom of youthful loveliness remained with a woman from girlhood to old age.

It was in the service of natural complexional beauty that

Pears

was invented more than a hundred and twenty years ago.

How efficiently it has fulfilled its beautifying mission is known all over the world, wherever real beauty of complexion is appreciated. Avoid common soaps and artificialities, and use Pears if you want skin beauty.

Pears is all-potent for refining and beautifying the skin, and securing the charm of a lovely complexion.

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

Caruso

Melba

Farrar

Tetrazzini

Scotti

Gadski

Sembrich

Homer

Schumann-Heink

Amato

Sammarco

WHERE a comparatively few years ago grand opera was a luxury for the select few, millions now enjoy it every day in their own homes on the Victor.

This wonderful instrument not only brings to you the masterpieces of opera, but they are rendered by the selfsame artists who are captivating hosts of opera enthusiasts in the leading opera houses—the world's greatest artists who make records only for the Victor.

And the next moment you can be listening to the gems of song from the sparkling musical comedies, or being entertained by the leading fun-makers.

It is only a step from grand opera and the classical to the lighter forms of music, for the Victor is wonderfully versatile and changes at will from grand opera to ragtime, from minstrel show to sacred music, from vocal selections to instrumental numbers; the very music you like best at the very time you want to hear it.

Victor-Victrolas
$15 to $200

Victor-Victrola

Victors
$10 to $100

Any Victor dealer in any city in the world will gladly play any Victor music you wish to hear and demonstrate to you the wonderful Victor-Victrola.

Victor-Victrola IV, $15
Oak

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Victor Talking Machine Co.
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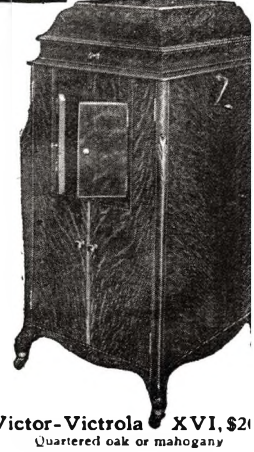
Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors.

New Victor Records are on sale
at all dealers on the 28th of each month



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Quartered oak or mahogany

"You'd better not buy less than half-a-dozen!"

BECAUSE your family will enjoy this perfect soup so well, you are likely to find yourself suddenly without it some fine day just at dinner hour with the stores closed and everybody clamoring for

Campbell's OX TAIL SOUP

And no wonder they all like it so well.

The rich stock is made from fresh selected ox tails most daintily prepared. And this nourishing broth—combined with whole-tomato purée—contains, beside the meaty marrowy joints, diced vegetables, barley, celery and herbs, all flavored delicately with dry Spanish sherry of our own importation.

There never was a more satisfying soup. And we make 20 others just as good. Try them all.

There was a young lady named Kitty
Who lived in great style in the city
She said "*Campbell's* fare
Is so tasty and rare
To miss it one day is a pity!"

21 kinds 10c a can

Asparagus	Clam Chowder	Pea
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Celery	Mock Turtle	Tomato
Chicken	Mulligatawny	Tomato-Okra
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Clam Bouillon	Ox Tail	Vermicelli-Tomato

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The Argosy for April

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FIVE SERIAL STORIES

ONE NOVELETTE

SEVEN SHORT STORIES

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By SEWARD W. HOPKINS

A thrilling castaway story of the Indian Ocean region, published complete in 39 chapters.

"The Lure of the Nile"

By ELBERT D. WIGGIN

A new serial of certain amazing experiences in Africa.

"The Disappearance of Hodge"

By JOHN S. BRACKETT

A novelette, concerning which there will be a special note in the Log-Book.

"The Hawkins Relapse"

By EDGAR FRANKLIN

Another new serial which will please the amateur inventor's friends and confound his enemies by riveting their attention.

"THAT OUTFIELD FLY" is the title of the May baseball story, by a new writer.

ISSUED MONTHLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E.C., London

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President. RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer.

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May Argosy Forms Close March 23d.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS DEPARTMENT

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

"A New Force In Business" is a booklet that tells how to advertise successfully in the classified departments of the Munsey Publications. Mailed anywhere on request.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

RESIDENT MANAGERS WANTED TO HANDLE THE quick-selling S. & H. Hand Vacuum Cleaner in exclusive territories. Only high caliber men who can earn big salaries need apply. Retails at $5.00, but does the work of most $25.00 models. If you are a born salesman, you can make big money quickly. Write to-day for our unique selling plan and ads, or send $2.50 for agents' sample. If model not as expected, return at our expense and get your money back. S. & H. Mfg. Co., 86 Church Street, New York.

HAVE YOU MONEY TO MAKE MONEY? We want hustling agents and general agents, with from $5 to $50 capital. We give exclusive city or State agency and send samples to every telephone user. All you will have to do is call and sale is made. Four cents, stamps, brings sample and particulars. Positively no postals answered. Rellim Auto. Mfg. Co., 247 W. 125th St., New York.

PLACE ON TRIAL—MAKE $2 EVERY HOUR. Simple, marvellous, labor-saving machine solves nasty scrubbing and mopping problem. "Made $6 first 30 minutes," writes James, Wis. "Placed machines on trial—made $20 first day," Cole, Ind. Something new—unheard of—astonishes everyone. Scrubs, cleans, dries floors, linoleums; abolishes old-style brushes, hands disfiguring mops; no putting hands in water; self-feeding, drying, sudsing; child of 12 can operate; weighs 5 pounds. "Sold 75 in 10 days," writes Hull, Kans. 100% profit. Cinch territory now. Credit given. Investigation costs nothing. Sanitary Supply Co., Box 413, Station F, Toledo, Ohio.

FREE SAMPLE — SEND 2c (MAILING COST). The only combined Anti-Splasher and Charcoal Water Filter on the market. No competition. Patented 1911. Only sold by agents; positively not in stores. Retails 25c; 200% profit. Renewal sales of Charcoal great source of revenue. C. P. Shinn, 93 Reade St., New York.

NEW SUIT OFFER. Send name and address for wonderful suit offer and *outfit* to start, samples, styles, etc. We want live agents. Can make $1,000 to $2,000 a year. All business your territory turned over to you. *We pay all express charges.* Only one suit offer in your town. If you want a suit *write quick* before someone else gets the prize. Paragon Tailoring Co., Dept. 15, Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS—BIG PROFITS. Brandt's Patented Automatic Razor Stropper, automatically puts a perfect edge on any razor, old style or safety. Retails at $2. Big seller. Every man wants one. Write quickly for terms, prices and territory. G. Brandt Cutlery Co., 42 Hudson St., New York City.

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE WANTED IN EACH TOWN to sell our underwear, hosiery, neckties, and sweaters direct to wearer on commission. Profitable opportunity with permanent future because every article is guaranteed satisfactory or money refunded. Write for Spring and Summer catalogue. Steadfast Mills, 24 Courtland St., Cohoes, N. Y.

POCKET TOOL KIT.—Forty-seven perfect, practical, splendid tools, in handsome, nickeled case, for pocket, desk, home, automobile. All fine steel. A 20th Century marvel. Made on honor, *sold on guarantee.* Money refunded if not satisfied. All for $1. Remit today. L. E. B. Sales Co., 115 Broadway, New York. *Agents wanted.*

AGENTS make big money selling our new gold letters for office windows, store fronts, and glass signs. Any one can put them on. Write today for free sample and full particulars. Metallic Sign Letter Co., 409 N. Clark St., Chicago.

SALESMEN TO SELL SUN TYPEWRITERS. Exclusive territory to right parties. Standard machine; moderate price. Sells itself and sells to others. Write for catalogue and terms. Sun Typewriter Co., 317 Broadway, N. Y.

AGENTS—HANDKERCHIEFS, DRESS GOODS. Carleton made $8 one afternoon; Mrs. Bosworth $25 in two days. Free Samples. Credit. Stamp brings particulars. Freeport Mfg. Company, 38 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS CAN EASILY MAKE $10.00 A DAY selling our Gold Window Letters, Novelty Signs, and Changeable Signs. Enormous demand. Merchants must have them. Catalogue free. Sullivan Co., 1233 W. Van Buren St., Chicago.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

WANTED — AGENTS TO SELL PRINTERS, ENGINEERS, MOTORMEN, anybody who wants clean hands. *Vanco*, the Perfect Hand Soap and Household Cleanser. Let anybody try a sample and you make a quick sale. Add twelve dollars per week easily to your income. We want hustling representatives in every shop. Enclose ten cents in stamps for full-size can and particulars. Address Box D, The J. T. Robertson Company, Manchester, Conn.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING BIG? We have a great, quick-selling, large-commission, premium proposition. Cash sales. No deliveries. Permanent work. Big returns. Just the thing a live canvasser likes to handle. Write today for full particulars to Current Literature, 139 W. 29th St., N. Y.

WANTED—ONE GOOD MAN IN EACH TOWN to take orders for men's tailoring. Beautiful styles, very low prices; *orders come easy.* High class permanent business; fine profits; $10 a day and up. No money or experience needed. We ship on approval, express prepaid, and *guarantee perfect fit.* Write for free sample outfit and *inside price on suit for yourself.* Banner Tailoring Co., Dept. 369, Chicago.

AGENTS—DOESN'T $10 TO $20 A DAY APPEAL TO YOU? That's what many of our agents make handling the Duplexo Vacuum Cleaner. Light, double suction; two years' guarantee; a wonder. Write today for territory, terms, etc. Duplexo Co., 101 South 5th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

LIVE AGENTS WANTED—HUSTLERS TO HANDLE our attractive 1912 combination packages of soap and toilet articles with valuable premiums. One Michigan agent made $65.00 in 47 hours; another $21.00 in 8 hours; another $22.50 in 10 hours. Write today. Davis Soap Works, 202 Davis Building, Chicago, Illinois.

AGENTS WANTED to sell "Kwicksharp," the only automatic knife sharpener and scissors grinder. 100% profit. Needed in every household. Sells on sight. No competition. Exclusive territory. A. C. Decker, 37 E. 28th St., N.Y.C.

AGENTS: MALE—FEMALE. I will start you in a permanent business showing $5.00 to $10.00 a day clear profit, handling the fastest selling household necessity manufactured. Whole or part time required. Mail order system free. Sworn statements of $100.00 per week profit. Write for plan. J. E. Golden, 34 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

AGENTS—Men and women to sell smart, quick-selling line of Dress Goods and Waistings. Liberal commissions; exclusive territory. Good money for those who mean business. Address Desk B. Coapa Mill, 78 Grand St., N. Y. City.

AGENTS—$50 WEEKLY. We manufacture the best needle case made; a wonderful seller; 200% to 500% profit; talking unnecessary; our "Trust Scheme" Envelopes do the work; general agents can make $100 weekly; particulars free, or send 10c for a 25c sample containing 115 needles. Paty Needle Co., 200 Union Sq., Somerville, Mass.

AGENTS—Best seller, biggest profits. Absolutely new diagonal stroke razor stropper. Blade moves up and down, strop moves back and forth. Puts a perfect edge on all ordinary and safety razors. Money back guarantee. Every call a sale. Write for territory. S. D. Kanner, 552 B'way, N. Y.

AGENTS—$6 A DAY should be easily made selling our Non-Alcoholic Flavors, Perfumes, Toilet Preparations. Quick sellers. Good repeaters. Experience unnecessary. Fine sample case furnished to workers. Be first in your territory. Write quick—*now.* American Products Co., 6089 Sycamore St., Cincinnati, Ohio.

JUST OUT! Eveready Cigar Lighter; neatest, surest at any price; sells 35c. Go like wild-fire! Also Matchless Gas Lighter and Self-Lighting Mantle. Ask for our selling plan. National Lighter Co., 110 W. 34th St., New York.

AGENTS: SEND FOR FREE BOOKLET, inside information on the agency business. Filled with money-making plans. Pointers and experience of thousands of successful agents. Address J. M. Finch, 1107 3rd St., Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED
—Continued

WIN NEXT $1,200. WE TELL YOU HOW. $40,000 already won by ten inexperienced people. Stoneman received $1,200 one month, $15,000 to date. Korstad $2,200 in two weeks; Schleicher $195 first twelve hours. Strange invention startles world. Gives every home a bathroom with hot and cold running water for $6.50. Abolishes plumbing, waterworks. Self-heating. Little wonder Hart sold sixteen in three hours, $5,000 to date; Lodewick seventeen first day. Credit given. Investigate to-day. Beat others to exclusive sale. Means fortune. ALLEN MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 3383 Allen Bldg., Toledo, Ohio.

AGENTS—MALE AND FEMALE—HERE'S A CHANCE for you to build up a permanent business in your own town, which will pay you a big income, selling our Orange-Flavored Sugar. Makes a dandy drink. Send 15c for sample can and particulars. KWENCH-A-THIRST CO., 24-26 Harrison Street, New York City.

AGENTS—No-Splash Water Filters with bumpers, $4.50 gross; without bumper, $2.50 gross. New gas lighter, $1.50 per dozen. Clothes sprinkler, $6 gross. Write for new circular. N. E. Inc. Light Co., 262 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.

"ALCA," THE FAMOUS $6.00 VACUUM CLEANER, seeks a few more willing agents to show its merits, and promises prosperity and success in return. Write for gilt-edge proposition. Alca Co., 366 W. 50th St., Dept. A, New York.

$100 MONTHLY AND EXPENSES TO TRUSTWORTHY MEN AND WOMEN to travel and distribute samples; big manufacturer. Steady work. S. SCHEFFER, Treas., TW, Chicago.

RAINCOATS FROM MAKER TO WEARER AT MANUFACTURER'S PRICES. Elegant future for hustling agents. New proposition. Interesting particulars. Free samples. REGAL RAINCOAT CO., Dept. A, 5-7 E. 16th St., New York.

PHOTO PILLOW TOPS, Portraits, Frames, Sheet Pictures and Photo Plates at very lowest prices. Rejects credited. Prompt shipments. Samples and cat. free. 30 days' credit. Experience unnecessary. Jas. C. Bailey Co., Desk M, Chicago.

AGENT'S OUTFIT FREE. QUICK PROFITS. BEST Handkerchiefs, Dress Goods and Fancy Goods on the market. Large Manufacturer. Particulars for stamp. MARICOPA MFG. CO., 82 Water St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS—One-piece "Oversuit"—Does away with overalls; especially useful to auto owners, chauffeurs, aviators, railroad men, mechanics, market men, expressmen, etc. Write for terms and samples. ROBBINS & LAWRENCE, 205A Huntington Chambers, Boston, Mass.

A 400% PROFIT. Gliding Casters. Anyone can attach. Sell many sets first visit 10c set. Cost 3c. Won't scratch floors. Save carpets, furniture, in homes, hotels—everywhere. Samples 4c. Evergrip Co., Dept. C, 22 Warren St., N. Y.

LIVE AGENTS WANTED. A permanent income selling Koeth Kombination Kit, 15 tools in one. Finest Tool Steel, Guaranteed. Big Profits. Wonderful Seller. Exclusive Territory. Send for Free Sample Offer and Terms. CURRIER-KOETH MFG. CO., 56 West St., Coudersport, Pa.

SELLS LIKE HOT CAKES; BIG PROFITS; NEW IRONING-WAX perfumes clothes with violet perfume. Nothing like it. Four cents brings particulars for free goods. M. B. R. MANUFACTURERS, 13M Water Street, New York.

Free sample goes with first letter. Something new. Every firm wants it. Orders from $1 to $100. Nice, pleasant business. Big demand everywhere. Write at once for free sample and particulars. Metallic Sales Co., 409 N. Clark St., Chicago.

AGENTS, BOTH SEXES, WE MANUFACTURE and control Climax, smokeless, odorless and never-burn Fry Pan. Entirely new. Exclusive territory. A. CONNOLLY MFG. CO., 123 Liberty St., New York.

HELP WANTED

WANTED—Active man in each locality. To join this Society. Sick, accident, death benefits. And introduce our Memberships. Spare time to start. $50 to $300 a month. Write for plans. Box SB-293, Covington, Ky.

BE A DETECTIVE—Earn from $150.00 to $300.00 per month; travel over the world. Write C. T. LUDWIG, 1271 Searritt Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

JEWELRY AND PRECIOUS STONES

GET A SOUVENIR OF THE GREAT PANAMA CANAL. Beautiful Jewel Stones from the bottom of the Panama Canal cut and polished ready for mounting on scarf-pins, cuff-links, etc., sent prepaid for $1.00; stones for hat-pins and belt-buckles for $1.25. Post-card views of the canal and tropical life, 10c. PANAMA GEM AND CURIO COLLECTORS, Ancon, Canal Zone, Panama.

AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED
—Continued

GREAT SUIT OFFER. Write us for *startling offer* on a suit for yourself, and *outfit* of samples, styles, etc. Only one suit offer in your town. We want *you* for agents so we can turn over all orders in territory to you. You get big business and easy money. Even new agents make $40 a week. If you want *great suit offer* write *today* or someone may get in first. American Woolen Mills Co., Dept. 521, Chicago.

AGENTS WANTED EVERYWHERE—New novelty in jewelry—7 in 1 scarfpin, each day of week; seven superb stones; match any color tie; sells on sight. Write today for full particulars. E. C. WEEKS, 3344 Boston, Mass.

YOU CAN MAKE $$$$$ AS OUR GENERAL OR LOCAL AGENT. Household necessity; saves 80%. Permanent business; exclusive territory; big profit; free sample. PITKIN, 14 Redd St., Newark, New York.

EARN MORE MONEY EASY. Sell Guaranteed Photo Pocket Cutlery. Scientifically tempered. Take big orders from lodges, manufacturers, individuals. Big profits. Write quick. CANTON CUTLERY CO., Dept. C-41, Canton, Ohio.

AGENTS—WE MANUFACTURE OVER 500 NEWLY patented household and office specialties; also cutlery. Big profits. Samples best sellers and catalog free. GEO. EDGREN CO., Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU—Big money in photo reproducing. Beautiful dainty work. Easily done at home. Write for full information. KALOS MFG. CO., 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Mass.

LARGE PROFITS. Manufacture "Barley Crisps," new confection, cost 1c to make. Sell like hot cakes for 5c. Machine and instructions, prepaid, $7.50. Send 10c for sample and literature. Barley Crisp Co., 1016 Howard St., San Francisco, Calif.

AGENTS—PORTRAITS 35c, FRAMES 15c, SHEET PICTURES 1c, Stereoscopes 25c, Views 1c. 30 days' credit. *Samples and Catalog Free.* CONSOLIDATED PORTRAIT CO., Dept. 1074, 1027 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS—WANTED, LADIES TO SELL OUR BEAUTIFUL SILK PETTICOATS, direct from factory. Generous terms. Can earn $25.00 weekly. Particulars free. P. & B. SKIRT CO., Dept. 11, Lynn, Mass.

AUTOMATIC TEA-KETTLE COVER; sells in every kitchen at 25c; aluminum, won't rust, prevents scalds; 100% profit; agent's sample 15c. W. D. CRAM, Box 7704, Haverhill, Mass.

SALESMEN EASILY MAKE $300 MONTHLY selling our Dry Chemical Fire Extinguisher. 500% profit. Buyers everywhere. Exclusive territory given. District managers wanted. Get our proposition. UNITED MFG. CO., 1102 Jefferson, Toledo, O.

I WILL START YOU EARNING $4 DAILY AT HOME in spare time, silvering mirrors. No capital. Anyone can do the work. Send for free instructive booklet, giving plans of operation. G. F. REDMOND, Dept. B, Boston, Mass.

AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY COUNTY to sell the Transparent Handle Pocket Knife. Big commission paid. From $75 to $300 a month can be made. Write for terms. NOVELTY CUTLERY CO., No. 277 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

HERE'S THE GREATEST OFFER MADE. Send $1.50. Get two guaranteed razors. Use 30 days. If satisfactory, return one. Otherwise return both, and get your money back. All risk ours. ROTHAM CO., West Lynn, Mass.

GOOD PROFIT SELLING "CLEAN-PAW." THE BEST hand soap known. Ten cents brings sample and particulars. Increase your income. Write now. CLEAN-PAW CO., 33 Newbury Street, Worcester, Mass.

FOR THE HOME

Suede Leather Pillow Covers, two-color, fringed and laced, 28x28 inches, $2.75 C.O.D. Brown and tan, wine and olive, red and gray, crimson and steel, chocolate and purple; college colors. Geo. H. Griswold Co., Norwood, Mass.

FOR THE LAME

THE PERFECTION EXTENSION SHOE for any person with one short limb. No more unsightly cork soles, irons, etc., needed. Worn with ready made shoes. Shipped on trial. Write for booklet. HENRY R. LOTZ, 313 Third Ave., N. Y.

FOR WOMEN

LADIES, MAKE SUPPORTERS, $12 PER HUNDRED; no canvassing; material furnished; stamped envelope for particulars. WABASH SUPPLY CO., Dept. A-393, Chicago.

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$50 WEEKLY PROFIT—Your Opportunity—Act Now. Be a "one minute" post-card photographer. New process. No experience. No canvassing. Work all or spare time—travel or at home. Mandel Post Card Machine makes photos direct on post-cards without using plates or films. Takes, finishes and delivers 3 photos a minute, right on the spot. Wonderful invention. Tremendous money-making opportunities everywhere. 500% profit and no expense. Start this $2000 to $5000 business of your own on a total investment of only $26. Write today for particulars, free—learn more about this 6-lb. "portable post-card gallery." CHICAGO FERROTYPE Co., Dept. 115, Chicago, Ill.

MANAGERS—WE WANT A MAN WITH $150 TO INVEST, that has some brains, to represent us for the best, dry fire extinguisher ever made. Sells on sight. Makes $75 to $100 weekly for the right man. No chances to take. We'll refund your money if you don't sell goods in thirty days. Write for territory. WHEELER MANUFACTURING COMPANY, Room 5060, Monolith Building, New York.

CONDUCT A "CANDY KITCHEN"! Clear $10 to $25 daily. Very limited capital required. We teach you the business. Send for particulars. KENNON & Co., 148 W. Ontario St., Dept. B, Chicago.

AUTOS AND MOTORCYCLES

AUTOMOBILES $50 UP. Motorcycles $20 up. Guaranteed for one year, shipped freight prepaid. Largest stock, lowest prices in the world. KING AUTOMOBILE BROKER, Department "A," 217 West 125th St., N. Y. C.

1912 MODELS of the world-famous M-M motorcycles now ready. Have more good points than all others. Perfectly controlled, durable, speedy and comfortable. Send postal today for literature. Agents wanted in open territory. AMERICAN MFG. Co., Brockton, Mass.

MOTORCYCLES—EASY TERMS, EVERY MAKE—NEW and second hand, $20 up. Some exceptional bargains. Every machine in perfect running order and guaranteed for one year. Shipments upon receipt of first payment. Free trial allowed. Write for price list of fifty machines. Agents wanted for unoccupied territory. Will trade. BOYD MOTOR Co., 228 Stanhope Street, Boston, Mass.

STAMPS AND RARE COINS

OLD COINS BOUGHT AND SOLD. Buying Catalogue 10 cents. New 55-page 1912 Selling Catalogue to *collectors only* "free." WILLIAM HESSLEIN, Malley Building, New Haven, Conn.

$7.75 paid for *rare* date 1853 Quarters. $20 for a $¼. Keep all money dated before 1884, and send 10c at once for New Illustrated Coin Value Book, 4x7. It may mean your fortune. Clark & Co., Coin Dealers, Dept. 34, Le Roy, N. Y.

RAZORS AND SAFETY RAZOR BLADES

SAFETY RAZOR BLADES STERILIZED AND SHARPENED better than new; 2 cts. each. Five years' success. Send for blade box and circular. ELECTRO STROPPING Co., 124 Shelby St., Detroit, Mich.

SPECIAL. Why pay $5.00 for a safety razor, when you can buy a Comet with 3 blades for 50 cents? Send for catalogue. Agents wanted. W. & B. RAZOR SALES Co., 226 E. Mill Street, Akron, Ohio.

GAMES AND ENTERTAINMENTS

PLAYS, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Minstrel Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Musical Pieces, Entertainments, Make Up Goods. Large Catalog Free. T. S. Denison & Co., Dept. 43, Chicago.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

WANTED: MOTION PICTURE PLAY WRITERS. You can write a picture play. Great demand. Big pay. Easy to learn. We'll teach you. Send address. UNITED PICTURE PLAY ASSOCIATION, San Francisco.

MOTION PICTURE PLAYS WANTED. You can write them. We teach you by mail. No experience needed. Big demand and good pay. Details free. ASSOCIATED MOTION PICTURE SCHOOLS, 611 Sheridan Rd., Chicago.

BUSINESS & CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

LEARN STORY WRITING. Stories bring big money. By our method of instruction, one with an average education can learn. Instruction by mail. Payments liberal. Cost low. Utilize your spare time in a profitable, pleasant and enjoyable manner. Write for booklet 15. INTERCONTINENTAL UNIVERSITY, Washington, D. C.

LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE WANTED. Splendid income assured right man to act as our representative after learning our business thoroughly by mail. Former experience unnecessary. All we require is honesty, ability, ambition and willingness to learn a lucrative business. No soliciting or traveling. This is an exceptional opportunity for a man in your section to get into a big paying business without capital and become independent for life. Write at once for full particulars. Address E. R. MARDEN, Pres. The National Co-Operative Real Estate Company, L345 Marden Bldg., Washington, D. C.

GOVERNMENT RAILWAY MAIL, Departmental Clerk, Bookkeeper, examinations everywhere soon. Get prepared by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Write *now* for free booklet. Patterson Civil Service School, Box O, Rochester, N. Y.

WANTED—RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS—Average $90.00 month. Examinations everywhere May 4th. Write for sample questions and schedule showing places. FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. W-1, Rochester, N. Y.

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FREE ILLUSTRATED BOOK TELLS ABOUT OVER 360,000 protected positions in U. S. service. More than 40,000 vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Easy to get. Just ask for booklet A18. No obligation. EARL HOPKINS, Washington, D. C.

OUR DOLLAR COURSE IN SIGN AND SHOW-CARD WRITING is complete. Money at your finger-tips, constantly traveling or local. Write today. Don't wait. S. M. ERRAR, Red Wing, Minnesota.

THE SCHOOL OF RAILWAY SIGNALING, UTICA, N. Y., offers by correspondence a complete course in *Signal Engineering* and special short courses. Send for catalog J.

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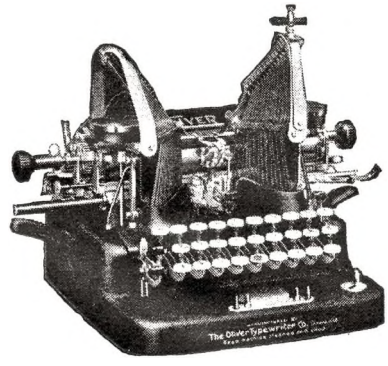

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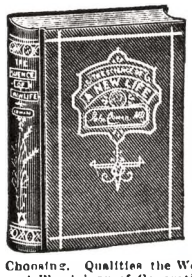

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXIX APRIL, 1912. No. 1

As the Dice Fell

by

Albert Payson Terhune

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

I FALL IN WITH TROUBLE.

I GLOWERED on him with a look that has often been imposed upon more warlike men than he, but he withstood my glare, and replied to it with something very like a grin.

"Master Gordon Clyde," quoth he, "the tale you have told me savors overmuch of the stage play for truth. Wherefore I made bold to laugh. And your scowl rebukes me right properly. Yet I meant no offense."

"No?" I snarled. "In other words, you call me liar and then vow you meant no ill. England may have changed much since I left it for the Italian wars, but I have not changed. So I beseech you to lead the way to the nearest bit of ground that will afford elbow room for sword-play."

"Is this a challenge?" he scoffed.

"'Tis the sequel among all men of honor when lie hath been passed," retorted I.

Again he laughed, lounging back on the ale-house settle and looking up at me in unfeigned amusement.

"Heigho!" he said. "Here be I, Sir Geoffrey Whitson, privy councilor to His Most Christian Majesty King James, and on my way to be lord chancellor of all England. And here be you, Gordon Clyde, down-at-heels soldier of fortune, defying me to mortal combat. I have all to lose and naught to gain. You have naught to lose and the rope to gain for breaking the king's edict against dueling. The fight you press upon me is no fair one. 'Tis as though I staked a gold guinea against a chipped penny."

"You will not fight me?" I asked.

"I assuredly will not," he yawned, making as though to rise.

"One moment!" I begged him humbly. "I arrived but to-day in London, penniless. The clothes I stand in, my sword, and my honor are all I own on earth. I had thought I was richer. I—"

"If the gift of a handful of guineas—" began Whitson in lazy contempt, as he reached for his purse; but I stayed him with a gesture.

"I had thought I was richer by one

friend," I resumed. "When I accosted you on Fleet Street here, a half-hour agone, it was with real joy that chance had thrown me into contact again with an old school friend. And I bade you into this tavern that we might quaff a cup of ale for old days' sake. 'Twas not in the hope of bettering my fortunes. Yet, when you asked of my adventures in the foreign wars, and when I made bold to relate to you one of the simpler of them, you laughed at me as at a buffoon. You have doubted my word. You have from the first, to-day, treated me as though I were some drunken rustic clown and you a court noble. And now—"

"And now," he yawned, "I weary of the clown's antics, and wish to be seen no longer in the company of a disreputable swashbuckler. And so, good day."

As he rose I picked up the tankard of ale at my hand and tossed its foamy contents in his face.

Down over his curled and perfumed hair cascaded the torrent of ale. Yes, and down over his smoke-gray velvet mantle, with its shell-pink satin lining, and over his rich doublet and his slashed hose.

The fellow was no coward. Now that his scornful superiority was washed away by a cataract of bitter ale, he was quite another man.

Gouging the stinging liquid from out his eyes with one silk gloved hand, he whipped out his rapier with the other and rushed, bellowing, at me like a mad bull. I awaited his onset. Then, with a sharp twist of mine own blade I sent his jeweled rapier flying across the room.

Sheathing my sword I caught Whitson by the ruffled nape of his neck, propelled him gently to the door, and thrust him out into the mud-filled gutter, where, losing his balance, he sprawled full length, to the further detriment of his court clothes.

Swiftly he scrambled to his feet, meanwhile bawling:

"Watch, ho!"

And as swiftly a man who had sat smoking a long pipe in a far corner of the taproom leaped forward, flung an arm about me, dragged me back across the room again and out into another alley by a rear door.

I struggled, but he cried earnestly:

"Run, man! Time enough later to argue. And better to do thy arguing under heaven's clear stars than in the bridewell."

As he spoke the man was ever dragging me along with him down the twilit by-street. He was stout, partly bald, far older than I, and scarce half as strong.

Yet, somehow I suffered myself to be carried along by his very earnestness and vehement fear for my welfare. It is sometimes so, when a man of strong purpose takes sudden control of a situation. Yet, by the time we had traversed a few hundred yards, mine own spirit asserted itself.

"Wait!" I ordered, "I will go no farther. Who are you that you should haul me hither and yon as though I were a prize bullock at a fair?"

Before he answered he paused, listening.

"'Tis safe enough!" he muttered. "We have thrown them off. They will have gone the other way."

"Thrown *whom* off?" I demanded.

"The city watch," he answered, "and such stray denizens of the Fleet Street taverns as may have cared to curry favor with a king's councilor by joining the hue and cry after you."

"After *me?* For what, pray? I did but resent a black insult. And I did it monstrous gently, I think."

"Now, Heaven save us from you in your ruder hours," he said in mock solemnity, "if that be a sample of your gentleness. Listen, sir," he went on more gravely. "If I understood aright from such scraps of your talk with Sir Geoffrey Whitson as chanced to drift to my corner of the room, you are but new returned from the Italian wars?"

"Yes," I made answer. "After eight years of campaigning."

"You left England then," said he, "during Queen Elizabeth's blessed reign? A reign when bold fellows were rewarded, not driven to cringe or starve."

"Have times so changed, then?"

"James sits now on England's throne, as you know. A strong man who swoons at sight of a naked sword and who turns his face away and trembles whenever he must hold blade in hand to administer the accolade to a new knight."

"A king who fears bright steel?" I exclaimed, "And he the son of Mary Queen of Scots!"

"'Tis true. He hates sword-play and soldierships. About him he gathers a few court favorites who feign to hate brawling as much as he, and who cajole and trick him into doing their will in well-nigh all things. The chief of these same favorites is Sir Geoffrey Whitson."

"So? He had ever an eye to his own advancement, even at school."

"And," pursued the stranger, "when he tells the king that you have drawn sword upon him, this England of yours will be too hot to hold you."

"What then," I asked, "of the man who has just saved me—an utter stranger?"

The fellow shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no great love for the court of to-day, nor its courtiers," said he, "and—to be frank with you—I acted also through selfishness. For I was minded to put to you a few questions if you would have the patience and courtesy to reply to them."

I glanced at him in open curiosity. He was stout, as I have said; of full middle age, and clad plainly yet richly in black velvet. I should have taken him for a merchant but for the aspect of his face.

This was no smug merchant's visage, with its domelike forehead and deep, unfathomable eyes, and the myriad thought-lines that crossed and recrossed the calm, florid countenance.

What object could such a man have in rescuing from the noose an obscure adventurer and claiming the privilege of questioning him? What questions could he have to put to me—and why?

For an instant I glanced apprehensively at the black-clad figure moving along beside me in the twilight. For I minded me of a stage-play I had seen by Marlowe (a tavern brawler and a shrewd scrivener withal) called "Dr. Faustus." A play wherein the evil one tempts one *Faustus* to sell his soul.

It was well understood at that time—1606—that such things were quite possible; though nowadays folk are beginning to laugh at such fantastic beliefs. (In another century or so, mayhap, folk will also laugh at witchcraft and at "demoniac possession.")

Yet I shook off the momentary dread. This man's face was as benevolent as it was wise.

"I will gladly answer," I said at last, "what knowledge of mine can serve you?"

CHAPTER II.

I BEHOLD A STRANGE MONSTER.

"FIRST," began the stranger, "would you sate my curiosity as to the scene yonder in the tap-room? I heard but part."

"'Tis simple," said I. "In early days Whitson and I knew each other at school. When he would have been expelled, and perchance jailed for an offense there, I came to his rescue. Later 'twas my sword that saved him from death in a street brawl. So when I met him to-day I thought to find a welcome. He treated me like a dog and—"

"And you paid off the score with usury," my companion laughed. "Man, your temper is peppery."

"When gold is low, honor must run high to make up for it," said I. "Indeed, 'tis for that same cause I find myself here to-night."

"An affair of honor carried you across seas?"

"Why, yes. One that sounds silly enough, I doubt me, in the telling. 'Twas in the Hungary wars a year agone that I met a soldier of fortune like myself. One Forgeron by name. I volunteered for service to enter the enemy's city by night and bear away certain information of use to our general. Ere I could go this Forgeron undertakes the mission. He succeeded and returns to camp, covered with a glory that should have been mine. I was laughed at for a laggard.

"I challenged him. We fought. At the first assault my sword broke at the hilt. I clamored that he either kill me or else wait till I could procure another blade. He said he had no more time to waste in foolish squabbling. And he rode away, leaving me once more a laughing-stock of the whole camp. A month agone I had sure news that he had sailed for England."

"And," broke in the stranger, wonderingly, "you threw over employment and hope of high reputation in the foreign wars—all to hunt down a man you fancied had affronted you?"

"What better object could I have had?" I asked. "Employment is easily found again wherever sharp swords are playing. And reputation is but a bubble at best. But honor is another thing. I came to England to seek mine enemy. And I shall find him, never fear."

We had reached the Strand—as the ill-paved waterside avenue was called, whose mansions and lawns sloped down to the Thames. Beyond us lay the meaner "seafaring quarters," where sailormen foregathered. And thither we were moving. A thought struck me.

"It was surely not to learn my sordid little story," I queried, "that you risked your own freedom by helping me out of yon mess at the ale-house? What are the questions by whose answer I am to help pay for my deliverance?"

He hesitated. Then he said, apologetically:

"I chanced, as I told you, to hear fragments of your talk with Whitson. If I mistake not, you spoke of having wandered in far lands. In lands farther afield than the continent of Europe."

"Why, yes," I made answer. "I roved the sea for a time in a privateer and then in a merchant ship. I touched at Africa and once I sailed even to within a few score leagues of the Americas."

"Passed you the Bermudas?" he asked.

"Aye, and vexed waters they are that surround those isles."

"Is it true," he inquired, "as some do say, that spirits rule those waters, and that monsters do inhabit the Bermudas?"

"As to that," I returned, "I cannot say. Yet I have heard such tales, even though I saw no signs of life there. But the Bermuda waters can scarce be so vexed, I should say, except by spirits."

"And Africa?" he asked eagerly. "Saw you the fabled crocodile while you were there?"

"Several of them," said I, "on the mud banks of the river Nile."

"Then there are really such creatures. And is it true they weep like babes in order to draw compassionate folk near enough to be slain by the creatures?"

"I have heard tell so. It is told as fact among the Egyptians. But I confess I saw no such case."

"And in Africa," he pursued, "saw you or heard you of the strange people whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders? Saw you the anthropophagi, the men that eat each other? Men say the hills in Africa be so tall they touch the heavens. I would fain know the truth of these things and of others like them that I have heard."

"And these," I marveled, "are the idle questions you wished to ask. Perchance you, too, seek to make me the butt of your laughter by drawing me on to tell travelers' tales?"

"No, no!" he protested.

"Because," I went on, "Whitson burst into great guffaws of laughter when I but told him I had seen, near the city of Naples, a mountain that did belch forth fire and smoke from its open crest like an oven. He vowed 'twas not possible. Yet I myself saw it. And when I protested 'twas so, he but laughed the louder."

"I have lived too long," said the stranger, "to be unbelieving of any marvel that this world can produce. Nor is laughter the argument of any save a fool. I do but ask concerning these marvels that when some fool mention of them occur in my plays, and who hears shall laugh, I may tell him what I say is true."

"Your plays?" I echoed. "You speak of stage plays?"

"What else? I have in mind a play of a man who goeth to the Bermudas and there is able to rule the spirits to his will. And I have writ another wherein a blackamoor shall tell of his wild exploits by flood and field and mid the monsters of far Africa. I—"

"A man of your substance," I exclaimed, "to waste his days in petty scribbling? What wealth or fame can such trifling bring? Who honors a scrawler of idle tales and such like trash?"

I spoke in genuine scorn—the scorn of the man of action for the man of thought. But he answered me as though too great to feel my foolish contempt.

"Each man to his own. And the hero may at times stand in need of the scribbler. Just as Gordon Clyde, gallant soldier of fortune, just now deigned to accept help from Will Shakespeare, simple scrawler of plays. And if—"

But I heard no more. With a yell I had sprung from his side. And, sword drawn, I was rushing madly down the darkening street.

We had been nearing the seafaring quarter, where waterside taverns and huts crowd along the wharfs of the Thames, and where ride at moorings the tall ships that ply from London to far ports.

As the stranger and I had strolled along, nearing this section, I had noted several men who turned in, one after another, at the door of a house somewhat larger than its squalid neighbors.

A lighted lanthorn hung above the door. By its glow, I had idly noted a thickset figure that had to me a vaguely familiar air, the figure of a man who was mounting the two low steps that led to the entrance.

As this man passed through the doorway the lanthorn-light touched his face. It was

then that I had shouted and dashed forward. For the face, half disclosed in the flare, was the face of mine enemy.

It was Forgeron, who had bested and flouted me in the foreign wars, and from whom I had never yet been able to wring the satisfaction which should draw the rankling thorn from mine honor.

And now here he was, scarce a hundred feet away, this man I had crossed the Channel to find.

I had expected a long and tedious search for him. I had found him almost at once and by sheer chance. Wherefore, with drawn blade, I rushed toward the house into which he had vanished.

In a few seconds I had cleared the intervening space, well-nigh falling headlong more than once over cobbles and rubbish-heaps, and so gained the house.

Up the two steps I sprang at a bound. Still gripping my sword, I pushed open the door, which yielded readily enough to the pressure of my shoulder and swung shut behind me.

I found myself in a long passageway, at whose farther end was another closed door. From under this door flowed a stream of light, and behind the closed panels came the sound of many voices. The passageway itself was dimly lit by a lanthorn that swung from the raftered ceiling.

Now, I had for years lived and fought in hostile lands where my quick wits and quicker sword-blade alone stood between me and death. I had learned to dodge a trap as cleverly as can any wild animal. And if ever man was rushing into a trap, it was I at that very moment.

Here was I, alone, friendless, helpless, save for my sword. And I was pushing my way into a strange house in a rough quarter of London in pursuit of a man who, from his apparent familiarity with the place, was well at home there and was among friends.

In that day it was no safe thing at best to venture into unknown parts of London after nightfall. And in the case of armed intruders into a house the inmates were apt to kill first and to ask questions afterward.

Had I been in my senses I should have heeded all this, and should have kept clear of a mess that was to alter my whole future.

But what angry man is in his full senses? And the sight of mine enemy had fanned my rage to white-heat.

Into the house I burst. Now, down the passageway I was striding toward that farther door with the light and the many voices behind it.

On I went at top speed. Then, half-way down the passageway, I halted as though a cannon-ball had struck my chest.

There I stood, shaking, my mouth open, my gaze fixed, the sword dangling inert in my loosening grip. For the very first time in all my thirty-five years I was afraid.

Yes. *Afraid!*

For from the shadows of the passageway, where it had been crouching, arose a terrible thing.

It was a monster—a demon. Such a being as I had heard tell of in old wives' tales, but infinitely more horrible than the most daring imagination had ever conceived.

I had heard and I had read about demons; but up to then I had secretly doubted that such things existed. Now I knew.

Slowly from its crouching position on a floor-mat in the passageway arose the thing. How shall I describe it as it appeared before me there in the half light?

It was half naked. Its body was of a coppery brown, and was painted with weird designs in red and blue and yellow.

Such few garments as it wore were of fantastically beaded and fringed wild-beast skins. Growing from the crown of its otherwise shaven head was a tuft of nodding feathers. Its eyes gleamed wickedly through the gloom. In one brown claw it gripped a decorated hatchet, which it raised with a slow, majestic movement, as if to bar my progress.

And I, not ten minutes agone, had been telling Will Shakespeare that I had never actually seen any of the spirits or fiends that were then supposed to people the waste places of the earth.

I stared blankly at the thing, my knees almost knocking together. For a full half-minute we stood thus, we two, in the gloom of the passageway. And the more I stared, the more unearthly the creature seemed. It was like a figment of some fever-dream.

Little by little my amazement permitted me to grasp certain details in its appearance. I saw it was shaped like a man, slender and wiry, yet powerful—yet unbelievingly tall. I myself stand well over six feet in height. Yet this apparition was a full head taller than I.

The features, too, were human, though cast in a mold I had never before seen. The

cheek-bones were high, the nose aquiline, the lips thin. And the coppery cheeks were horribly painted in vivid colors, as were the forehead and chin.

My courage returned to me at last, as it ever does in moments of peril. I was confronted by a monster from the pit. Was I to turn and run—as I might long to do—and ever afterward be ashamed of myself? Or was I to risk certain death and keep mine honor intact by assailing the supernatural thing?

There was but one course open to me. Nerving myself and tightening my grasp upon my sword, I charged upon the creature. Yet I would rather have charged single-handed against a battery of artillery.

CHAPTER III.

I MEET MINE ENEMY.

DOWN the passageway toward the monster I forced myself, blade uplifted. The creature, reading my intent, whirled his gaudy hatchet aloft. In another instant we would clash.

I fell to wondering, even in that tiny space of time, whether the coppery hue of his polished skin meant that he was made wholly of some metal? I had heard of such beings.

Should my first sword-thrust prove his body to be metal, I resolved to cast myself upon him barehanded and seek to wrench apart his copper joints.

Then, even as I sprang, and as he brandished his hatchet, the rear door at the end of the passage was thrown open. A blaze of light from the room beyond struck through the dimness, and for the moment well-nigh blinded me.

I halted and drew back a pace, lest the monster should take advantage of the dazzling light in my face to attack me unprepared.

A man came out of the farther room into the passage. At sight of our belligerent figures he leaped nimbly between us, his hand on his sword-hilt.

"What is this, Aquia?" he rasped, wheeling on the monster.

Then, turning toward me, he went on sternly:

"Who are you? And what mean you by drawing blade on my servant?"

"I—I came hither," said I, still blinking uncertainly in the strong light, "to seek a man whom I saw enter this house. As I crossed the passage I beheld that demon."

"This *what?*" queried the man, puzzled.

"This fiend from the pit," quoth I. "He rose from the ground before me, and I—"

A laugh from the man interrupted me.

"A 'fiend,' eh?" he guffawed. "Why, 'tis my servant Aquia."

"You are a sorcerer, then," I asked, "that you make demons serve you? If—"

"'Demons'?" he mocked. "Saw ye never a red Indian before? Scores of them have visited London in the past few years."

"Red Indian?" I babbled. "From the Americas?"

"From where else, man? This one came to England as servant to Sir Walter Raleigh, a traveler and courtier, of whom perchance you have heard. When Raleigh was thrown into prison Aquia took service with me."

I frowned in disgust. No man loves to play the fool. And the thought that I had been fear-stricken for the first time in my life at sight of a mere savage filled me with self-contempt.

"I came hither," said I stiffly, changing the topic, "to seek a man whom I saw enter—"

"So you said," answered the other. "If he be in this house, he is one of the gathering in yonder room. Shall I call him forth, or will you go in?"

"I will go in by your permission," I answered.

My old hatred for mine enemy flared up again, now that the momentary fear of the copper-colored apparition was stilled. For a full year I had sought Forgeron. And now he was in the room just ahead of me.

Brushing past the man who had accosted me, and whose figure — silhouetted black against the light from the doorway — still blocked the passage, I strode forward across the farther threshold.

I found myself at the entrance of a great, low-ceiled room that contained perhaps thirty persons, chiefly men. They were seated for the most part about tables, puffing at long pipes and with ale-mugs in front of them. In one corner was piled a mountain of portmanteaus and bundles.

'Twas the gathering of a ship-load of sea-passengers on the eve of sailing. They had doubtless come together at this place in order to go aboard a near-by ship as quickly as the tide should serve for departure.

But what struck me as strange in the

group was the fact that they were by no means the sort of folk one would expect to see gathered for emigration. There were few — almost none — of the hardy, rugged tradesman or farmer or mechanic class that go aboard for such voyages.

Some of the men were gaily pranked out in tottered finery and wore long swords. Some were in rags, and had the faces and bearing of cheap criminals. Others were palpably "broken" fellows who had served long as Fate's useless playthings.

In one corner sat an elderly, plainly dressed man of strong countenance. Beside him, clad in a long cloak, whose hood half hid her face, sat a girl who, from her general likeness to him, seemed his daughter. These two held aloof from the noisy crowd of their fellow voyagers.

The girl was pretty. I noted little else about her at the time. For my eyes were busy seeking out mine enemy. From face to face I peered through the blue tobacco-clouds. But I could see no one who bore the slightest resemblance to Forgeron.

Clearly he was not here. And I grew sick with disappointment. Well, if he were not in this room, he was doubtless elsewhere in the house. I would search, and wherever he might be hiding I would have him forth.

I turned on my heel to leave. There in the doorway stood the man who had admitted me—the man who owned the red Indian as a servant. But now, instead of being blackly silhouetted and unrecognized, he stood in the lamplight's full glare.

And I knew him. It was Forgeron, mine enemy.

"Forgeron!" I shouted, drawing sword. "You remember me? This time our quarrel can be settled once and for all."

In his stern yet twinkling little eyes I saw perfect recognition. Indeed, I think he had recognized me at that first glimpse in the passageway. Yet he made no movement either to defend himself or escape. Instead, he stood with folded arms, calmly and amusedly surveying me.

Let me draw his picture for you in a mere thimbleful of words. For he was a man whose mark shall rest on history so long as his story shall endure.

He was of middle height, perhaps twenty-eight or thirty years old, thick-set and of enormous strength. His forehead was high and broad, though tanned brown by the weather. His brows were beetling and bushy above the sharp, fierce eyes.

A great sweeping mustache, worn French fashion, covered his firm, thick-lipped mouth. A monstrous bristling beard hid his lower face and jutted forth like a courtier's ruff.

There was about him, moreover, the indefinable air that bespeaks the born leader of men, and a certain boarlike truculence that seemed ever to be warring with a desire for laughter.

As I have told you, Forgeron made no move either to meet or to elude my attack. He stood unmoved, eying me with a quizzical half smile.

"You remember me?" I repeated furiously, standing ready to plunge into the combat on the very instant his sword should be out of its scabbard.

"I remember you well," he replied in that great harsh voice I now so well recalled. "You are Gordon Clyde, a gallant soldier of fortune, whom I would far rather enroll as a friend and a comrade than as a foe. It was for that reason I would not resume our duel in Hungary."

"You have no choice now," I cried. "Will you fight, man, or shall I strike you across the face with the flat of my sword, here in the presence of your own associates? Which shall it be, M. Forgeron?"

"My name is not 'Forgeron,'" he answered, as though patiently correcting a stupid child. "Nor am I *monsieur*. I am an Englishman, like your somewhat peppery self. 'Twas but for a *nom de guerre* that on the Continent I translated my British name into its French equivalent. Know you not what 'Forgeron' means? 'Tis the French word for 'Smith.' And I am Captain John Smith—all at your service. I—"

"It matters not who you are," I retorted, in no wise interested in his explanation. "You are the man who made me the laughing-stock of the Hungary camp. And for that you shall pay. Will you fight or—"

"Oh, I will fight!" he assented wearily. "But I would far liefer be your friend. If an apology will serve— No? Then be it as you wish."

He still made no effort to draw sword, and I waxed doubly impatient. The bulk of the emigrants had flocked close about us, eager to witness the fray.

"You challenge me, I understand?" remarked the immovable Smith.

"I assuredly do," I flashed. "Draw, man!"

"By the laws of the *duello*," he resumed

with the same imperturbable calm, "the challenged man has choice of weapons and of all other arrangements for the combat."

"I grant that," I fumed. "But to soldiers what possible weapon is there except the sword? And what time or place can be more suitable than this? The light is good, the floor smooth. Nevertheless, if you prefer other weapons and other arrangements, name them. I pledge myself to abide by them. All I demand is to fight you and to clear mine honor."

"I claim the privilege of the challenged party," said he gravely, "and I hold you to your pledge. Will you hear the terms?"

I nodded assent, still full of fury, yet puzzled by his odd calmness.

"At daybreak," said Smith, "I and these people set sail for the Americas—for Virginia."

"If you survive the duel," I corrected grimly.

"I shall survive," he replied. "It is a way I have. We sail with others—one hundred and five souls in all. Virginia is a tract of wilderness that stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. No man knows just how far that may be. And it stretches from the French colony in New France—or Canada, as men now call it—to Spain's province of Florida. A goodly land and large withal."

"I am here to fight," I snapped. "Not to con a lesson in geography. What—"

"In a moment," he urged. "We purpose to sail thither in three tall ships, there to found a colony where Sir Walter Raleigh and the rest failed to establish one. We—"

"I care not what you propose," I interrupted. "The terms of the duel, man! Get to them!"

"I am getting to them," he answered. "On the table yonder is a dice-box. That dice in that box shall be our weapons."

"What jest is this?"

"No jest. Hear me out. The dice shall be our weapons and—"

"I understand!" I cried. "I recall, now, that I once heard of the custom, in Italy. The two foes throw dice. The loser is pledged to stab himself to the heart. Let it be as you say. Though I shall have preferred the joy of actual battle."

"You go too fast," Smith corrected me, as a little buzz of wonder ran through the group at my words. "I had not come yet to the terms of the duel. Merely to the weapons. We shall throw dice, you and I. Should I lose, you shall have the privilege of carrying out your threat and shall strike me across the face, here in the presence of all my following. To receive such a blow, unresented, will disgrace me forever. Are you content?"

In a thrice I saw how much keener than death would be the humiliation I might thus cause mine enemy. And my heart glowed.

"I am content!" I exclaimed. "And if I lose?"

"If you lose," he drawled, "I shall not strike you, but you shall hold yourself pledged to cross the seas as one of our company. Is it agreed?"

"I have no wish to go to that barbarous land!" I protested.

"And I," he retorted, "have no wish to be stricken across the face and thus forever degraded before my people. Yet—"

"Have done!" I broke in. "I accept! The chance of avenging mine honor on you is too strong to be missed."

The dice-box was brought. Smith and I seated ourselves at opposite sides of the table. The rest crowded eagerly about.

And our strange duel began. A duel which was to affect the future of a whole continent.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE DUEL.

It was an odd scene. The low, crowded room, with its smoky ceiling and flaring lamps; the blue reek of tobacco; the tense, excited faces of the adventurers who pressed close about the board.

Smith and I, seated opposite each other, were outwardly the calmest men in the place. Our faces showed no sign of our inward thrill. Yet, each in his way, had as much as life itself at stake.

Smith was evidently the master of this odd assortment of voyagers. And, from my own knowledge of men, I foresaw how utterly he would lose his hold over the nondescript adventurers if once it were known that he had meekly consented to receive a blow in the face.

For, in those rough days, an unresented blow was a lasting and irredeemable disgrace to its bearer; no matter what the occasion of its receiving. Such a victim was forever looked down on and scoffed at by his fellows.

Oh, I had been wise when I had consented to stake all upon that form of vengeance against mine enemy!

On the other hand, my own case, in the event of my losing, would be little better. I was but thirty-five; of splendid strength and health; a veteran soldier who could always find fat employment whenever hard knocks were given and taken.

Many a soldier of fortune, not so well equipped, had risen to the very steps of thrones, or had, with their keen swords, carved fortunes and high rank upon destiny's tablets.

And now, I stood in peril of throwing away all these golden chances and of burying myself in that Virginian wilderness for life. A luring death, forsooth, and one for which I had scant desire.

I had ever a scorn for men who were content to turn their backs on home and kindred and to start colonies in heathen lands. Such a man, for instance, was that same Sir Walter Raleigh. He left career and court and spent the best days of his life trying to make savage Virginia an English colony.

He had explored it, taken possession of it in England's name, and had called it "Virginia" in honor of England's virgin queen, Elizabeth. Yet his colonies had failed. And one of them — that at Roanoke—had even vanished from mortal knowledge as completely as though the earth had swallowed it.

And now Smith, it seemed, was not only a leader in one of these same crazy colony-schemes, but was angling to hook *me* into it. Small wonder I dreaded the outcome of our strange duel!

I seized the horn dice-box, rattled it sharply, and made my first cast.

The two yellowed ivory dice struck the table's hard surface with a double click like the cocking of a musket. They bounded and rolled along like a couple of live things. Then, they suddenly settled. And I read the numbers scored on the upturned planes of the cubes.

Two!

The lowest cast possible; a cast that gamesters make barely once in a hundred throws. Such was the luck that dogged me that night.

My foe could not throw a lower number. The odds were more than one hundred to one that he would throw a higher.

Already I seemed to feel myself aboard the west-bound ship. Through my disgruntlement there was but one gleam of consolation.

I remembered, all at once, what Will Shakespeare had told me of Whitson's influence with King James, and his prophecy that, after my assault on the courtier, England would be too hot to hold me.

Nevertheless I could have wished to go back to the Continent, where men were more or less civilized, even the worst of them; and where at least they did not wear feathers on their heads and have painted copper skins.

Smith picked up the dice, dropped them in the box, shook it and let the cubes fall lightly on the table.

Five!

Well, I was beaten in the first throw, but there remained two throws more. And, as ever, when the odds are against me, my fighting spirit rose to meet the crisis.

Smith courteously gathered up the dice again, put them in the box, and passed the box across the table to me.

I took it, with a nod of acknowledgment.

The chances of victory were now two to one against me. Yet I was cooler and less excited than at any time that day.

I rattled the dice and cast them.

Twelve!

Two sixes. The "Venus Cast," as an Italian scrivener once told me the ancients used to call it. The highest cast possible.

I permitted myself a smiling glance at Captain John Smith. He was as imperturbable as ever, and even seemed to be weary of the whole proceedings. I envied him his splendid self-control. Not to be outdone in calmness, I passed in the act of watching him prepare to throw, and stifled an imaginary yawn behind my hand.

Smith threw the dice as gently as before. I glanced carelessly at them, as though not one whit interested.

Nine!

I had won the second throw. We were even, mine enemy and I. We could start abreast on the final cast.

"Captain," I urged, arresting his hand as he made to offer me the dice-box, "we stand equal now on this. Therefore, I may speak as I could not when chances were against me. I have no wish to go to the Americas and there toil like a black slave in building a colony. Nor, I take it, do you desire a blow across the face. Let us have done with this silly gaming and

turn to man's work. I have humored you by throwing dice for a fearful stake. Humor me, now, I pray, by meeting me hand to hand, sword to sword, foot to foot, in such combat as becomes brave men."

Smith raised his bushy brows in mild wonder.

"Since when," he asked coldly, "have 'brave men' begged off from the terms of *duello,* as they have already agreed to? Are you a coward?"

I leaned back in my chair and stared moodily across at him.

"I hate you," I said quietly, "and I want to meet you sword to sword, and quench that hatred in your blood; not to shake dice with you like a boon companion."

"You prefer your own game," he sneered, "and you fear mine. Are you really a coward?"

"You have twice asked me that vile question," I made answer, "and I have endured the insult for the hatred I bear you, and for the hope of forcing you to fight me. Once for all, you refuse to offer me the satisfaction I crave?"

By way of reply he shoved the dice-box toward me across the board. I caught it up savagely.

"The blow across your ugly face," I snarled, "shall be one you will carry to the grave."

"Your position in the Virginia colony," he retorted with a cold smile, "shall perchance be scarce more enviable than that same grave. Throw, I beg. Unless you really fear to."

Down I cast the dice. One of them fell on the table almost directly beneath the box, and lay there. It was a six.

The other ivory cube bounded and rolled along the expanse of the table until I thought it would never come to a stop. To my overexcited nerves it seemed to be rolling foolishly along for an eternity.

On the very edge of the table, balancing almost half-way over, it halted in its flight. And I saw it was a six!

Twice in succession had I thrown twelve. It was a cast that could not be beaten, and could scarce hope to be matched. I had won! And the wave of relief that swept over my body showed me for the first time how keyed up I had been.

The cube, I say, hung balanced on the verge of the table-edge. And ere I could reach forth to pick it up, some one in the crowd that pressed so close about us, chanced to strike a knee or elbow against the table. The jar, tiny as it was, sufficed to knock the cube off onto the floor.

Now, by every rule of gaming, in that day, if one or more of the dice should fall from the board before being picked up, after a cast, the throw was declared void.

All present knew this, even as did I. Indeed, the cube's hazardous position on the table-edge had led to my swift effort to seize it ere it could fall. But I had been a fraction of an instant too late.

"A false cast," commented Smith indifferently, as he stooped to pick up the cube and to restore it to the table. "The luck is against you. You would have scored twelve —two sixes. By the rules you lose your turn, and the next cast is mine."

As he spoke he had let both dice drop into the box, and was tranquilly swaying the latter to and fro. Now he rolled forth the cubes onto the table, with a scarce perceptible motion of his wrist.

They lay almost as they fell, so slight was their momentum. I breathed freely once more as I glanced at them.

A three and a one—*four!*

A simple throw to beat. In fact, the chances were more than four to one in favor of my besting or equaling him.

It was with ease not wholly affected that I gathered up the fateful little dice and boxed them for my final cast.

Down they tumbled onto the board. And my heart turned sick within me.

Three!

A two and a one! With every chance in my favor I had achieved the improbable.

I sat back, letting the empty dice-box fall to the table. Then, in a moment, I was on my feet, master of myself once more, ready to submit to my fate.

"You have won, sir," I said steadily, bowing to Smith as I spoke. "I will go to the Americas with you. But there was naught in my pledge that should force me to be civil or obedient to you, or to forgive you the scurvy trick you have played on me. I wish you joy of the firebrand you have won for your colony."

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH—AND ANOTHER.

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH leaned back with a great, noisy sigh, as of a man who throws

aside an irksome rôle, or who sets down a heavy burden.

"Faith," he cried, "'twas a tough won victory enow! And never have I so long kept cool my temper under such trying occasion. I was mightily tempted, man, to take you at your word and to try conclusions with you, sword to sword."

"Then," I demanded crossly, "why did you not do so?"

"Because," quoth he, "I am bounded to Master Bartholomew Gosnold to ship so many good men as may be, on this voyage, and, peppery and hot-headed though you are, you are one of the strongest and most energetic men I have met. The sort of men we shall need beyond all others in Virginia. I watched your career in the Continent wars. You were a prize well worth my playing for."

While I sought for a surly answer, I felt a hand slip into the empty money-pouch at my belt. Glad to vent my rage on anything, I gripped the hand with lightning speed, ere it could be drawn away, then wheeled to face the thief.

He had wriggled up to me, unnoticed in the crowd, and had taken advantage of my momentary diversion of mind to try to pick my pocket.

The hand I grasped was jerked violently back, but it could not tear itself free of my grip. I found myself hanging like grim death to the wrist of a lean, sallow-faced fellow, clad in leather, and cursed with the shiftiest, red-rimmed eyes that ever I saw.

"Accept my humble compliments, Captain Smith," quoth I, monstrous polite, "on the class of men you have picked as my fellow colonists. This promising young pickpocket should add much luster to your fame in the new world. Are all the rest like him—and like your worthy self?"

Smith's swarthy face grew positively black and hideously distorted with wrath, as he saw what had happened. He paid no heed, seemingly, to my sneering words, but he strode up to the cringing thief, who shrank back in mortal fear before the lightning glare in the captain's eyes.

What might have happened I know not, but just then the door swung open and three richly dressed men swung into the room. Smith reluctantly turned from the pickpocket and moved forward with surly civility to greet them.

I took a step backward and seated myself miserably on a settle that ran along one side of the wall. Truly, I had made a precious fool of myself, and it was a goodly company of blackguards with whom I found myself.

Here, then, was the end of my bright dreams of martial glory! I saw the future stretching out before me, dreary and barren as a rainy sea.

"Do not judge us all by him," said a voice that was so soft as to seem to blend with my own silent thoughts.

I glanced to the right of me. I found I had unconsciously seated myself next to the girl and the stern-faced elderly man whose presence I had already noted on my entrance to the room. The girl was looking half shyly, half merrily, at me, from under the shadow of her dark hood.

"You spoke to me?" I queried absently.

"I bade you not to judge us all by him," she repeated.

"By Smith?" I asked. "Now, Heaven forbid! I would not so much malign any company."

"I spoke not of Captain John Smith," she answered, "but of Wat Croy, the man who sought to steal your purse."

"Oh," I laughed, "that mattered little. The purse was empty. Nor do I wonder at finding such a man on an expedition of this sort."

"We must take what men we can find," said she. "Men of substance and ability have too much at stake in England to cross the seas to a wild country. So, until the colony proves itself prosperous, we must e'en be content with such as will go. These are for the most part down-at-heel galloots, pardoned convicts, broken folk, and those whom King James's laws too cruelly oppress. Of such last are my father and myself."

"Yourself!" I echoed, roused to faint amusement. "You can scarce be eighteen. How can you have fallen 'neath the law's ban?"

"I go with my father," she said simply.

"And he?"

"He is Mark Errol," she replied, as though she spoke the name of one of the earth's great ones.

The name was wholly unfamiliar to me, yet I lacked the brutality to say so to her just then.

"A man of his sort," I evaded, "can scarce find much to rejoice him in such company, and under such a leader as this fellow Smith."

"Why do you speak so of Captain Smith? He treated you fairly, and whatever his faults, he is the greatest man we have in all our hundred and five. He is the one man of all others who can make the colony a success."

"A success?" I retorted. "Naught can make it a success. North America will ne'er be settled. To the end of the ages 'twill ever be a desolate wilderness, peopled only by red Indians, and wild beasts, and forest demons. Each effort to colonize it has failed, and each will always fail.

"White men have never established a foothold there, and they never will. With South America it is different. That flourishes. It may one day be the land of a mighty nation. But North America, never! 'Tis a fit expedition for such a purpose. A company of tatterdemalions—barring your father and yourself — led by a windy braggart."

"Braggart?" she mused. "Yes, Captain Smith is assumedly a braggart. My father says so. And many of his boasts of past exploits do not ring true. In fact, when Master Will Shakespeare penned those five stage pieces, 'The Lives and Histories of Kings Henry IV and V,' some folk say he made the character of *Pistol* from this same Captain John Smith. But Shakespeare misread him. Boaster and full of conceit as he is, the man is gallant, and is a born leader."

"Those three men who came in just now, and with whom he is talking," said I, foolishly angry to hear praise of mine enemy from lips so fair—"who are they?"

"The stout man with the gray beard," she answered, "is Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, of the Godspeed. The little man with the red face is Captain Christopher Newport, of the Susan Constant. The dark, tall man, whose face seems always scowling, is Captain John Ratcliffe, of the Discovery. They are commanders of our three ships."

"Whatever they may be saying to Smith," I observed, "it seems to give him scant pleasure. See how he scowls and shakes his head."

As I spoke Smith turned from the three sea captains and pushed his way toward where young mistress Errol and I sat. But it was not to us he addressed himself.

He passed us and stopped in front of Mark Errol, the girl's father, who sat silent and wholly immersed in his own thoughts.

"Master Errol," quoth Smith, more gently than his frowning brow betokened, "I have black tidings for you. Captain Gosnold and the rest tell me there is a squad of the city watch at the door without, and that their leader holds a warrant for your arrest."

Errol raised his head, his somber face dull with apathy.

"I scarce expected to get scot free from England and gain a fresh start of life in an honester land," he muttered. "From the first I said 'twas too good to be true."

He rose. Smith held his big, hairy hand in sympathy.

"How they guessed your whereabouts," said he, "I know not. And in another two hours you would have been safe aboard ship and off to the New World. I sought to persuade our three worthy shipmasters yonder to let us make shift to hold off the city watch by force till we could smuggle you aboard and up anchor, but they will not have it so. If prudence be a virtue, then those three fairly reek of virtuousness."

"'Tis the old charge, I suppose?" asked Errol.

"So Gosnold tells me. The watch-officer says the warrant accuses you of complicity with the gunpowder plot of two years agone, and—"

"Never did I take part in that foul conspiracy," retorted Errol, "nor was I privy to it. I have already told you how my effort to save one of the conspirators, whom I deemed innocent, brought this false charge on me. And now, after dwelling in hiding, like some felon, for more than a year, I must needs end my days in the Tower or on the block. Just when I saw light ahead! Good-by, sir, and take all my thanks for your great goodness to me.

"Dorcas," he went on, in a tenderer, infinitely sad voice, turning to the girl, and gathering her into his arms, "my own little lass, be brave. I wish—"

I moved back out of earshot. It seemed to me this parting between father and daughter was far too sacred for a curious outsider's ears.

But I could not take my eyes from Dorcas Errol. The hood had slipped back, and her face shone clear beneath the lamplight. Never before had I seen such a look on human visage.

She was weeping. Not noisily or sniffingly, as do many women, but as a fright-

ened little child might cry in the dark. Her great dark eyes were wide with dumb terror. Grief had stricken her radiant young face a ghastly white, and it was drawn and haggard, as from sharp illness.

I think, in some phases of life I am a fool. I can stare unmoved and watch the moistly picturesque weeping of most women. But when one cries like a frightened child, as did Dorcas Errol, or has in her face that look of dumb, hopeless, child-like horror, why, there is ever a silly something that grips fiercely at my heart and sends a lump into my throat and straightway prompts me to some idiot's action. And so it proved now.

What were these Errols to me? I scarce knew them. And if the father had run foul of King James's law, why should I concern myself? I felt no interest in the somber, sour-faced old fellow.

Yet that look in his daughter's eyes, and her terror-stricken, silent sobs, all at once turned me from a sane man into an ass.

And, for good or ill, I took quick and imbecile resolve.

Gosnold, as Errol and Smith drew near the threshold leading into the passage, opened the door and beckoned in the watch-officer. Then, pointing to Errol, who stood apathetically waiting, his cloak wrapped about him, and his sugar-loaf hat pulled down over his eyes, Gosnold said:

"Officer, here is your prisoner. Bear witness to his majesty that we willingly surrender the felon into his hands. We are right glad to learn in time of his true character, and to be rid of him, for we want none but good men, and true, on this, our venture."

The officer nodded, and touched Errol on his cloaked shoulder.

"Mark Errol." he droned, like a child speaking its lesson, "I arrest you on charge of high treason against our lord, the king's high majesty, and against his sacred life. Come with me."

"No, no!" panted Dorcas, still clinging to her father's arm.

But I stepped between, officiously eager, and dragged her with seeming roughness to one side. Then I seized Errol by both shoulders and shoved him forward so suddenly that he collided with the officer with such force as to knock the latter bodily backward through the door and into the passage where his men awaited him. I noted with joy that the single candle in the passageway lanthorn had burned itself out, leaving the place in gloom.

Shoving Errol through the doorway ahead of me, I cried:

"I have him safe, Master Officer. Let your men seize and bind him, for I fear me he is a right desperate fellow."

As I spoke I released one of Errol's shoulders and slammed shut the door behind me. Thus, for a moment, we were all left in black darkness in the crowded passageway.

That moment sufficed me. While the officer, cursing me for a blundering, officious fool, had sent one of his men to fetch a torch he had left at the street door, I ripped the long cloak from Errol's back, threw it about my own shoulders, then snatched his hat and jammed it far down over my eyes.

All was done in a twinkling.

I had but time to thrust the struggling, uncomprehending Errol into an angle of the passageway wall, and whisper fiercely to him to crouch there and to hold his tongue.

Then the torch-bearer appeared with his light at the end of the passage. As he did so I dived forward, butting and hitting out wildly in clumsy effort to break through the little knot of watchmen and gain the safety of the street.

Instantly, as foreseen, my awkward attempt at escape was discovered. The officer and three of his men, seeing the supposed captive trying to get away, hurled themselves on me.

Down we went to the floor in a writhing heap. And when they dragged me to my feet and pinioned my arms, my sugar-loaf hat was jammed so far down over my face by a blow I myself had given it, that it hid my whole countenance from the mouth upward.

My own father could not have recognized me. My figure, under voluminous folds of the now torn cloak, was hunched to shorten my height and to give the air of an elderly, "settled" man.

The watch captain laughed gleefully at the clumsy efforts of his captive to elude him.

"One on each side, boys!" he ordered his followers. "And if he moves to escape, send your halberd points through the old traitor. Master Mark Errol," he went on mockingly, "ye have dodged the king's justice for over a year, but you cannot dodge

the clutch of my stout lads. So come quietly or it will be the worse for you."

As he spoke, he and his men had been rushing me down the passageway toward the door and down the steps into the street.

I think they half-feared Errol's comrades in the room behind might attempt some rescue. For, at the noise of the turmoil in the passageway, the door had opened and excited, questioning voices had been raised.

Amid the babel as I was dragged down the steps onto the street, I had heard Dorcas Errol's voice raised in a cry of wondering ecstasy at sight of her father safe and sound.

And the memory of that joyous cry kept up my heart as I was propelled along the dark streets toward the Tower. It was my one comfort in a sea of self-contempt at my rash folly.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT OF TROUBLE AND IN AGAIN.

LEST any should doubt the ease wherewith I had performed the ruse substituting myself for Mark Errol, let me say it was the very simplest sort of feat. Self-injuring maneuvers generally are, I find.

It had required but one instant of a swift action there in the utter darkness of the passageway, during which I had snatched and donned Errol's hat and cloak.

'Twas my futile rush for escape that had assured the success of my trick. For, when men are struggling in the half light with an escaping prisoner, they waste little time in scanning his features or in debating whether or no they have caught the right man.

Errol's long, old-fashioned cloak and his tall, parsonlike sugar-loaf hat were unlike most garments worn in that day. There had been none others like them in the room.

Thus, when a man thus attired had made a break for freedom, he had very naturally been seized.

Once out in the street, whose pitchy blackness was relieved only by the flare of the single torch borne by a man who walked ahead, the deception was still easier to maintain.

I uttered no sound as I moved along among my rough captors. I could see nothing, for Errol's hat, as I have said, was jammed down to my very mouth.

One thing only did I fear. I dreaded lest the fellow who was gripping my left arm should chance to feel my sword-hilt rubbing against his side.

Errol had been unarmed. I had seen the officer's quick glance stray to his side, to make sure of that. So, with my elbow I managed to keep my left-hand captor's body from pressing too closely to me.

When one cannot see his surroundings, a journey is ever doubly long. And our march to the Tower of London seemed interminable. Also, when one cannot see, the mind turns inward with added intensity.

And I, perspiring and half-stifled inside that miserable sugar-loaf hat, had ample time to review my situation and to rail at my folly in rushing into such a predicament.

Twice that day had I thrust my neck into the noose. First, by my attack on Geoffrey Whitson, favorite courtier to King James. That assault alone, as I now full well knew, was enough to send me to the Tower for life or even to cause my beheading.

Having won free from that peril, through Will Shakespeare's help, and having been on the eve of showing a clean pair of heels to England and the law, I must now, forsooth, involve myself in a far worse dilemma and impersonate an old treason-hatcher with whom I had absolutely no acquaintance.

And all because a girl had chanced to look like a frightened child when she wept! What were Dorcas Errol or her tears to me?

How the miserable adventure was to come out, I did not know. Of course, the first official who knew Errol by sight would see that I was not he. But what fate would the law be likely to mete out to the man who had helped a traitor to escape?

We came to a halt, in answer to a challenge from a sentry. And I gathered that we had reached one of the Tower gates. There was a brief colloquy between the watch-officer and a guard-captain. Then we marched on a few yards (apparently into a courtyard, from the way our steps reechoed from high-surrounding walls), and thence up one or two steps. I was pushed through a narrow doorway.

A high, nasal voice in front of me demanded:

"Well, well, what's here, officer?

What's here? A masquerade or a headless man? Take the thing's hat off that we may observe it."

A ripple of laughter followed his query.

"If it please your worship," said the watch-officer humbly, "this is a desperate traitor, who did conspire in the evil gunpowder plot, and whose body I have seized in pursuance of a royal warrant."

His men, as the officer spoke, were busy prying up the smashed rim and crown of the sugar-loaf hat from my head. Off it came at last with suddenness and then I saw I was in the office of the Tower gate, where presided the committing magistrate. He was a thin, flaxen-haired man in gaudy robes and lolled back in a chair behind a carved, black table.

Lounging about the room were several courtiers and other well-dressed men. I remembered, when I was in England before, it had been the custom for well-to-do idlers to spend an hour or so in the committing magistrate's office of an evening to amuse themselves by watching the hapless prisoners who were brought thither for examination. And now—*I* was the prisoner!

I bowed to the magistrate, who took no heed of my salute, then stood awaiting the next move in the wretched game.

"What is your name, fellow?" demanded the magistrate in his high voice.

Before I could reply, the watch-officer spoke up.

"If it please your worship, 'tis Mark Errol, the—"

"Mark Errol?" broke in the magistrate. "I dined at Errol's house a score of times in the days before he turned malignant traitor to his king. Errol is full twenty years older than this man, and a head shorter."

"But, your worship," babbled the officer, "the name 'Mark Errol' be set forth clear and fair in this warrant. I know, for I be a man of learning as well as of substance and I can read. See it for yourself, your worship."

The magistrate brushed aside the proffered document.

"What care I about the name on the warrant?" he fumed. "This is no Mark Errol. You have blundered grievously, officer."

"*I*, your worship?" protested the indignant officer. "I be as zealous an arm of the law as may be found in all England. Aye, and as shrewd."

"You are an ass!" retorted the magistrate.

The watch-officer's fat face went purple with mortification. Then, observing that the magistrate's clerk was scribbling away at his notes, the luckless man cried in wild entreaty:

"Oh, master clerk, in your report I pray you write me not down an ass! That I should live to see the day that any clerk should write Jem Dogberry down an ass!"

A laugh burst from the bystanders. I glanced across at them, taking closer heed of their aspect than at my first general look. And there seated amid a group of gallants, I saw a familiar figure.

It was Will Shakespeare. His eyes were full of mirth, yet as he looked at me they filled with troubled pity. He could do nothing for me, yet his look of sympathy warmed my heart. I looked back at the magistrate.

"'Tis not Mark Errol," the latter was saying again, "but who is it? And how and where captured you him, Dogberry?"

"At the house where the passengers for the Virginia voyage were gathered for departure, your worship," answered Dogberry. "'Twas there we had word he was hiding. And there, sure enough, he was. Behold him!"

"Silence!" roared the magistrate in the last stages of exasperation. Then he turned on me.

"Give an account of yourself, sirrah!"

"I was with some of the other passengers for the Virginia voyage this evening," I said quietly, "waiting to go aboard our ships. This fellow watchman entered the house to make an arrest. I chanced to pass out through the hallway and Master Dogberry and his crew seized me. They dragged me here."

Dogberry had been staring at me with his dull, near-sighted eyes.

"'Tis not the same man," he now broke out. "T'other was shorter and older. Yet I cannot have made a mistake. And—the fellow hath grown a head taller since he came hither."

Another laugh, and once more the magistrate cut in.

"You have the bearing and voice of a gentleman, sir," he said to me more civilly, "and I would not interfere with a volunteer for these colonies by which our gracious king sets such store. Yet, I can scarce understand—"

"'Tis simple," I returned. "These men seized me and brought me here."

"You suffered them to hale you—an innocent man—through the streets?"

"They represented the majesty of the law," said I right priggishly; adding with a grin:

"Moreover, when a man's hat is bashed down over his eyes and mouth as you saw mine was, he can scarce talk convincingly. I could not raise my hands to remove the hat, for they pinioned my arms."

"He—he hath a sword!" cried Dogberry excitedly. "I take oath he was unarmed when we made the arrest. I noted that with especial care."

"He probably grew the sword during the journey," observed the magistrate. At which rare jest his subordinates dutifully shrieked with laughter.

"But," went on the magistrate, "the fact that he wears a sword and did not know it nor was deprived of it by the watch, bears out his story. I fear, sir," he added, turning to me, "that you have been the victim of a grievous blunder. If there are any in London who can attest to your character I will gladly turn you loose and tender you the law's apologies for this inconvenience."

"By your leave," put in Master Shakespeare, rising and stepping forward, "I know this gentleman, and I am sure he is mixed in no treason plots. Will that suffice?"

The magistrate bowed assent; treating this mere scrivener of stage plays with as deep respect as though he were a man of importance; whereat I marveled.

"You are free, sir," the magistrate told me. "I grieve for your ill treatment. Also for the rents in your cloak. As for the hat's destruction, 'twas evidently a shocking bad hat at best and far out of style. So you suffer little loss there."

I thanked him and stood aside. I was about to depart when Master Shakespeare plucked me by the sleeve.

"Was it not rare?" he chuckled. "Was it not rare to hear yon clown of a Dogberry? Could I but put such a character on the boards, 'twould set the whole pit in a roar. I must talk further with this same Master Dogberry."

"'Twas monstrous good of you," quoth I, "to speak for me just now."

"Nay," he answered. "'Twas for mine own interest. At supper to-night I chanced to speak of you to my Lord of Shaftesbury. He hates Whitson and is powerful enow to protect you from him. He bade me, should I see you again, to offer you honorable service in his own household. There is much chance there for advancement. On the morrow you and I will wait upon his lordship."

I thrilled with joy at the idea. To find such employment was almost beyond the dream of a plain soldier of fortune. It was lucrative and offered fine chances of preferment.

To be a member of the great Shaftesbury's official household was the open sesame to wealth and rank, for the right sort of man.

In a thrice, my world was changed. From poverty and despair I found my feet set upon the high road to fortune. I felt as if all the gray, old world were one glorious blaze of sunshine.

Then, athwart my golden dream came a black shadow. And at the shock, I could feel myself turn white.

My promise to mine enemy! I had pledged myself to sail to the Americas with Captain John Smith, to take up there the dreary, hopeless, grinding life of a Virginia colonist. I had made my solemn pledge to abide by the decision of the dice. And the dice had decided against me.

There was but one thing a man of honor could do. Had I been victor in that strange duel with Smith, I should have deemed him the vilest of curs if he had begged off or eluded payment and I knew he would have kept his pledge. Was I to prove myself less of a man than that swashbucklering braggart? There was but one course open to me.

"Master Shakespeare," I muttered—and my voice was dead with the deep despair that sanded my dry throat—"I thank you from my heart. But I have other employment."

I could say no more. And I knew my words must sound ungracious.

"As you will," he answered, plainly hurt at the rebuff.

And he strolled out of the room.

I wrapped the torn cloak about me, for the December night was cold, and prepared to set off to the meeting-place of the cursed Virginia expedition, secretly hoping that I might be too late and that the three ships might already have sailed.

As I neared the door, the threshold was blocked by several gallants who were sauntering into the magistrate's office. I stood aside to let them enter.

The first of the group was Geoffrey Whitson.

At a glance he recognized me. Whipping out his sword he cried:

"Guard! Arrest him! I accuse him, in the king's name! Seize him!"

CHAPTER VII.

MY HEELS SAVE MY HEAD.

IT is odd what sudden twists a man's mind will take. Half a minute earlier I had been berating my fate at having to turn my back on a brilliant career and bury myself in the Virginia wilderness.

Now, that same wilderness seemed paradise to me compared with lodgment in a Tower cell and the chance of a later acquaintance with the headsman's block.

Whitson, drawing sword and rushing at me, had yelled for the guard. In that small room, with a full dozen people in it, my mind and body worked at once and in unison. There was no time for me to get at my sword. Instinctively, before the cry of alarm was fairly past Whitson's lips and ere he could reach me, I had bounded forward.

I tore off my cloak with one wrench as I jumped. And with a single cast, I had hurled it at Whitson's face. The huge, torn garment covered his head and body like a clinging pall.

In practically the same movement I lowered my head and plunged into the little knot of men who were following Whitson into the room.

Unprepared for my action and not yet fully catching the import of the situation, they had no chance to brace themselves for the shock.

Like lightning I tore through the group, scattering gallants to right and left. I gained the small courtyard ere those in the room behind me could pass the staggering, sprawling men in the doorway and get at me.

The guard at the postern-gate leading to the street was just closing the portal after letting Will Shakespeare out. Before he could clang the door shut or turn around I was upon him like a catapult.

Knocking him to one side, I threw my whole weight and strength against the heavy and almost shut iron gate. The portal swung outward, under the impact, and I darted out into the night like a rat from a trap.

I had no time to shut the door in my pursuers' faces. And out after me they poured, pell-mell, swords drawn, yelling like a pack of hounds.

I sped past Will Shakespeare who had advanced scarce a half-score paces on his homeward walk from the Tower. By the light over the gate he glanced at me as I flew past, and recognized me. But there was no time for me to waste time or breath in shouting so much as one word of explanation. And on I fled.

Never again have I seen Will Shakespeare. Never again have I heard news of him. I have sometimes wondered if ever he kept his intent of writing those dramas about the tempest off the vexed Bermudas and of the blackamoor who told of the adventures among the Anthropophagi, and if ever he portrayed my captor Dogberry's silly character in a stage play.

I am old now and I am not likely to learn more of Master Will Shakespeare or of his writings. For the events I am describing happened well-nigh fifty years ago, and the name of a mere scrivener like this Master Shakespeare is no doubt forgot by this time. Had he been a great general or a statesman he might perchance have been remembered by posterity.

And so, back to my story:

I plunged into the blackness of the unlighted street, with the full hue and cry after me.

The night was densely black. But years of night duty in the foreign campaigns had so accustomed my eyes to darkness that I could see easily, where these town-bred pursuers of mine could not.

Moreover, I was ever fleet of foot, beyond the average. So I swung along through the gloom at a tremendous pace, over the uneven street, easily avoiding the inequalities and holes and rubbish heaps; while those who followed me floundered desperately or stumbled and fell.

I dashed into a crooked alley, slackening my pace because of the increased darkness there; reached the next street, ran along it for a short space, then cut into a second alley that led toward the river. Cold as the night was, my exertions kept me glowingly warm.

By this time the sound of the clash had died away. I had shaken off my pursuers with ridiculous ease. And now I bent my hurried steps toward the docks and the house where Smith and his passengers had gathered.

As I turned out of the short-cut alley to the street before the docks, a shape rose out of its gloom before me; and the point of a half-unseen knife pricked my throat.

"Stand and deliver!" ordered a voice.

I could have laughed. What, in the name of St. Nicholas, the patron of thieves, had I to deliver?

"Friend," I answered unflinchingly before the menacing knife, "I have an empty purse, a half-worn suit (without hat or cloak), and a serviceable, but not especially costly sword in a much scratched scabbard. I think you have hailed the wrong man."

As I had been talking I had managed, furtively, to raise my arm. Now, as I reached the end of my indifferently drawled words, I suddenly struck upward.

My blow caught the highwayman's arm just below the elbow, knocking the knife to one side. At the same instant my left fist caught him on the chin. Down he went, in a heap. I did not wait for him to recover, but cleared his rolling body with one spring and ran on.

Two minutes later I burst into the house from which, barely an hour before, I had been led by Dogberry and his watchmen.

The great room was empty. At my shout a sleepy servant appeared. He told me that all hands had gone aboard their ships a half-hour agone.

I ran to the docks which he pointed out to me. There, inquiry from a half-drunk sailor gave me the news that the last of the three ships carrying the Virginia colony had weighed anchor five minutes earlier.

For an instant my heart grew light. Assuredly, I had done all in my power to keep my pledge to Smith. If I had failed, despite my best efforts to reach the docks in time, the fault was not mine. I was absolved of my promise! Free to take high service under the Earl of Shaftesbury.

But the next moment my miserable sense of honor came to the fore again. And almost without volition I found myself racing at top speed along the river bank.

I remembered the section of London from former days. I knew that, a half-mile below, there was a sharp curve of the Thames. And, by taking another short cut there, I believed I could reach the river at a point beyond the curve before the last of the three Virginia-bound ships should pass it.

So off I ran. And in another five minutes or so I had come, panting, to the spot I had had in mind. I stood on the muddy bank, straining my eyes across the faintly glimmering gray expanse of water.

The black bulk of a ship, moving slowly down stream with the tide, all sails set, was in mid-channel. Behind it, less than a furlong, came another vessel of the like size; while, fading away in the gloom far in front, I could barely make out the blot on the water that marked the third and leading craft.

Down the river, drawn by the ebb-tide and pushed on by the slight wind that brushed their canvas, were the three Virginia-bound ships; slipping away from England in the darkness of a night which blotted out every vestige of land to scores of homesick eyes that should never look upon England's green coasts again.

Apparently I had reached the bank after the first of the three ships had passed. The second was abreast of me, and the third coming along in the rear.

There was no time for thought. Into the ice-cold water I dived and struck out for midstream. The freezing December water bit to my very marrow. It well-nigh shocked my heart and brain into lethargy.

For, remember, I was in a glow from my long, hard run. Yes, and I was tired, too. I had undergone much that day; and I was lately recovered from an attack of camp fever.

Yet, with all my strength I struck out; not waiting to remove my clothes, light boots, or sword. A mad feat, I grant you, and one for which I had no desire. Yet my honor and the memory of my unfulfilled pledge goaded me on with a lash of scorpions.

As I had feared, I reached mid-channel much too late to board the second ship, or to attract its crew's notice by my water-choked hails.

But I found myself straight in the path of the third and last vessel. She was coming on so slowly that I was well in front of her. I shouted. But no one answered. She seemed to carry no lookout. And her crew and passengers were evidently astern. Even in that moment, the circumstances struck me as odd.

I trod water and shouted once more. Then, all at once, her bowsprit was jutting directly above me, like the limb of some giant forest tree. And, 'twixt myself and the sky, I could see her battered figure-head silhouetted.

Just above me, and looping down to below the water-line, hung the bow-anchor chain.

I caught at it, when the prow was almost touching me, and passed my hand through one of the huge iron links.

Then, summoning all my remaining power, I clambered hand over hand up the chain. It was an easy feat for any agile man, for there was almost as good grip-hold as on a swaying rope-ladder.

But in my chilled, fatigued state I was almost unable to finish the simple climb. Again and again I had to pause, clinging to the big links, chattering with cold and fighting for breath and fresh strength.

At last, after an eternity, my hands grasped the rail. One awkward, muscle-wrenching heave of my whole body and I had rolled over the rail onto the deck.

There I lay panting, gasping.

After a few minutes I got back my breath and enough strength to stagger to my feet.

I looked about me. Not a soul was in sight. The fore-deck was as deserted as a midnight churchyard. I could not understand. Was this the phantom ship of the Flying Dutchman that I had boarded?

The silence and horrible solitude seemed to beat in upon me like hammer blows.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LION-TAMER.

I WALKED aft. For the first few steps the deck lanterns showed me no one. And again I marveled.

For folk newly come aboard ship are wont to scatter all over the decks and cabins, surveying their new quarters. And full two-thirds of this colonial crowd had never before set foot on shipboard, so would be doubly inquisitive.

A step or so farther and I was a trifle relieved of my apprehensions. There was a man on duty at the helm. And scarcely had I made out his figure when I saw another man at work up among the shrouds. But, except for these, no one was in sight.

A half-dozen strides brought me to the "break" and the entrance of the great cabin. About the doors of this a crowd of seamen flocked, intent on what went on within. I wondered at the laxity of discipline. It boded ill for good, sailorly work during the voyage. Then I elbowed my way into the cabin.

Under the hanging lamp stood Captain John Smith. His huge right hand gripped the shoulder of Croy, the shifty-eyed man who had sought to pick my pocket. All around pressed the passengers, eying the scene for the most part in sullenness or in open anger.

None observed my entrance, so intent were they all. As I came in, Smith was saying:

"And I gave fair warning that none but honest men were wanted on this voyage. You all know that. Yet, what find we? A common thief who preys on his own comrades. We catch him red-handed picking Master Gordon Clyde's pocket. There was no time to give the case attention ere we sailed. But now it shall be settled. Brothers, what is your verdict? How shall we punish him?"

A murmur arose. A murmur of discontent.

"Set him free!" called one man in the crowd.

"This is no law court," cried another. "We be all equal here."

"Who said that?" snarled Smith, whirling about and glaring from one face to the other, his eyes blazing, his teeth bared like the fangs of a wolf.

"Who said that?" he demanded again.

None answered. For his expression did not encourage argument. But black, rebellious looks everywhere greeted him.

"Since none has manhood to say a word for honesty," went on Smith, red with mortification, "I will e'en take justice into mine own hands."

Ere any could check him, or so much as guess his purpose, he had caught up the thief bodily, swung the fellow athwart his broad shoulders, as though Croy were a sack of meal and, striding out of the cabin, through the crowd, bore him to the rail.

"We cleanse our good ship thus!" cried Captain John Smith.

As he spoke he heaved the yelling, kicking, writhing pickpocket far out over the rail and let him fall with a mighty splash into the river.

The thief rose to the surface a few yards off, sputtering and floundering. Then, get-

ting his bearings, he struck out for the nearer shore with a long, easy stroke that at once did away with any fears for his safety.

"So!" roared Smith, turning upon the muttering, yet cowed, group. "Let it be an example. And let none other merit throwing overboard. For, in mid-ocean, it might not go so lightly with the offender as within a furlong of the Thames's safe banks."

The muttering swelled and hands were laid covertly on sword-hilts or knives. But ever, where Smith's fierce glance flashed, the mutterings ceased and hands fell away from the hilts.

He reminded me, ridiculously enough, of a lion-tamer I once saw in Rome, who entered a cage of ravening beasts that longed for his life but dared not brave the light of command in his eyes.

Some men are like that. When their power extends merely to dumb brutes we dub them lion-tamers and pay our groats and pence to watch them risk their lives at the county fairs. But when the same power controls their fellow men we call them "born leaders" and obey them sla-

compelled to spend four months, waking or

And, while this tatterdemalion crowd obeyed and cringed before Captain John Smith for the moment, yet I would not just then have given a clipped farthing for his chances of surviving the long voyage.

I did not envy him his position as their temporary leader. I have faced death more than once, and in no very attractive forms. Yet, I confess, I should have thought twice before trusting myself to be the hated disciplinarian of that gang of outcast cutthroats on a four-months' sea-trip.

It was as though the lion-tamer were compelled to spend four months, waking or sleeping, continuously locked in the cage with his murderous beasts and with no one to come to his rescue. In his sleeping hours something not wholly pleasant would be likely to happen.

Bitterly as I hated Captain John Smith, my heart at that moment went out to him in quick sympathy. For he was at least a man. And I felt as I might had I seen a human being harried by a pack of rabid curs.

The passengers, little by little, dispersed to their sleeping quarters and the ill-disciplined crew took up their stations of duty.

I looked in vain for Mark Errol and Dorcas. I learned later that they had sought their berths as soon as the ship had weighed anchor.

At last I left the dark corner where I had watched the scene of incipient mutiny and entered the cabin.

Smith sat there alone beside the table. His arms were folded on it and his head buried in them. I think he was realizing for the first time just what lay before him.

I walked up to the table. At sound of my step he raised his shaggy head, frowning, and glowered at me. Then, seeing who it was, his frown gave place to a look of amaze.

"How did you get here?" he demanded.

I pointed to my dripping wet clothes. He nodded, understandingly.

"But why?" he asked.

"Through no will of mine," I retorted sulkily, "you may be sure of that."

Again and more keenly he stared at me. Then, once more he nodded.

"I see," he said curtly. "I might have known. You are a man of honor, Master Clyde. I ought not to have doubted you would keep your pledge, had you been forced to swim the whole blue Atlantic to do it."

"I do not need nor wish your commendation," I returned surlily, my dislike of the man rising once more to the surface.

"I do not need nor wish to commend you," he sneered.

There was a brief, comfortable silence, during which I wondered what the outcome of the interview would be.

"I saw what you did for Errol to-night," said Smith. "I alone, of us all, saw part and surmised the rest. Why did you do it?"

"I do not know," I returned, uncomfortable under his sharp gaze. "The foolish impulse of a moment. The peril was slight. As soon as the committing magistrate saw me he knew I was not Errol. Convinced of his mistake, he set me free."

"H-m! You will merit the undying thanks of both Mistress Dorcas and her hard-shelled old father. I have had no chance to speak with them since then. But —as otherwise they will fail to understand the part you played in saving Errol — I shall explain it to them in full to-morrow morning."

"No!" I cried, hot with anger, in spite of the cold wetness of my clothes. "You shall not!"

"Very good," he assented indifferently. "If you prefer, I will not."

"You give me your word?" I insisted.

"Assuredly. But why—"

I could not explain to him how I dreaded being looked on in the melodramatic light of rescuer and of being overwhelmed with tearful thanks. So I but shrugged my shoulders and, to shift the topic we were discussing, said:

"I wish you joy with the ruffians and ne'er-do-wells you have shipped as colonists. They are rare material from which to build the welfare of a new land."

He winced under the coarse sarcasm.

"You are right," he agreed with something very like humility. "What I need is a band of sturdy, honest, God-fearing men. Tillers of the soil, builders of homes, good citizens. But such folk will not yet leave home. Nor even will they until home is made too hard a place for them. So I must e'en make shift to carve the colony with such broken and blunted tools as lie ready to my hand."

"Gamesters, thieves, broken adventurers, gold-seekers, ex-convicts, down-at-heel swashbucklers, and needy gentry," I supplemented.

"You have called their roll," he agreed quietly; "and in which category do you place your worthy self?"

"That is a hard question to answer," I said slowly. "First of all, I am a man who hates the whole venture and who, as you know, enters upon it with utter distaste. Also, I hate you and all pertaining to you. And should the opportunity ever honorably come, I shall slake that hatred."

He nodded, in no whit displeased.

"In the meantime," I went on, "you are a man alone among ravening beasts. And by the blood-kinship of man to man as against the lower animals, I shall stand at your side and aid you in all things. We understand each other now, I think. There is no further need of words between us."

He had sprung to his feet and, impulsively, had half-stretched forth his hand to grasp mine. I ignored the gesture and passed out of the cabin.

From the deck outside I saw him look after me for an instant with something like wistfulness in his ferocious little eyes. Then he sank back in his chair, and once more buried his head in his folded arms.

It occurred to me momentarily that I had behaved like a boor. And I was half minded to go back and take the hand of fellowship he had offered me.

I have since wished I had obeyed the impulse.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEREIN "GRATITUDE" IS QUAINTLY DEFINED.

IT was well-nigh a week later when Dorcas Errol and her father first appeared on deck. Mark had been desperately seasick, it seemed, and his daughter had remained below to nurse him. Thus it was that I had caught no glimpse of either of them.

But one blue-and-gold morning, when I was taking my usual brisk walk on the cramped little deck, I came upon them, seated in the sunshine in an angle of the cabin-wall.

I was more glad than I had realized. For the riffraff that made up most of our passenger-list were not of the sort wherewith a decent man might associate with any sort of mental or moral profit. These two were of a far different stripe. Already I had promised myself many a pleasant hour in their company.

During the past week I had been sadly at lack for society. I would not mingle with the worthless scum who were to form our wonderful colony. I would not associate more than I could help with Captain John Smith.

Hence, oddly enough, I had picked acquaintance with Aquia, the giant red Indian who was Smith's servant. The savage knew a smattering of English. And as I was the only man on board who did not mock at his strange aspect, he seemed to have taken a sort of liking to me.

I had resolved to improve the voyage by picking up from him something of his Indian language. It would serve to pass the tedious hours, and would prove of use to me in Virginia. Aquia, nothing loath, had consented. And our lessons had already begun.

'Twas a barbarous tongue. But I had ever had a knack for quickly mastering foreign lingo; so I hoped to make some sort of progress in Aquia's lingo ere the dreary voyage should end. This morning, as I caught sight of Dorcas and old Errol, it suddenly occurred to me that there were infinitely more agreeable ways of passing time on shipboard.

Sweeping off my hat with my very best bow, I advanced upon the father and daughter. They had not seen me until I was close to them. Then the look that sprang into the eyes of each could hardly be construed as one of warm welcome.

I halted, irresolute, before that double gaze of utterly horrified contempt. Then, manlike, I rushed to my destruction.

"No doubt you have forgotten me?" I commenced, hoping that I had misread the look that I could not at all account for. "We met once before. I am Gordon Clyde—"

I paused. Mark Errol, quivering with rage and supporting himself upon his staff, had risen to his feet.

"You cur!" he panted, thrusting his face toward mine. "You man-selling, contemptible cur!"

Now, no living man of mine own age and strength could have lived to boast that he had spoken such words to me. But from an old and sick one I could not exact payment.

Moreover, Errol's odd speech struck me dumb. I had risked life and liberty for him. I had saved him from the headsman's block. And now—

"Were you not content," he raved on, "to play the blackguard and help in my arrest, but now you must pollute with your presence the air we breathe?"

Still wholly in the dark, I, nevertheless, choked back my choler and said:

"Will you kindly explain, sir?"

"Explain?" he rasped. "Explain to you, perchance, that you aided the minions of the law to make an unjust arrest? That you curried favor with the king by seizing me and thrusting me into the very arms of the city watch? That you dragged my weeping daughter from my embrace and delivered me over to the law? Explain? Faugh!"

I well recalled the scene he had described. But that—in the light of what I had done directly afterward—he could so grossly misunderstand my actions was more than I could believe.

"Pray, sir," I insisted, "since you have so accurately depicted my actions in that room where we met, go on and describe what befell after I had pushed you out into the dark passageway."

"Ah!" he cried, with a smile of sour triumph. "'Twas then that Providence mercifully overruled your evil intent. As you well may not know that I escaped your clutches, I will tell you, in order that you may see how miserably you failed."

"Yes," I assented drearily enough, "I have failed. And miserably. Go on, I beg."

"In the darkness there," pursued Errol, "of a sudden all was turmoil and confusion. I know not clearly what happened, for all passed so swiftly. But I opine that my captors quarreled among themselves. There was a scuffle. In it I lost my cloak and my beaver hat, and I was thrust by chance into a corner, while the fight raged on past me. The next moment the city watch had left the house. By a miracle I was saved."

"Accept my warm congratulations," said I dryly.

"But," he raged, his anger kindled afresh, "your own vile share in the arrest is none the less black. And for that I would I were a younger man that I might punish you as you merit."

"Mistress Errol," I cried, turning to Dorcas, "on my honor I am quite guiltless of this foul offense wherewith your father charges me. Will you believe? Will you let me explain my part in this affair of your father's arrest?"

But as I moved toward her the girl shrank back from me in horror as from some loathed reptile.

That gesture of hers, and the look that accompanied it, went to my heart like the thrust of cold steel. I had not thought mortal person could so hurt me.

Ere I could speak again old Errol was between us.

"Every word to my daughter from so low a beast as yourself," he mouthed, "is an affront. Be silent. Back to your kennel, dog!"

As he spoke he whirled his staff aloft and struck me full across the face with it. The force of the blow and his own enfeebled grip sent the stout oaken cudgel clattering from his hand to the deck. I snatched it up. Dorcas gave a little cry and made as though to throw herself protectingly in front of the raging old man.

I looked Mark Errol in the eye for a full half-minute. And under my emotionless gaze, I saw his face change from fury to senile fear. Then I broke the thick oak staff between my two hands as though it had been a pine wand, and let the pieces fall clattering at my feet.

"Forgive my intrusion," I said gently, as I turned on my heel; "I shall not trouble either of you again."

CHAPTER X.

THE HOUR OF BATTLE.

HAD I the prospect of Methusaleh's years and had my readers Job's patience, I might undertake to write a description of that voyage from England to Virginia. As it is, its incidents up to the hour of battle can be told in a mere handful of words.

The three little ships crawled over glassy seas or were buffeted like chips by the great winter gales. The passengers of our own vessel were first sick, then keenly interested in everything, then wearied and bored; and at length, by natural course, fell to plotting mischief.

Smith ruled them as though they were slaves. He had no legal right to do this, for the new colony's leader had not yet been named.

By orders of His Majesty King James, transmitted to "The Company," we were to sail to Virginia. Within twenty-four hours after landing there we were to open a sealed packet.

That packet contained the names of the men ordained by the king to be our president and of the men who were to form his council. None knew what names were written in the packet. None could know until we should land.

In the mean time we were normally under command of our three sea captains. But Smith, who had been the master spirit in recruiting the expedition, took on himself the temporary leadership. And he enforced it, by sheer strength of character, over the men who daily grew to hate him worse and worse.

For my own part, I kept my promise to the Errols. I never went near either of them again. But, curiously enough, I could not feel for them the wrath their stupid ingratitude and Mark Errol's blow deserved.

For the old man I had the pity one might have for a cranky, defective child. As for Dorcas, I found myself daily thinking more and more about her. And while this provoked me, I could not cease from it.

Left to my own resources, I plunged heart and soul into the wearisome task of learning from Aquia his language. When one has nothing else to do, and applies himself for more than four months to the acquiring of a foreign tongue, it is surprising what progress he can make. And in my own case, as I have said, I am ever quick at learning languages. Ere that awful voyage was over I had mastered the dialect of the giant Indian's people.

Despite a few gales, we fared more than commonly well in the way of weather, until we were within a few days' sail of the Canary Isles. Then one morning as Smith was using a rounded mirror to signal to our sister ships, the glass slipped from his hand at a lurch of the vessel and fell to the deck, where it broke in fifty pieces.

A gasp of fear rose from the onlookers. They were an ignorant and crassly superstitious lot. And to them the breaking of a mirror signified fearsome ill-luck, not only to the man who broke it, but to all his house. And as Smith's "house" just then consisted of the ship, they loudly foretold disaster for us all.

Smith rebuked their fears; but in the midst of his harangue as to the folly of the belief in superstition, one of the crew gave a shout of terror and pointed to westward.

Five minutes before, the early spring sunlight had been cloudless and balmy above an almost unrippled sea.

Now, as by magic, out of the west had leaped a black wall streaked with lurid gleams. It was rushing down upon us like a live thing. No one who has not witnessed the swift upcoming of such a tempest in southern seas can imagine its aspect or the terror it strikes to the stoutest heart.

For a second everybody stared in mute horror at the onsweeping storm. Then the shipmaster howled orders that sent the sailors swarming up into the rigging like so many monkeys. There, in wild haste, they tugged and hauled at shortening sail — a task on whose prompt achievement all our lives hung.

A heavy-set man in a sky-blue mantle thrust himself forward from the crowd of passengers.

"Yah!" he screamed, shaking a dirty forefinger in Smith's face. "'Tis you we have to thank for this! You smashed the mirror and drew a curse on us all. If we go to the bottom, it is because of your—"

"Silence!" roared Smith.

But terror of the elements had robbed the man and his fellows of their lesser terror of their master. They pressed about

Captain Smith, cursing him, reviling him, threatening him with eyes and fists and half-drawn blades.

The mastership that blazed in his little eyes had for once no effect on his followers. The fury of the tempest that was bearing down upon them was so terrible as to make mere mortal's rage seem a puny thing.

Like hungry lions about a man who sleeps at a dying jungle-fire, they edged closer and closer, and more menacingly toward the fearless but powerless captain.

In another moment, I think, the rush would have come—a rush that might have torn him limb from limb. But with a roar like that of a thousand pieces of artillery, the storm broke over us. It struck the ship as with the buffet of a huge fist. Over she careened, so sharply as to fling every one in a kicking, struggling jumble to the deck.

It was every one for himself. The waves swept the deck below the break before the ship could right herself again. Had the crew been five seconds less prompt in their work with the sails we must have turned turtle.

Then pandemonium broke loose.

The light of day was blotted out. Our ears were half deafened. The cordage sang like harp-strings. One seaman was blown out of the top rigging like a fly from a wall.

Men's yelling voices were inaudible in the uproar. The spume made everything invisible at a distance of a yard or so.

The ship shook and shivered and groaned like some sea-monster in anguish. From one side of the deck to the other we were tossed until the narrow decking-space was a shapeless mass of twisting, grotesquely writhing humanity.

In a few minutes the first force of the storm spent itself. The gale passed. But it was only the precursor of a three-day tempest, before which our three baremasted ships scudded impotently.

Hatches were battened down, and we were herded most of the time between decks like cattle. It was not pleasant. The air was vibrant with prayers, groans, and curses.

On the fourth morning the storm had somewhat abated, and we crawled on deck again. We could not see either of our sister ships anywhere.

The shipmaster ordered part of the canvas set and headed for the Canary Isles, where it had been arranged we should all meet in case our vessels should ever be scattered by a tempest.

In reply to an idle query, our shipmaster said:

"I dare not crowd more canvas on. We are not at the end of the storm. This is but a lull."

That was enough. Men glanced blankly at one another. Then the bulk of the passengers and several of the crew moved as by common consent toward the stern, and there they huddled for a time in eager, low-voiced converse.

I can read men a bit. That is why I am still alive. And if ever I read trouble, 'twas at that moment. I understood in part what the conversation portended. There was but one course for a decent man. I walked into the cabin, where I found Captain John Smith hard at work over a roll of maps and charts that he had spread out on the table. He glanced up as I approached.

"I am altering these," he said, too full of zeal to recall our cold relations one toward another. "Virginia now extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from New France settlement in Canada, down to the Spanish Floridas. It is in my mind to split it into two colonies, north and south, and to rename the northern one. Not to name it after a king who may die and be forgot, but after our own grand fatherland that can never be forgot. What think you, man, of christening the northern colony '*New* England?' Is not the idea a worthy one?"

"Pardon!" I broke in impatiently, able for the first time now to stem the current of his enthusiastic speech; "but if, instead of naming colonies that may never exist, you will look to your own welfare, you are like to live the longer. Come!"

"What do you mean?" he asked, angry at the interruption, yet seeing me to be in deep earnest.

"Get your sword first and put on your helmet and breastplate," I answered. "Do it without delay. Afterward there will be time to question me."

It was characteristic of the man that he waited to ask no further questions. He went to the wall and snatched down his sword and helmet. Then, beckoning to Aquia, who had stood stolidly in one corner of the cabin gazing out at the clump of whispering men, Smith ordered the Indian to help him fasten on the heavy, dented breastplate. I talked briefly and to the point while these preparations went forward.

"The crisis has come," I said. "These

ruffians of yours are no longer content to snarl. Look at them out there. They mean mischief."

Smith looked. At one glance this ruler of men saw I was right, and at a stride he reached the doorway leading from cabin to deck. He was not one second too soon.

For, even as he stepped forward, the conference among the malcontents ended. As one man they moved forward toward the cabin in whose doorway Smith, sword in hand, stood glaring at them.

This time his weapon and his eyes did not check them. There was a hissing sound as a score of swords leaped from their scabbards. The big fellow in the blue mantle was in advance of the rest. It was evident he was spokesman.

Onward moved the men until their leader was barely two swords'-length from Smith. Then he halted and made as though to speak. But Smith spoke first.

"What does this mean?" shouted the captain, his rough voice booming forth like a cannon-shot. "Is it mutiny? If so, you will one and all wish you had not been born."

The blue-mantled man held his ground and replied:

"We have had enough of that, Captain Smith. We have endured your browbeatings and your bullyings long enough. The end has come. It is you who have brought ill luck upon this ship."

"A gang of blackguards like you and your fellows, Jerry Crowley," retorted Smith, "are enough to bring ill fortune on Westminster Abbey itself. If—"

"The breaking of the mirror," pursued the blue-mantled Crowley, unheeding, "brought a curse on this ship. Our lives have been in peril from storm and wave ever since. And the shipmaster says the storm is not yet past. It is you, Captain John Smith, who have brought upon us this curse. And while you remain on board we shall not know one safe hour."

"The shore is overdistant to swim to," jeered Smith, "and our consort ships are not in sight. I fear me you must e'en endure my fateful presence a while longer."

A confused howl of negation — furious, beastlike—rose from the crowd.

"We shall not endure your presence," Captain Smith," retorted the spokesman. "That is what we have come to tell you. You brought ill luck upon us. If you stay we will all go to the bottom. And—"

"The right men in the right place at last," commented Smith.

"And," continued Crowley, his voice raising, "to save our own lives we must sacrifice you."

(Do not think I overdraw this scene, I beg. History will bear me out. From the beginning of the world seafarers have been rankly superstitious. And again and again they have thrown overboard men who they believed brought misfortune to the ship. To search no farther afield for an example, let me recall the case of the prophet Jonah in Holy Writ.)

"You mean to hurl me overboard?" asked Smith in genuine wonder.

For reply they unanimously pressed closer. Again was their fear of him forgot in a greater terror—the superstitious dread that his continued presence would bring them shipwreck and drowning.

At their forward move Smith raised his sword-point, but gave no other sign of emotion. Indeed, his usual truculence was replaced by calm—a deadly calm.

"Before you can cast me into the sea," he drawled, "you must take me. Who first will court death by laying hands on John Smith?"

They gathered for a rush. I quietly stepped into the broad doorway to one side of Smith, sword in hand. Aquia, the giant redman, hatchet aloft, stepped to Smith's other side as unconcernedly as though about to serve his master's dinner.

We were three against twenty. The odds seemed overwhelming. Our position in the doorway, which we completely filled, gave us some added advantage. But I knew enough of hand-to-hand warfare to realize how slender was our hope of survival.

Well, it would be, at any rate, a soldier's death. And at the side of two brave men. One might do worse than die thus, with drawn sword, for the right.

And, happier than I had been for months, I threw myself on guard.

CHAPTER XI.

I TRY MY HAND AT SWORD-PLAY.

THE appearance of Aquia and myself beside Smith was an evident surprise to the mutineers. I think they had not counted on the captain's receiving help from the few of the passengers and crew who were not in the plot.

Indeed, the non-combatants were huddled like scared sheep in a group near the farther rail, watching the proceedings with helpless terror.

I could make out Dorcas Errol's pale face and great frightened eyes. And beside her was her father, striving to force his way to the front of the knot of spectators.

Smith glanced quickly from one side to the other and noted our presence.

"Thank you, Clyde," he said to me under his breath, "you are a brave man. I knew I could count on you."

"Captain John Smith and you two others," cried Crowley, "I call on you to lay down your arms. You three will but die uselessly. Surrender, and Clyde and the Indian shall be spared."

"Oh, cease gabbling and begin your attack," snapped John Smith, "or do you want us to come out there and settle you? Ye are twenty. We are three. Yet we three be *men*. And—"

"No!" called a voice from one side of the mutineer group. "Ye are *four*, Captain John. I cast in my lot with you."

It was old Mark Errol. He had at last made his way through the non-combatants, and was shuffling rapidly across the deck toward us.

He had almost reached our side before his defiant words called the mutineers' notice to him. Then Jerry Crowley, who was nearest the old man, struck brutally at him with his sword.

I heard Dorcas cry out, but I was in mid air when I heard. For I had sprung forward and caught the heavy, descending blow on my own blade, at the same time clutching Errol by the collar and throwing him bodily toward the doorway.

Aquia caught the old man as he spun toward the threshold, and unceremoniously thrust Errol into the cabin behind him. Scarce had he done it when I was back, unhurt, in my former place at Smith's side.

It was a daring thing I had done. But its very unexpectedness, coupled with its lightning speed, had made it possible. I verily believe that less than two seconds elapsed from the time I left the doorway to the moment I returned to it after rescuing Mark Errol.

But the instant of action had been enough to snap the last thread of hesitancy on the part of our assailants. Instinctively, and waiting for no word of command, the whole mass of them flung themselves upon us.

Then, for a minute or so, ensued some of the hottest work of my life. There was no time nor room for clever fencing. There was naught possible save to elude or beat aside as well as possible the bristling sword-points that came toward my breast, and to thrust with ceaseless and wondrous rapid insistence at my oncoming assailants.

I had no chance to note how my comrades were faring. It was all I could do to hold my own and to keep from going down under the onslaught. A sword-point pricked my shoulder, another my thigh.

"Clyde," shouted Smith above the clamor of battle, "stick to the point, lad. Never give 'em the edge. 'Tis the only chance."

"I am no novice," I yelled in reply. "Save your breath for fighting."

For I was already observing the needful warning he had called to me. A swordsman trying to hold a doorway or other semi-protected position against two or more adversaries must ever thrust with the point of his sword, and never attempt to slash with its edge, for the latter motion leaves his guard open and takes up too much time.

Every swordsman knows this, and it irked me that Smith should have deemed it needful to tell me; but, like many born leaders, he seldom gave others the credit for common intelligence.

After a minute the first rush slackened. Unable to force their way in the initial attack, our assailants gave back for a second and a more concerted onset.

As the pressure in front of me slackened ever so little, I glanced at Smith, who was using his blade as coolly and dextrously as if he were in a fencing-school. He plied his great sword with perfect ease. And I noted that, like my own, his weapon was red to the hilt.

The Indian, Aquia, was equally calm. His arm was slashed by a sword blade, and another cut had laid open his cheek. But his stoical features gave no sign of pain.

At our feet lay six men, dead or wounded. And more than one of the survivors carried marks of our handiwork.

I hoped, for a moment, that the mutineers would be scared off by this proof of or power to defend ourselves. But, rapscallions as they were, they assuredly were not cowards.

These were men who not only lived by their wits, but who for years had held death off by their powers and courage with the sword.

And the difficulty of the task that now confronted them served only to urge them to further and more furious efforts. Their hatred was at boiling point. Their fighting spirit was up. The time when the power of a more masterful mind could quell them was past.

There was no hope for us. I hit on a bold plan. These men were gamblers and were wont to stake all on one throw: I would appeal to that instinct in them.

"Wait!" I cried, as they gathered about Crowley, arranging for a better and more carefully executed assault. "Wait! Crowley, 'tis to you I am speaking."

"The time for speaking is past," he growled.

"You are these men's leader," I hurried on. "You voiced their alleged grievance. Are you man enough to take the weight of that grievance upon yourself?"

He looked puzzled. So did the rest. They did not understand.

"Will you hold back your pack of curs," I continued, "and meet me, man to man, hand to hand, sword to sword?"

"What?"

"Will you let us represent our two factions and let the whole quarrel rest on the result of our duel?"

A murmur of keen, wondering interest sprang from the group. I gave it no time to die down.

"If you men charge us again," I said, "you may or may not overcome us. But in any case you will lose many lives. You have seen how we can fight. On the other hand, if we beat you into submission you all will continue to snarl for the rest of the voyage."

Again I paused for the fraction of a second to let my words sink in. Then I resumed:

"Let us rather be true gamesters. Fight me, Master Crowley. If I win let your men pledge themselves to obedience. If you win, Captain Smith shall be delivered into your hands."

"Hold on!" cried Smith (speaking to me in Italian, that he might not be understood by the rest). "What are you doing, man? Offering to deliver me over like a trussed pig to the butchers? Have I no voice in this?"

"If they attack again," I answered, in the same language, "we are none of us likely to have 'voice' about anything. We should not have lived through the first charge had they not attacked in confusion and with no concerted plan. Next time they will be wiser and four or five of them will engage each of us at once. No mortal, outside a romance book, could live for one minute against such odds. What I propose to Crowley is our only chance."

"Then," Smith insisted, "it must be I, and not you, who shall fight him. This is *my* quarrel."

"Should you step from this doorway," I retorted, "they will fall on you in a body. No. Mine is the only course. Take heart. You know something of my sword play."

Turning to the mutineers, who had been conferring excitedly together, I asked in English:

"Do you consent?"

"Yes!" they roared, Crowley among them.

It is human nature to enjoy watching an exciting contest between two well-matched men. It is gambler nature to enjoy the playing of a desperate hazard. Crowley evidently had the reputation of being a brilliant swordsman. Otherwise he could not have won his way to the mastery of such a rabble. I, on the other hand, was unknown to them as a fencer. From all these reasons I was not all surprised by the loud and ready assent to my proposition.

"Good!" I assented, stepping out into the cleared space in front of the doorway. "So be it. If I win, you men are to come to heel and conduct yourselves with due submission. If I lose, Captain Smith is yours. It is so understood?"

"Yes," roared the mutineers again.

And Crowley, casting aside his blue mantle, strode forth into the open space to confront me.

The deck was slippery and uneven. The ship was pitching wildly in the ground-swell of the storm. The pain from my two flesh wounds was sharp, yet I greeted right blithely this single chance of winning for us.

"On guard!" cried Crowley.

And our blades clashed together.

CHAPTER XII.

AN AFFAIR IN MIDOCEAN.

THERE is a sort of "sixth sense" possessed by every expert fencer which tells him at first clash of the blades whether or not his opponent is a good swordsman.

Such a sensation, I am sure, came to both Crowley and myself as our swords crossed, there on the ship's rolling, slippery deck. Around us, in a semicircle, crowded the mutineers. On the other side, in the cabin doorway, still grasping their weapons, stood Smith and Aquia. The wind was fresh in our faces and whistled through the cordage above.

For a few moments my antagonist and I were content to feel out each other's skill and to look for openings of attack. It was he who made the first aggressive move.

Dropping the point of his sword almost to the deck, in the hope that mine would follow it, he brought the point up again with incredible swiftness and lunged for my throat.

It was a clever trick, but an old one, and I was ready for it. Instead of being lured into sinking my sword-point, I had thrust as his point dropped. Crowley sprang back and parried at the same time, but he was just too late to avoid me.

The point of my sword sank into the flesh of his upper chest, struck on a bone, and deflected. The wound was light, but painful, and it infuriated him.

Casting caution to the winds, and spurred on by a cry of derision from some of his followers, Crowley rushed to the attack with a strength and savage quickness that taxed my powers to the utmost. For a space I could do naught but defend myself, and was hard put to it to do even that.

Our blades clashed and ground together, whining and slithering, like living creatures. This man, Crowley, was a swordsman of prowess. I, who have been accounted a skilled man at that art, could scarce do more than repel his assault.

But his own vehemence was fighting my battle for me. He was a strong man, and swift of motion, but his florid face and baggy eyes showed that he had lived the wildest of lives. And that same mode of life was now beginning to tell against him.

His fierce exertions were making him breathe fast, and were, ever so little, slackening his speed, whereas my own lungs and muscles, hardened by the rigors of many campaigns, and kept in condition by frugal, temperate living, felt no distress under the heavy strain I was putting upon them.

Around and around each other we circled, he ever on the offensive, I defending myself, and at each chance of an opening seeking to reach him. I had no eyes or ears for the onlookers. All I could see was Crowley's ferocious countenance, and the lightning play of his sword. All I could hear was the clashing of our blades and the panting breath of Crowley. My wounds were bleeding but little, yet they hurt me cruelly.

Our swords threw off a shower of red sparks as I parried a terrific cut for my head. I slashed under Crowley's guard. He sprang back to avoid the cut.

His foot slipped on the slimy deck, and down he crashed on all fours, his sword flying out of his grasp.

Now, here (as Smith did not hesitate to tell me later) was where I played the fool. Had the situations been reversed, Crowley would have spitted me as foul as I lay sprawling and disarmed at his feet.

Moreover, with the fate of Smith resting in my hands as it did, I had no right to indulge any foolish notions of chivalry. My duty was to Smith and to myself. Not to this cutthroat blackguard whom accident had placed at my mercy.

I knew all this. And I despised myself for my silly squeamishness. But I *could* not bring myself to stab the man as he groveled helpless. I could not do it.

I stepped back, sinking my sword-point to the deck.

"Get up!" I ordered.

A gasp of utter and unbelieving wonder burst from the mutineers. A cry of disgust came from the doorway where Smith stood watching.

But Crowley had caught up his sword, and was on his feet by the time the words were fairly out of my mouth. I could see from the look on his angry, bloated face that he felt a surprised contempt for me. Then he leaped to the attack.

Humiliated by his own awkwardness, mad at having been thus shamed before his followers, he flew at me in a frenzy of rage that half blinded him.

But this time I withstood his assault with less difficulty. Fury had dulled his keen skill; fatigue and the jar of his heavy fall had shaken his bovine strength.

In less than a minute I was on the offensive. And now for the first time during the duel, I was the aggressor. Little by little I drove him back, my sword barely missing its mark in more than one cut or slash.

I "touched" his shoulder, and a red spot widened on the white of his cambric shirt. My sword-point pierced his left arm in a lunge that was meant for his heart.

Backward ever I forced him. Nor, despite his wildest efforts, could he resume the offensive. His bolt was shot. His great body, strong as it was, had begun to pay the penalty for the life it had led. His breath came in sobbing gasps. His eyes were glaring and bloodshot.

He still fought ferociously. But I knew the end was not far off. So long as he stood face to face with me, and able to defend himself, I felt no shred of pity nor of compunction for what I was about to do.

At any instant, now, one of my lunges or cuts must penetrate past his weakening guard with sufficient force to end the combat.

Smith would be saved, and with him such future as might possibly lie in store for the Virginia colony, and for the Americas themselves. And I pressed my foe the more relentlessly.

I cut at his head, rising on my toes to give the greater force to my blow. He warded the stroke, yet so feebly that my blade came down upon his head glancingly, cutting away his leathern cap and staggering him.

I leaped forward to follow up my advantage. One more such blow would stretch him lifeless.

As I sprang my toe caught against the outflung, stiffening arm of one of the men who had been slain in the attack on the cabin doorway.

The ship rolled jerkily as I strove to regain my balance, and down I went on one knee. Luckily the fall was not enough to send the sword from my hand. But it shook me, sickeningly.

Before I could recover myself or make the first effort to rise Jerry Crowley was upon me. With a shout he had swung his blade aloft, and was bringing it down with every atom of remaining strength on my head. The slash would have cloven my skull in two, had it found its mark.

But, as he struck, I flung myself sharply to the right. Down whizzed the sword, barely grazing my left shoulder, yet with sufficient force to benumb my whole left arm.

And, as the stroke sped downward, I thrust.

I was still on one knee. But I thrust upward and threw the rising weight of my body into the lunge.

It all happened in a second. Crowley was drawn forward by the force of his own blow. And my upward thrust's force was redoubled by the fact that he involuntarily came to meet it.

Through leathern vest, through flesh and through bone, my good blade bit its way. Yes, and its point stood out a full three inches behind the man's back.

Crowley gave a convulsive start, whose force tore the sword-hilt from my wearied hand. Then, for a second, he stood stock-still, his hands upraised, a grotesque look of amazement on his purple face, and my blade transfixing his powerful body from chest to back.

He stood there, I say, while all the spectators stared breathless. Then, slowly, as if his legs were turned to melting tallow, he began to sink. And he lay on a great, huddled, silent heap on the blood-flecked boards of the deck.

Panting, I stepped back to the doorway of the cabin.

"I will take your hand now, Captain Smith," I said, "if you are still minded to offer it to me!"

"Brave lad!" cried Smith, thumping me on the back in a fashion that may have been commendatory, but was assuredly most agonizing to my wounded shoulder. "Good, brave lad! I could scarce have done a neater job myself. But why did you spare him the time you had him down? You saw how he treated *you* in like case."

"Yes," said I, dryly, "I saw. And it made my task the pleasanter. I—"

"Trouble!" croaked Aquia, in the Indian tongue.

He pointed at the mutineers. While one or two of them were fruitlessly seeking to revive Crowley, and to stanch the wound in which my sword-blade still remained, the bulk of them were eagerly jabbering together.

A less keen judge of human nature than Aquia could have seen that their conference boded no good fortune to us.

"Well!" called Smith, harshly. "Your champion lost the fight. And you will abide by the terms. Back to your quarters, all."

Instead, they turned on us as one man, and again their blades flashed out. It was clear they had hastily decided to re-

pudiate the agreement on which I had staked my life and Smith's.

Low gamesters as they were, they had not even sufficient manhood to abide by the turn of the fortune they themselves had invoked.

Possessed by the superstitious belief that Smith's continued presence on the ship would bring them disaster, they abandoned even such feeble hold upon honor that the average gamester is supposed to maintain.

Smith read their vile intent, as did I, even before their drawn blades gave proof of it.

"Your gallant fight was useless, Clyde," said Smith. "They mean to have me."

"And they have my sword," I growled. "I cannot help you hold the doorway against them on the next rush."

They had bunched themselves in rude military formation, and were preparing to charge. I could see this would be no wild, unarranged assault like the first.

We were doomed, we three men, of whom two were wounded, and one weaponless. Nevertheless I darted back and snatched up a three-legged stool from the cabin behind me.

With this rude weapon I took up my place in the doorway beside the two others. I hoped to strike some one before being killed.

"Charge!" bawled a skeletonlike gallant, with a shock of black, oily hair. He stood in the lead of the mutineers, and had evidently assigned himself to Crowley's vacated place as their captain.

"Charge!" he ordered, waving his sword.

And, in the same breath, even as we three braced ourselves for our hopeless defense, a hoarse, quavering voice from far to one side, called:

"*Halt!*"

So unexpected was the crack-voiced command, and from so unforeseen a direction, that all of us turned instinctively to look. Even the mutineer leader, who stood just in front of his compactly massed men.

And at what we saw, we every one stood aghast—dumfounded.

CHAPTER XIII.

I AM FORGIVEN—FOR NOTHING!

ON the high-jutting little platform just beyond the "break" of the deck, a culverin (a small cannon) was situated. One stood at each end of the ship, as precaution against pirate attack.

The two culverins had been overhauled and reloaded that very morning. For the storm-spray of the past three days had soaked their powder.

Idly we passengers had watched dry powder and a bagful of slugs and nails rammed into them not two hours before.

Now, instead of pointing swiftly out to sea, the culverin above the "break" had been slewed about on it's greased base-wheel, and was so tilted as to point at the direct center of the mutineer group.

To turn and sight the cannon thus was no great task for one man. But what took us so vastly by surprise was the identity of the man who had done it.

Crouching at the culverin's side, a lighted slow-match held just above its priming, was Mark Errol!

His thin, white hair waving in the wind, his somber face aglow, he seemed like some grimly grotesque caricature of Nemesis.

I had flung him out of harm's way from Crowley's threatening blade. Aquia had bundled him into the cabin like a sack of rags. But Errol had evidently crawled out by the other and smaller door at the cabin's far side, and had made his way unseen to the nearer of the two culverins.

In any case, there he was, with the cannon trained full on the mutineer group, and the sputtering slow-match within an inch of the priming's powder.

I speak, of course, only for myself. But I think we all, at that minute, recalled how large a bag of slugs, nails, and scrap-iron had that morning been crammed into the culverin's gaping mouth.

And I think we all realized just what hideous execution that charge of assorted metal would inflict at close quarters. It would sweep the whole deck like the wind of death itself. And, straight in the path of the discharge, the mutineers were bunched.

By a common impulse, all at once they started to spring aside from the menace. But ere they could move a step, old Errol's cracked voice pealed out again in menace:

"Halt!" he screamed, his husky tones scaling to angry falsetto. "The instant the first man of you stirs hand or foot I shall fire."

Quickly as the group could scatter, they knew the hail of death would be among

them ere the swiftest man could bound from its path of devastation. And they halted; pallid, muttering, dazed.

For a moment the old man eyed them with an air of mildly malevolent triumph. He, the unconsidered feeble passenger, to whom none of the noisy throng had ever given a second thought, held all their lives in the hollow of his withered hand! A far greater man than he might have been pardoned for gloating.

But the pause was only momentary. Then Mark Errol spoke again:

"Captain Smith," he called, "I have these rascals safe at your disposal. What is your will? Shall I fire?"

"Not yet," answered Smith, grasping the situation at once, as was his wont. "There may be no need. Let me disarm them first."

He stepped from the doorway. I drew him back by main strength.

"Are you insane?" I cried. "If you go out among them they will kill you like a sheep, for they know he will not fire on you. Let me go instead. Errol hates me like the plague. And if they attack me, he will not hesitate to blow me and them to kingdom come."

I gave Smith no time to argue, but hurried out among the cowed mutineers. I snatched the swords from their unresisting hands, the dirks and knives from their belts; tossing the weapons back by the handfuls to the doorway, where Aquia gathered them and stowed them safely away inside the cabin.

It was the work of only a minute or so to disarm the entire lot. Then Smith summoned the shipmaster who, throughout, had remained cowering among the non-combatants.

"Call up enough of your crew to take these men below," he ordered, "and have them battened down there until we reach port. Take them two by two. The rest of you," he added, to the helpless mutineers, "stand still! Errol, if one of them makes a move, fire."

Two by two they were led away, under escort of the cowed shipmaster and his sailors. When the last of them was gone, Smith folowed to the hatchway and called down it:

"You will be glad to know the priming plug was fastened into the touch-hole of the culverin. Errol did not know enough to remove it. He could not possibly have fired. That is why I bade him wait. You were all as safe from death as if you had been in St. Paul's Cathedral. Brood over your own heroic courage while we batten down the hatch above you, you vipers with extracted fangs!"

Two days later we reached the Canary Isles where, at the agreed meeting-place, we found the two other ships of our expedition awaiting us.

There was a great conference. The mutineers stated their grievances, and Smith roared his. Gosnold, Ratcliffe, and Newport sat in judgment, a judgment palpably swayed by the bulk of the three shiploads of colonists, whose sympathies were all with the mutineers.

Some were for hanging Smith from the yard-arm; some for executing him as soon as we should reach America; some for marooning or sending him back to England.

Gosnold pointed out that none of these pleasant suggestions were feasible. For, according to royal orders, no step of drastic justice could be taken until the colony's officers were appointed. And that could not be done until we should reach Virginia.

Then, by the king's command, we were to open the sealed packet that contained the names of the officials appointed by his majesty to rule over us.

As a compromise, Smith was placed under a sort of "honorable arrest," which did not affect his freedom or personal authority, until we should reach Virginia. And, this arranged, we sailed onward.

I foresaw more trouble the moment we should land. If Smith's name were not included in the sealed packet's list of officials (and there seemed no reason to believe it would be), the officials would probably seek to curry favor with their colonists by ordering him to death or to banishment.

And thus the new colony would be deprived of the one man who could possibly save it from utter failure.

If, on the other hand, Smith's name, by any chance, should be among the officials, he was safe. For, desperate blackguards as many of them were, the colonists would not dare defy the king's authority, nor lay violent hands upon one of his chosen officers. Such an act would bring swift and relentless punishment upon the offenders.

I was seated on a coil of rope on deck

the night after we left the Canarys, pondering on these things, when a shadow came between me and the moon.

I looked up. Dorcas Errol stood before me. It was my first glimpse of her since the battle. For, by Smith's orders, she and her father had kept to their own quarters, lest the mutineers' sympathizers might seek to harm them.

She had come silently along the deck. As she paused in front of me, I fancied she mistook me for some one else.

Knowing how distasteful my presence had been to her, I rose, and started quietly to move away; but, with a light hand on my arm, she checked me.

"Master Clyde!" she said softly.

I hesitated. She laughed a little, in embarrassment, as she looked up into my bewildered face.

"Please do not go," she continued. "There is something I must say to you. And, oh! 'tis so hard to say! Pray make it easier by seating yourself again, and looking out to sea or anywhere at all except at myself."

Dumbly I obeyed her. I sat down again, wondering vastly what had caused this odd change in her manner. She seated herself near me. And for a moment she was silent. Then—

"Master Clyde," she began timidly, "I have sought for days to speak with you. And—and now that the chance has come, I be monstrous frightened and uncertain what to say."

"If it pains you to say something that is on your mind," I suggested, awkwardly enough, "why say it? Unless, indeed, I can be of service to you."

She caught at the idea expressed in my hesitant words.

"Of service to me?" she repeated. "You can be. Will you tell me something?"

"Gladly."

"That night—the night we left England," she began, hesitatingly.

"Yes," I answered.

"I saw you push my father out into the hallway, into the very arms of the city watch. Why did you take from him, among other things, the silver chain he wore about his neck?"

"I did not!" I stormed, springing to my feet, ablaze with indignation.

"You took naught from him?" she insisted.

I did not answer.

"Captain Smith says," observed she, "that you are a man of honor. Do men of honor break their word? You promised me, but now, to reply to my questions. What did you take from my father that night?"

"His hat and his cloak," I replied sullenly.

"And why? Had you none of your own?"

"I beg you will pardon me if I answer no more questions," I retorted, bitterly. "Believe, if you like, that I stole them to buy liquor or for any other purpose."

"Suppose," she pursued, "that I prefer to think you played the hero rather than the thief? Suppose that these poor wits of mine have been working hard over this mystery, and that at last they pieced out the whole truth, except as to how you impersonated my father and fooled the city watch? Suppose—"

"Don't! I beg you to say no more about the affair. You and your father were convinced that I thrust him into the hands of the law's officers. Let it rest at that!"

"Suppose," she persisted, "that having pieced out the entire story except as to the matter of your disguise, I had put to you just now a question or two that seemed insulting, in order that I might learn the rest of the truth, would that have been an unworthy act of mine?"

"Mistress Errol," I began in dire confusion.

But she interrupted me.

"Master Gordon Clyde," she said, and the tears seemed very near her voice, "I have done terrible injustice to a brave, self-sacrificing gentleman. And so has my father. We misjudged you and insulted you. You who had risked your life for us. What atonement can we make?"

"Oh, I beg you, speak no more about it," I implored. "It is not meet that any woman should humble herself before a man like me. I—"

"For weeks I had tried to hate you," she went on, "and to tell myself you were unworthy my lightest thought. But ever, in spite of me, came a voice whispering, 'You are wrong!' I—"

"Please!" I cried, but she hurried on.

"Then, on the day of the mutiny, when you saved my father again from death, and when you risked your life fighting for Cap-

tain Smith, whom you hated, why, it came to me all at once that you could not be the blackguard we had deemed you. Even my father now agrees with me. I—I—oh, 'tis so hard to confess one has been wicked and unjust! Pray make it easier by glowering at me, or berating me, or—"

"Or asking you to forget the whole wretched misunderstanding," I supplemented. "The happiness you give me by no longer deeming me a scoundrel is tenfold reward for everything."

I had leaned toward her in my eagerness. A very blessed and heaven-sent breeze blew a strand of her lovely hair across my face. Its caress thrilled me to the very soul.

And, all at once, I knew that my whole heart was tangled in that mesh of moon-kissed hair, and that never, never could I hope nor wish to untangle it.

She was speaking again.

"You will let us be friends?" she asked, half timidly, half appealingly.

As she spoke she stretched out her hand toward me. I took the little palm between my own two big hands, and bent down reverently to kiss it.

Such a salutation was frequent and commonplace enough in those days. Yet the touch of her cool, soft hand in mine went through my whole being.

"Friends?" I repeated stupidly, "*Friends?*"

"It is so dull on shipboard during the long days and evenings," she said, talking fast to hide a sudden embarrassment, "and it will be good to have some one with whom to talk. You will talk with me sometimes?"

"Sometimes? Every moment that you will permit."

"And you will forget our cruelty to you? Our wicked injustice?"

"Forget it?" I answered. "Forget it? Never while life lasts. Does one forget the key that opens paradise to him?"

But being still just a little sane, I said this to myself. Aloud, I mumbled something stupid.

CHAPTER XIV.

LAND HO!

A LOW-LYING, sandy coast on either side. We had passed into the great bay of Chesapeake, and Smith had named its two bordering capes after the two sons of King James—Henry and Charles.

We had found safe anchorage, after a storm off, another point of land, and this, for its anchorage and the security it afforded our wind-battered ships, he named Point Comfort.

And now we were nearing the great, muddy river on whose banks we planned to form our little colony. We had left England early in December of 1606, and now we were in mid June of 1607.

Folk nowadays prophesy that in a few years ships will be able to cross from England to the Americas in five or even four weeks. Personally, I believe in no such wild forecasts. In any case, our own roundabout journey had consumed nearly six months ere we touched at Point Comfort.

And a dreary time it had been, the first part of it. Small wonder I had managed to learn from Aquia the Indian language during the endless days of the voyage.

But since we had left the Canarys my language-study had suffered sadly. And time had flown on golden wings, for daily I was with Dorcas Errol.

Her sour-faced father had even deigned to growl some halting apology to me, and a still more halting speech of gratitude for my services toward him, and little by little he had taken me into his confidences, and a genuine friendship had sprung up between us. For Dorcas's dear sake I would have endured a far more crotchety comrade than old Mark Errol.

This afternoon as we moved into the yellow current of the great river, away from the blue, dancing stretch of water behind us, Dorcas and I leaned over the rail. side by side.

"To-morrow we will land," she was saying. "What a voyage it has been!"

"A golden time for laziness," I answered, "that I shall never forget. It will be sweet to look back on, amid the endless toil that awaits us yonder."

"You still hate the idea of turning colonist?" she asked. "I thought you had become reconciled to it."

"I have," I said, "for now the toil means something to me. It means—home! I have never known a home, Dorcas."

She did not answer. Emboldened, I went on:

"After our town is laid out and the treaty made with the savages, and our crops are planted, I want to find somewhere

in the wilderness a spot of land that shall be mine own. Shall I tell you of it?"

"Yes."

"A sloping lawn, running down to a lake, a forest behind and about it, with great, gentle hills coming down almost to the water's edge, and on the brow of my lawn a house. My house—and one other's. A *wife's!* And when I come home from my day's work of turning the wilderness into a fertile farm, she will be waiting at the door, in the sunset, to welcome me and to make me forget the labor of the day in the joy of seeing her. A strange dream, is it not, for a broken soldier of fortune. Does it interest you?"

"You know it does," she murmured.

I drew nearer to her side.

"Dorcas," I went on eagerly, "do you know who the woman is whom, in my dreams, I see waiting for me in the glory of the sunset at the door of my cabin? She is the one woman in all the world to me. Shall I tell you her name, or have you guessed it?"

I know not what she would have replied, nor could I guess it from her face, which was so far averted as to leave me but a glimpse of one very small, very pink ear. At that wondrous moment, as mischievous luck would have it, who should come a clumping up to us—actually looking as if he thought we would be glad to see him—but Mark Errol.

"Lass," said he, "we cast anchor in another hour, they tell me. Get our goods packed and ready."

Meekly, after the manner of daughters in that day, she hurried off to obey. I looked at Mark Errol as calmly as I could, but of a certainty if he could have read the murderous thoughts behind my stolid, weatherbeaten face, he would have jumped overboard or climbed up a mast in sheer terror.

For weeks I had been rehearsing, and improving, and twisting that proposal speech of mine, nad now, just when I had got it finely under way, the father must needs break in upon it and spoil all.

Yet I picked up heart, for I had also rehearsed for weeks a formal yet eloquent address wherein I was to entreat Mark Errol for the honor of his daughter's hand.

I had intended to deliver this second speech after I should have won the maid's own consent, but now it seemed a pity that so much good courage should go to waste, so I resolved to unburden myself of the formal request while Mark Errol and I still stood there by the rail together.

I fear me that luck was not with me on that day, for even as I cleared my throat and assumed a conciliatory smile, prior to plunging into my entreaty for his daughter's hand, Mark Errol, who had glanced about him nervously, bent toward me and whispered:

"Lad, you have a level head, and I can trust you. Moreover, it is needful that I confide in you that you may be on guard to aid him in case trouble should follow what I have done. Yet to me it seemed his one salvation, and the colony's as well."

I growled something under my breath which, luckily, Errol did not hear. I knew not what this confidence might be which he was trying to tell me, nor did I care. I knew only that his interruption had sent my own well-rehearsed speech scattering to the four corners of my brain.

"Lad," he went on, "in Gosnold's strong-box is the royal packet which we are bidden to open within twenty-four hours of landing. It names our officers who are to rule over us here, in the king's name."

"Yes, yes!" I retorted impatiently, "I know. It is known to all. What about it?"

"Simply this," he answered, after a pause in which he seemed to be fighting back some confession that had sprung to his lips. "Simply this, lad: When it is opened look out for excitement."

"Zounds!" I exclaimed in vexation. "Was this the 'confidence' you were about to make?"

"No," he returned surlily, "it was not. On second thought I have decided that all I needed to do was to set you on your guard. These colonists are wont to act hastily."

"And you mean they will clamor for the new crown officials to hang Smith?"

"'Tis possible."

"Officials or no officials, Smith shall not die while I can draw sword."

"How devoted and loyal to him you are!" approved Errol.

"On the contrary," I contradicted, "I am not devoted to him at all."

"But—"

"But he is the one man who can save this tatterdemalion colony from ruin. I may not love the helmsman of a ship, but while that ship, in storm, depends for

safety on the helmsman's wise hand, I will do all I can, for my own sake, to protect him."

"A great man!" muttered Errol. "A great man!"

"I thank you right humbly, sir," quoth I, blushing violently and deeply gratified at the praise.

"I refer to Smith," he snapped, and his words were like a dash of ice-cold water.

"Oh!"

"To Smith. 'Tis a wise choice. He will guard her and make her happy."

"What are you trying to say?" I demanded, vaguely uneasy. "What is a 'wise choice'? And—"

"My consent to Captain John Smith's plea for Dorcas. Has the lass not told you?"

I could not answer. I stood, mouth agape, staring dully at him.

"'Twas yesterday," prattled on the old man, "that Captain Smith broached the topic to me. It seems my lass has found favor in his eyes. She—"

I interrupted with a wordless gurgle of horror that I prudently changed to a cough. He went on:

"Captain Smith told me he intends to settle down for life here, as colonist and planter. He wishes to marry, and Dorcas is a winsome lass, though I, her father, do say it. Captain Smith made full courteous request for her, and I granted it."

"But she?" I blurted out, trembling. "What of her? Does she consent to such—"

"Master Clyde," reproved Errol, "in my home I have ever been master, and ever shall be. My daughter has been trained since birth to obey. I did not ask her consent. I gave it. And she, as a dutiful daughter, realizes that I have acted for her best and highest interests."

Still I stared at him, wordless, dumfounded. There was a roaring in my ears as my beautiful air-castles fell in fragments about me. Oddly enough, in all my thirty-six years no other woman had ever touched my heart until I had met Dorcas Errol. She was the ideal which my heart had craved.

And now, I knew full well, through all the black years to come, all other women would be to me as shadows. Once more had mine enemy, Smith, scored against me. And this time with a blow that took all the joy out of life for me.

I could not speak. I turned on my heel and walked away, my heart as heavy as lead.

At a flat, marsh-bordered slope of green we landed. Here our colony was to be founded. Smith would gladly have sought the higher, healthier ground farther up the river, but he was overruled by force of numbers.

After months of sailing, the colonists would not hear of wasting more time in voyaging. To them the site of our colony seemed fair and healthful enough.

And here, in the early summer of 1607, was sown the seed that was to blossom into the first permanent colony in North America.

There were dozens of fantastic names suggested for our embryo settlement, but at length Smith's own suggestion was adopted, and, in honor of England's king, the place was called by us "Jamestown."

Scarce were the ship-loads of adventurers landed when they went apparently mad. Some were for rushing straight off through the hostile, trackless forests, westward, toward the Pacific Ocean. It was commonly reported in those days that the Pacific's shores were yellow with pure gold.

Thither the adventurers resolved to go at once. They seemed to fancy that the Pacific was at most a half-day's journey westward from Jamestown.

Others snatched up spades and mattocks and eagerly began to dig in the soft, black waterside earth, tearing each clod of dirt apart with shaking fingers, in search of gold nuggets.

Still others pointed at the yellow waters of the great river and learnedly declared that the quantities of gold along its banks gave it that aureate hue.

Gold! Gold! *Gold!* GOLD!

That was all the crack-brained idiots thought of, talked of, dreamed of. It possessed their souls like a frantic mania. When one of them dug up a few shiny particles of mica the rest actually drew knives in rabid dispute over their possession, deeming the bright stuff gold dust.

Yes, it is true, all of it. And I have not told one-tenth. Such were the men on whom we relied to build a lasting colony here; to settle and to populate the New World.

Around them were miles of black forests, alive with savage beasts, and with far more

savage Indians. Ere our scanty store of ship's provisions should be exhausted we must work day and night cutting down trees, reclaiming and plowing forest land, and sowing our crops.

Ere winter should come we must build warm homes and get the skins of wild animals for cold-weather clothing. Sooner than that, we must erect fortifications against the warlike Indians of the interior, who any day might swarm down upon us.

And, with this mountain of pressingly needful work looming up before them, what were our choice gentlemen-adventurers doing? Digging with their finger-nails for gold and planning treasure journeys to the Pacific coast!

Smith raged among them, purple with fury, shouting insults and commands, exhorting them madly to return to their senses, to get to work, to make at least preparations against attack.

At first the gold-maniacs paid no heed. Then, upon their craving for wealth, intruded the fact that their tyrant was once more harrying them. They ceased their treasure hunt and rushed as one man to Gosnold with the demand that he open at once the king's list of officials for the colony.

Their intent was plain. So soon as these officials should be named, the adventurers would force them to put Smith to death. Thus, legally, they would accomplish what the mutiny had failed to give them.

As the king's commands were that the packet be opened within twenty-four hours of our landing in Virginia, Gosnold could find no excuse for refusal.

He brought forth his strong-box, unlocked and opened it, and drew forth the parchment, fastened with the royal seal. It was discolored and limp from sea-water that had soaked in during the storm. The seal came open almost at Gosnold's first touch.

Around him crowded the gentlemen-adventurers, faces cruel and eager, hands on hilts, ears strained to catch the wording of the list.

Smith alone, seated on a sea-chest, to one side, gave no sign of interest.

But I noted that his knuckles were white from the tight grip on his sword-hilt.

I moved carelessly across the cleared space until I stood beside him, and I motioned secretly to Aquia and Mark Errol to follow me.

Slowly, reluctantly, Gosnold unrolled the damp scroll. Then, as he glanced at it, his face changed, and I half drew my sword. Presently he read aloud, all listening breathlessly:

"*By the command and the good pleasure of His Gracious Majesty, James the First, of England and of Scotland, to his well-beloved subjects in Virginia. Greetings and these:*

"*It is herewith ordained and commanded that the following President and Council shall rule over you in my name, and with royal authority—*"

Gosnold paused. The silence was tense, alive with meaning. Then he read on:

"*President of the Virginia Colony*—Captain John Smith!"

Gosnold got no further. A groan that rose to a howl burst from the adventurers. Their tyrant, from whose power they had hoped to be freed in one stroke, was now their legal ruler; the choice of their king.

To raise hand against him was to court death. All England's mighty authority was behind him. Henceforth John Smith would be as secure among these blackguards who hated him as in the Tower of London.

My sword slipped back into its sheath. There was no work for it. My eye fell by chance on Mark Errol, and the look in his face struck me with a sudden suspicion.

Our eyes met and he moved across to me.

"I can trust you, now that the thing is done, lad," he muttered low, "I did it at Point Comfort when the ships lay at anchorage there. Gosnold slept. One of my keys fitted his strong-box. A hot knife-blade lifted the seal. Five minutes' work with erasing-knife and a quillful of ink completed the affair. The handwriting was easy to copy. Smith's name was not on the king's list. But for me the council would now be signing his death warrant."

"To work! howled Smith, "and a hundred lashes on the bare back of the first man who speaks the word 'gold'!"

CHAPTER XV.

INTO THE UNKNOWN.

THROUGH the dense, untrodden forest we moved in single file. Aquia, genius at trail-making and woodcraft in general, led the way. Close behind him followed Smith. And I brought up the rear.

We three were traveling alone through a wilderness where never before had white man's foot trod. We were bent upon an errand that meant either death to ourselves and the colony or else the saving of both.

For we were nigh unto starvation. We had been too short a time in Virginia for our first crops to reach the hour of harvesting. The provisions we had brought from England were well nigh exhausted.

Our men, who had been able to live by their wits in taverns and gaming-rooms of London, were unable to use those same wits for the snaring of wild beasts or the finding of edible fruits and berries here in the American wilderness.

Hunger's skeleton face grinned uncomfortably close to us all. Small, marauding bands of Indians, too, had kept us nerve-racked and sleepless.

Smith at length decided that there was but one course left to us. Powhatan was king of all the Indians in that region. Aquia told us the savage monarch held court in a great village far to the westward.

Smith resolved to visit Powhatan, and to try to make with him some sort of treaty which should not only insure us against further depredations from his wandering war-parties, but should provide us with food as well.

It was barely possible such a mission might succeed. It was far more probable, as Aquia pointed out, that Powhatan might kill the envoys, and then, at his leisure, destroy the colony, for he was known to bear no love for the white man since the day that one of Sir Walter Raleigh's followers had shot his youngest son.

The chance we were taking was a desperate one. Still, slender as it was, it still was a chance. And it was our only one. We were three thousand miles from England, and at a time when no reenforcements or food could reach us for many months at best.

So Smith had called for twenty volunteers to accompany him to Powhatan's village. Of all our swash-bucklering company only Aquia and myself had offered our services. The rest took one look at the forbidding vastness of the forest, known to be peopled with wild beasts and savages, and believed to be peopled with forest-demons as well. Then, unanimously, they refused to go with us.

Thus it was that Smith and Aquia and I were pressing westward without guard or escort, risking our lives for the welfare of a crowd of men who would not stir finger to help us.

For days we had traveled. Smith's compass and Aquia's general sense of the direction of Powhatan's village being our only guides. Thanks to Aquia we had moved along a route not likely to be frequented by war-parties. And we had kept close hidden, traveling with almost ridiculous caution.

To-day, as we crossed a half-blotted outglade in the thick of the forest, an arrow whizzed from out of the dense leafage beyond us. With a tinkle it smote Smith's steel head-piece.

We whirled about. Not a sign could we see of our assailant. Nor could we see Aquia. He had vanished as if in thin air.

Whether he had dropped and then glided to a thicker part of the bushes, or whether the earth had swallowed him, we could not tell. But he was gone.

There was something uncanny about it all. A minute earlier we three had been plodding along safely and weirdly in single file.

Now our guide had vanished in the twinkling of an eye, leaving Smith and myself standing there, waist high in the rank undergrowth, the hot sun beating down upon us, while death lurked invisible behind the surrounding wall of leaves.

It is one thing to face peril hand to hand. It is quite another to stand helpless before a foe you cannot see. I know of nothing that so racks the nerves. It is the same dread magnified a thousandfold that makes little children fear the dark.

Smith and I did not stand supinely waiting. Instead, on the instant, we were back to back; our heavy muskets cocked and leveled; our eyes seeking vainly to pierce the barrier of foliage for a glimpse of our hidden foe.

The stillness was absolute. Even the myriad tiny forest noises seemed hushed as we watched tense and breathless. We were both veteran soldiers and accustomed to night alarms and surprises of all sorts, But not to standing in the peaceful sunlight trying to guard against an unseen enemy.

Suddenly the stillness was split by an unearthly shriek. From the long grass twenty feet away from us a savage in full war-paint sprang up into the air, his arms outflung, his face distorted.

In the brief moment that he hung thus 'twixt earth and heaven we could see that his skull had just been cloven as by a hatchet-blow.

Then he crashed noisily down into the undergrowth of the glade. And the noonday silence poured back upon us, until I could hear the throb of my own heart.

What did it mean? The bushes and grass of the little glade had shown no sign of motion. No rustle had reached our ears; we had seen no swaying of leaf and grass blade, as from the passing of some moving object.

Yet, from a spot in the glade which we had traversed not two minutes earlier, this Indian warrior had leaped into air, and bearing the mark of a death-blow which must have been delivered at the very instant before he had sprung up. Who had killed him?

It was so unnatural, so weirdly impossible, that I felt a little chill of horror. The savage must have stolen forward from the woods since we had passed that point in the glade. Yet how had he done so, unnoted by us? And what nameless thing had met him there in the grass and stricken him dead?

Again the wilderness silence brooded over everything. We scanned the undergrowth about us. It was moveless. This suspense was terrible.

"I cannot stand this any longer," cried Smith, and his voice was hoarse. "I am going to charge!"

"What? Where?"

"Into the forest. I feel as if a million unseen faces were grinning at me. Come! Let us make an end of this!"

Something like a great whizzing hornet buzzed through the glade. And from the branches of a great live oak at the clearing's edge a red, painted figure tumbled heavily to earth like a shot squirrel.

As the Indian fell headlong from his impenetrable nest of leaves I could see the shaft of a war-arrow sticking between his shoulders.

He fell into a clump of bushes. The crackle and thud echoed through the stillness. Then the hush came back, broken only by an occasional convulsive kicking or quivering of the arrow-pierced body in the undergrowth at the foot of the great tree.

And to my overtense mind came back a fragment of a psalm text:

"The terror that walketh by noonday!"

"Charge!" panted Smith. "It is better to be shot down than to stand watching the handiwork of unseen death!"

CHAPTER XVI.

I ENACT A STRANGE RÔLE.

We had been standing on guard, back to back, our muskets raised and ready to fire at the first glimpse of our hidden foes.

Now, at Smith's nervous command, I ranged myself at his side. We sprang forward together through the waist-high grass, toward the thick woodland in front of us.

We had scarce traveled three yards in our plunging flight ere we crashed to earth. Together we fell, as by a signal. We did not stumble. We did not lose our balance on the uneven ground. But, simultaneously, our feet were jerked back from under us, and we sprawled heavily on our faces.

Ere we could either of us make the first effort to rise a score of strong, lean hands gripped and pinioned us. The seemingly empty glade swarmed all at once with naked savages.

They seized us, burying us beneath sheer force of numbers, binding our wrists and ankles with green withes. There was no question of a struggle. By the time we struck the ground, face downward, they were upon us.

We were lifted up bodily, like trussed pigs. Then I was able to look about me. We were surrounded by perhaps thirty Indians. That they were a war-party was proven by the nature of the paint on their coppery faces and lithe bodies. They grasped hatchets and bows and knobbed clubs. But they made no move to injure us.

And from this fact I understood the worst. We were reserved for torture. A big, fierce-eyed young man, who seemed to be their leader, a sub-chief, grunted an order. Several of the braves ran to two different points of the glade, and returned bearing among them the bodies of the two Indians we had seen so mysteriously slain.

And now the dull, stolid expression of the savages' faces changed to puzzled wonder as they marked the hatchet-stroke and the arrow-wound. From the two dead Indians to ourselves they looked in bewilderment.

I understood. They saw that neither of us carried bow and arrow nor hatchet.

And they could not guess how their comrades had met death, for doubtless this was their own territory, and free from incursions of any hostile tribe. In all this sea of misunderstanding it comforted me a little to find that others were as puzzled as I was.

But the American Indian spends little time in fruitless speculation over anything. In a few moments the sub-chief gave a second grunted command.

We were slung upon the backs of our four warriors in no gentle fashion, and the march westward was recommenced. Our muskets, which had caused some excitement and conjecture to our captors, were borne along by one of the braves.

And thus, for perhaps two hours, we were carried. At the end of that time we came out upon an open space on the edge of a brook.

There was a fire burning, and over it a buck was broiling. Three or four Indians ran forward to greet us. The place was evidently this war-party's temporary encampment.

Smith and I were tossed down uncomfortably near the roaring fire, while our captors withdrew out of ear-shot and conversed together in slow guttural tones.

"What next?" I asked of Smith.

"The torture," he answered quietly. "I am sorry, Clyde, that my throw of the dice should have led you to such an end."

"I am not in love with the idea of death," I replied with forced lightness, "and I confess the thought of torture turns me sick, but I shall at least die beside a gallant man, and one whose example will keep me from showing these red beasts how keenly their torment hurts me. And so, old comrade, good-by, and good luck! Here they come."

The pow-wow was over. Two parties of braves set to work driving thick cedar stakes into the ground, about thirty feet apart. Others collected brushwood and began piling it near these stakes. Several Indians approached us, picked us up, and placed each of us beside one of the stakes. They loosened our hands, but left our feet tied.

Smith's stake was at the rear of the clearing, close to the network of forest undergrowth and trees. Mine was within a yard or two of the camp-fire. Suddenly, as I watched the torture-preparations, the craving for life surged up in me like a mighty wave, and with it came the unnatural calmness and clear thought that are mine in moments of fiercest stress.

The sub-chief chanced to be passing where I sat. I looked up at him and laughed. The Indian seldom laughs, save in mockery, or at the sight of suffering. To laugh in a redskin's face is an insult. So much I knew from Aquia.

The sub-chief halted and scowled down upon me. I met his glower with a veritable roar of laughter. Every eye in the camp was turned upon me.

The sub-chief's hand sought his hatchet. At the gesture I laughed louder than ever. (I wonder if any man since the birth of time has laughed with less mirth in his heart?) He paused, irresolute, angry. Then, in turning to his followers, he sneered:

"You have heard how the white fool can laugh. Soon you shall hear how he can howl."

He nodded toward the stake as he spoke.

"That is why I laugh," I cried in his own tongue.

Even the stolid savage looked blank at my easy use of their language, and I mentally blessed the tedious weeks I had spent in acquiring it.

"I laugh," I hurried on, "to see your preparations for burning us. Idiots! Do you think the fire is built that can burn me? I am fire's master. It will spring from the earth or at the sky at my bidding. Do you not know manitous when you see them?"

Boastful talk? Yes, in faith worthy of Smith's own worst bragging. Yet it caught and held the savages' attention.

"Look!" I declaimed. "I will make good my words. Whence shall I call forth fire? From the ground beside me?"

I reached across to the camp-fire's embers and caught up a smoldering coal in bare hand. It burned my palm horribly, but I gave no sign of pain.

"From the damp ground here fire shall spring at my call!" I bragged.

And with a mystic gesture I struck the earth with the little piece of red-hot ember I held.

At my action a burst of yellow flame flared up in a sizzling puff, and a cloud of dense smoke drifted away through the still air.

A miracle? Not at all. I had covertly emptied from my pouch a handful of gun-

powder upon the black loam. The touch of the fiery coal had done the rest. Perfectly simple, as you see. But these savages had neither seen nor heard of gunpowder.

At the flash and the puff every Indian had sprung backward. I gave the impression no chance to pass. Raising my powder-blackened hand, and waving it dramatically in front of the sub-chief, I shouted:

"You seek further test? You shall have it. I shall now make fire burst from your face. A flame so fierce that it will blot out your eyes and burn away your flesh. Behold!"

But with a very unstoical yell of alarm the sub-chief jumped back, shielding his face with both arms.

"Coward!" I scoffed.

He stared down at me, irresolute.

"These foolish bands at our ankles!" I raged on. "Could I not burn them through at a touch? Could I not smite you all dead by calling upon the invisible manitous that serve me? Even as, at my orders, my invisible ones slew your two comrades back in the forest yonder?"

Another gasp and a start of dismay, as each Indian looked nervously about him to ward off possible attack from one of my unseen "spirits."

"In the hot nights," I continued, "you have seen the flash of my fire and heard the sound of my voice. You called it lightning and thunder in your ignorance. You have seen next day a great pine-tree blasted and prone. You thought it a lightning-stroke. It was *my* blow."

This last flight of imagination, I saw, was well-nigh too much for even these savages' credulity.

"You doubt?" I asked sternly. "Behold the proof."

I reached forward and picked up one of the two muskets that had been laid near the fire. A great buzzard, attracted, I suppose, by the smell of cooking meat, was winging heavily toward us. I pointed out the advancing bird.

"Watch!" I commanded.

I raised the musket and took swift aim. The target was not a difficult one for so good a marksman, yet when I realized all that depended on my shot my hand well-nigh shook.

The forest quiet was rent by the roaring report of the musket. The flash lightened up the shadowy clearing. The buzzard fell with a bump to the earth, torn half to pieces by the heavy charge of shot I had fired into him.

Four or five of the natives fell prone on their faces. Others incontinently bolted for the woods. One or two of the bravest stood poking at the shattered buzzard and murmuring guttural appeals to the Great Spirit for protection.

"Is it enough?" I demanded of the sub-chief.

"It is enough," he croaked from between ashen lips.

He knelt and undid the thongs from my ankles, but I noticed he made no move to free Smith.

"My fellow manitou," said I, "is as great as myself. Witness the test. He can hear the words whispered by the leaves and the tree-bark."

I picked up a strip of birch-bark from the fagot pile. On it, with the charred end of a stick, I wrote in English:

"Give this man the kerchief from your neck."

Handing the bit of birch-bark to the trembling, frightened sub-chief I said in a low tone:

"Whisper to this bark the wish that my friend may give you the scarlet cloth that binds his neck. Then carry the bark across to him."

Sheepishly, yet as if not daring to refuse, the savage held the bark to his lips and mumbled the wish under his breath. Then he crossed to where Smith sat alert and watchful, and handed him the scrawled message.

Smith glanced at it, then held it to his ear. Presently he nodded, as if hearing something. He dropped the bit of bark and unwound from his throat the neck-cloth.

He reached out his arm to the savage, proffering the handkerchief. But the sub-chief, who, of course, had never heard of writing, shrank back from it in terror. He was convinced.

Was it more incredible that gunpowder and chirography should have fooled these sons of the forest than that I, at first sight, in London, should have mistaken Aquia for a demon?

"You will wonder," I went on, "why two spirits like ourselves allowed you to capture us. We did it because we demand your escort to your king, Powhatan. To

him, King of the Indians, we come as envoys from the King of the White Spirits. Take us to him!"

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE MOONLIGHT.

It was on the evening of the second day. Through the forest we had traveled westward, escorted by the copper-skinned war-party. No longer did they lay violent hands on us or threaten us. But they accorded us the fearsome respect—and hatred, I was sure—that they might have bestowed upon a brace of invulnerable rattlesnakes.

They supplied us with food and gave us the warmest bough-beds by the camp-fire on chilly nights, but not one of them would willingly touch us. Nor would they lay hands on food we had tasted, nor come near the bough-beds on which we had slept.

They avoided us as though we had the plague, yet waited on us as if we were emperors.

I became aware presently that there was never a moment when one or more of the savages was not watching us closely. When one or the other of us would stray beyond the camp, during the evening rest, there were always several of the Indians who unobtrusively formed a cordon on either side of us.

We were honored, shunned, and closely guarded. It was a combination I could not understand. In fact, the white man who can understand the Indian's nature is not yet born, and never will be.

The restraint and watchfulness began to tell upon my nerves. Smith stolidly bore it, and was but glad of our chance to reach Powhatan in safety. But I saw, or fancied I saw, something sinister in every move and every look of our escorts. When I said so to Smith he laughed at me for a fool, after which I kept my fears to myself.

On the second night the weather turned of a sudden warm, for the moon was full. I turned my back on the couch prepared for me by the fire and walked to the camp's farthest edge. There I threw myself down beyond the radius of the firelight, and shaded by the foliage from the moon's rays.

At once an Indian arose from beside the fire and crossed to where I lay. Seating himself on the ground a few yards from me, he folded his arms and stared at me.

This was abominably annoying. I rose and walked several steps into the forest, again lying down on a moss-bank. I was scarce settled there when I looked up to see the same Indian calmly sitting near, his beady, black eyes fixed on me.

Realizing the uselessness of remonstrating or of seeking more secluded quarters, I stretched my arms, yawned right prodigiously, and made as though to compose myself to slumber.

In a few minutes my snores were shaking the woodland stillness. Yet ever under my upflung arm, my eyes were a little open, and I watched the savage who was watching me.

It may have been an hour, it may have been two hours that I watched him. Then his shaven, top-knotted head began to nod. It had been a long, wearisome day's march, and he was tired.

At last I saw his chin sink on his breast. Of this I gave little thought. Any sitting man may simulate sleep by nodding his head. So it was his shoulders that I watched. When I saw the shoulders relapse and slope inertly downward at the corners I knew the man was sound asleep.

Why I had kept such cautious watch on him I myself could scarce have told, but I suppose it was in an unconscious effort to prove warier than he, and to outpoint him in this game of vigilance.

Now that I had succeeded, and my guard was actually asleep at his post, while I remained still wakeful, another thought came to me. Would it not be a rare joke, would it not greatly enhance my repute as a manitou, could I steal off unseen and unheard into the forest, and then calmly walk into camp again at dawn?

My eluding of Indian vigilance surely would give our captors a new respect for me. The idea appealed, as will any silly notion to a man who is living in the monotony of the wilderness.

Silently as an Indian, without the rustle of a lear or the crackling of a twig, I rose from my mossy bed. The savage did not stir. His shoulders were still relaxed.

Without noise, I stole away, farther into the forest. For a furlong or more I crept on still as death, through the dark leafage. Then I stepped out into a moonlit space between two mighty pine-trees.

A figure motionless as a graven statue stood there awaiting me. It was the Indian I had left asleep back near the camp.

What had awakened him, and how long he had been close to me in my furtive march I did not know, but I felt like a schoolboy whose clever truancy has been detected and balked.

I stood there for a moment, speechless with mortification. Then I strode forward.

"Be off!" I growled. "What d'ye mean by spying on me like this? Be off, I say! Back to the camp!"

He inclined his shaven head reverently at my command and stirred not one inch. I sprang at him, full of petty rage, and resolved to enforce my commands by physical strength.

Then I halted and involuntarily recoiled a step in sheer amazement. Some one had just stepped from out of the black depths of the wood and now stood between us in the vivid glow of moonshine.

It was a woman.

She glanced at me in open-eyed curiosity. Then her gaze fell carelessly upon the savage. She made a curt gesture. The Indian bowed to the ground, his hand to his forehead. Then, with a sudden backward movement, he glided silently out of sight.

And the woman and I remained facing each other.

I had had time to improve on the first quick look. Now I saw her clearly, flooded as she was by the southern moonlight.

She was tall, slender, infinitely graceful, more in aspect like some woodland sprite or naiad than like mortal. Her black hair, rippling and glossy, was unconfined. It fell below her knees. Her eyes were huge, dark, fathomless.

She had a bearing that, nothwithstanding her evident youth, was nothing less than regal. Her face was that of an Indian, but without the harsh outlines and ridiculously high cheek bones of the savages I had seen.

The features were delicate and sensitive, with a nameless, wistful appeal in their expression. Her complexion, while richly dark, was not coppery like those of the other redskins. She was clad in a mantle of white deer-hide, soft as velvet, and decked with many old beaded designs. Her little feet were enclosed in white deer-skin moccasins. In one graceful hand she bore a bow, and a quiver full of arrows was slung across her shoulders.

"Diana!" I muttered, involuntarily; "Diana of the olden myths! And come to life again here in the Americas! Verily the moon goddess walks the earth as in the days of Endymion."

She listened with eager, child-like attention. But it dawned upon me that she could not understand one word of my foolish rhapsody. So I spoke again, this time in Indian dialect.

"Who are you?" I breathed, still lost in wonder.

"I am the princess," she replied, in a perfectly self-possessed voice, and as though wondering just a little at my ignorance in asking such a question.

Her voice was soft, with a girlish, unspoiled quality that was singularly sweet.

"The princess?" I echoed, blankly. "Of—of what?"

"Of America," was the quiet response.

"I might have guessed it," I answered, seeking to humor her; yet still half under that strange spell which tempted me to kneel and do homage to this utterly delightful forest deity.

"And you," she went on evenly, "are one of the two 'white manitous,' who came as envoys to the king?"

"How did you know?" I cried in astonishment.

"Your escort sent on a courier to tell the king," she answered. "The courier reached us to-night at the set of sun. I was curious to see you—and for another cause. So I walked forth to meet you. 'Tis but two hours' march to the king's palace."

"The king?" I repeated. "You mean Powhatan?"

"Yes."

"Oh," I exclaimed. "And you are his daughter, perhaps? That is why you called yourself the 'princess'?"

"Assuredly. But how did you chance to be so far from camp. We were told you came heavily guarded and could not escape. Yet I found you here with but one single watchman. My father will be angry when he learns how lax a guard has been kept over you. With the magic powers you possess, you might have escaped?"

"Escaped? Guarded?" I echoed. "Then I was right in my fears. We are not going to your father under an escort of honor, but we are being taken to him as prisoners!"

"Yes," she assented. "Yet you go the more comfortably, because of the tricks you played on the warriors. They are ignorant. They take you for manitous. My father is very wise and, of course, knows better."

I stared at her in dumb dismay. We had hoped to impress old Powhatan with the belief that we were white gods, and that the members of our colony were also deities, and thus work upon his superstitious fears to force him into a treaty.

And now, this girl's word showed that it was we and not the wily old king, who were being duped. I think she read something of my consternation in my face, for she continued:

"You see, in the other years, my father journeyed to the sea coast. There was a ship there, full of such men as you. My father saw them play with the black grains that flash fire, and saw them use the sticks that spout flame and death. And they showed him that it was not magic, but a trick. So, when the courier told what you had done, my father understood."

"Oh?"

"Yes. He understood all save the way you caused the death of the two warriors by arrow and hatchet. For the courier say neither of you had such weapons."

"No," I said, "we had not."

"But my father is in wrath," she went on, "for one of the slain braves was his nephew, and the white men in the earlier years slew his son. So you are both to die."

She spoke with no show of regret. It was as though she stated a simple fact, and I could not at once frame a reply. I could not understand this singularly child-like, yet self-possessed girl who spoke thus of death. But she was talking again.

"Why did you come here?" she queried.

On the tip of my tongue was the pompous lie that Captain John Smith had prepared for Powhatan, but to this clear-eyed forest nymph I could not lie. I said simply:

"The story is long. I will put it in few words. Across the sea is our home, the land is crowded and the laws are harsh upon the poor. So, many of us sailed across to the Americas, to build here new homes where we might be free and where every man might have a fair chance at livelihood and happiness. We have built rude homes on the bank of the great river, but we are starving and your people harry us. Therefore, my leader and I came into the wilderness to beg your father for food and protection."

She had listened eagerly, and for a moment she did not speak. Then she said wonderingly:

"You and your leader did not know you were coming to certain death when you journeyed to my father? You did not know he had sworn to avenge his son by slaying every white man he could find?"

"Yes, princess," I answered. "We knew it. I had it from an Indian, the same who taught me your language."

"You knew you faced death? Yet you came willingly."

"Not willingly, princess, but because our comrades were starving."

"You faced death that they might live?"

"They are our comrades, the men for whose lives our leader is responsible, and we hoped there might be one chance in a thousand that your father might grant us peace and food. On that chance we came."

She made no reply, but stood gazing at me in silence from out of those great, impenetrable eyes of hers.

"There is still time to escape," she said at last, as though suddenly making up her mind. "I will go with you to your camp. At my command the warriors will let your leader go free, then you and he may gain the coast again ere the war-party my father will send in pursuit can overtake you."

"Ten thousand times I thank you, princess," said I, "but it cannot be."

"Why not?"

"Our men are starving. If we return empty-handed, they will die. My leader is wise. He may yet be able to move Powhatan's heart to aid us. If not, we shall at least have done all that mortal man can do. Our Master has said: 'Greater love hath no man than this—that a man lay down his life for his freinds.'"

Again there was a long silence. Then she asked:

"This leader of yours? The courier described him as a mighty, noisy, hairy man. Could not he have come alone on this mission? Did you so love him that you wished to share his peril here?"

"I love him not at all, but none of the others would come."

"They were afraid?"

"It seems so."

"And *you* were not afraid?"

"Why, yes," I laughed, "I was very much afraid. But some one must come. He could not come in safety alone."

"He is not your friend, yet you are risking your life for him? Why?"

"Because he alone can save us from destruction. It is his genius that has saved the colony thus far, and if the colony is

to live, it will be by his splendid efforts. Should he die, all must perish."

"You are brave, sir," she cried, taking my hand impulsively, "and you are good. What I can do for you and for this great leader of yours shall be done. But, oh, count not on it. My father hates the white men. Maybe I cannot save either of you."

She was gone! Gone, in the twinkling of an eye. The earth seemed to cover her. Without a sound, she had left me.

"Princess!" I called.

But the woods above gave back the echo of my voice. I turned back toward camp, my head in a whirl.

I had not gone two steps when the Indian who had followed me from camp rose up before me out of the thicket. There was an ugly light in his little eyes.

"I have heard," he croaked. "No manitou, but a mortal. Yet I alone know except the princess, and he who slays a manitou, will win high fame. It can be said you attacked me in the forest and I slew you in fight, overcoming your magic by my courage."

He had drawn the hatchet from his belt, and now crouched like a wild beast, for a spring. I was weaponless. I had even laid aside my hunting-knife when I lay down to rest earlier that night.

Yet I made shift to sell my life as dear as might be. As he leaped at me, I ran in and grappled with him.

Yet he wrenched free one of his hands and whirled the hatchet aloft above my defenseless head. There was no time for me to tear loose from him, ere the blow should fall. Down swirled the hatchet, its blade gleaming evilly in the moonlight.

But it did not reach my head. Instead, it fell tinkling among the mossy stones at my feet. I felt the savage's lithe body relax in my grasp. I let go and he sank lifeless to the ground.

From between his shoulders protruded the feathered shaft of a war-arrow.

And even in that moment of wonder, I noticed that the weapon was far heavier and larger than were the dainty arrows that had filled the princess's quiver.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE BEHOLD THE KING.

I MADE my way in a roundabout journey back to camp, leaving the fallen Indian where he lay. I was so accustomed, by this time, to surprises and to things I could not in the very least explain, that the savage's strange death left me almost callous.

My brain was full of my odd meeting with the princess and with forebodings of our next day's interview with Powhatan. That an Indian had sought to murder me and that an arrow flying out of the darkness had stricken him dead, would have roused me a few days earlier to all sorts of speculations and to a fruitless search for the unseen archer.

But now I was surfeited with adventure and with mystery. In the wilderness one experiences things that would be impossible in the haunts of men. Small wonder that savages, the world over, believe the forest wastes to be peopled by spirits!

Back to camp I went. I arrived there in the first dim gray of the morning. The fire was out. Smith still snored beside it. But the Indians were beginning to stir. They eyed me wonderingly as I strolled toward them.

There were quick-exchanged whispers. Then a brave left the camp. He "picked up" my trail as a hunting dog picks up a scent. And off he set, over the route I had traversed.

I crossed over to where Smith lay. Waking him, I told as briefly as possible the things I had learned that night and the adventures that had befallen me. He listened with keen interest. But when I told of the forest princess's vanishing, his worried face broke into a grin.

"Lad," he said, "you dreamed it. I have seen these Indian squaws. They are flat-faced, shapeless, hideous. Not in the very least like the woodland nymph you describe."

"I have seen them, too," I answered. "But I also saw this maiden last night The moon was bright as day, and she was as I have described her. Nor was I dreaming. I have never been wider awake."

"But you say she vanished without a sound?"

"Assuredly. I had turned my eyes away for an instant. When I looked back, she was gone."

"You did not hear her go? There was no noise of twig or leaf? Impossible! A dream, I tell you."

"Was it a dream when Aquia vanished from beside us, in broad daylight, when we were ambushed back here in the glade?"

I retorted. "It showed what an Indian can do. They appear and disappear as suddenly and as soundlessly as serpents or foxes."

"But—"

"I was not dreaming. I was wide awake, and no dream ever knew so sane a conversation as I held with the princess; no, nor so wise a warning as she gave me."

Smith smiled in that exasperatingly superior fashion of his. I could see he did not believe a word, and that he was quite satisfied in his own mind that I had dreamed the whole experience.

Once he had formed a conclusion (which he ever did with startling quickness and usually with equally startling correctness) nothing on earth could shake him from it.

Yet I was about to try again to convince him, when, of a sudden, an Indian burst into the clearing. He was the man who had "picked up" my trail.

At a glance I knew he had followed that trail to the place where his slain comrade lay. I knew it even before he called out tidings in a scared, excited voice to his fellows.

Some ran to verify the tale and to bear the dead man back to camp. The rest stared at me in horrified loathing. Yet none of them dared raise hand or voice against me.

The morning meal was prepared and eaten hastily and without words. Then camp was struck and we set forth at a rapid pace along the brook's edge.

The Indians walked in front of us, behind us, on either side of us. But they would not willingly come within arm's length of either of us.

"You saw the savage brought back to camp," I said to Smith. "Does that seem to you like part of my dream?"

"No," he answered. "The man no doubt attacked you, as you say. And a marauding Indian of another tribe shot him from ambush. You were doubtless roused from your odd dream by the attack, and that is why you failed to see whence the arrow came."

"We were not dreaming that day in the glade," I insisted, "when we saw one Indian tomakawked and another shot by invisible hands."

Smith made no answer, but trudged on, his brow furrowed. Presently he said:

"It was not like Aquia to desert me."

Now for the past two days we had harped ceaselessly in our talks upon Aquia's strange defection and had come to no sensible conclusion about it. So I saw no profit in reopening the subject. I did not reply. Smith continued, a moment later:

"Could he be following us unnoticed? Could it have been he in the long grass, that day, who killed the two Indians? And, last night—"

"We have gone over that point before," I said wearily, "and we decided it could not be. These savages keep as close a lookout for spies as if they were in hostile country. You remember how they scoured the neighborhood of the glade that day for the trail of the unseen slayer. And you saw them hunt the trail again this morning after the Indian's body was found."

"Yes," agreed Smith thoughtfully, adding with a chuckle: "It was clever of me, when they asked what had become of the tall Indian who had marched with us, to tell them he was our servant-spirit and that he was still at our side, invisible."

"It was clever," I acquiesced, "in that it doubtless kept them from continuing their search for poor Aquia and tracking him down. Have you thought how you are to conduct the negotiations with Powhatan?"

"I have it all planned out," he answered confidently. "Do not fear. As I told you back in London, I have been in a thousand death-perils, and I have ever a habit of surviving them."

It was an hour or so later that we came out upon a great clearing in whose center rose a hill. The slopes of the hill were honeycombed with huts, caves, and skin-tents.

On the summit stood a great, irregular-shaped house, a single story high; thatched of roof, and walled with unhewn logs. Around this huge building stood a veritable forest of gaudy totem-poles.

"The house of the king," curtly grunted the sub-chief in reply to my question.

The plain at the foot of the slope was swarming with Indians of both sexes and of all sizes. All were staring eagerly and wonderingly at us. Upon our approach they raised no clamor. But in dead silence they made a wide path for us among them—a path that ran straight to the hill.

With our escorts we entered this lane in the crowd. I glanced keenly to left and right, but could see no sign of the princess. No, nor of any savage whose bearing or

dress could be recognized as King Powhatan.

So complete a stillness in so large a throng of people was positively uncanny.

A plump redskin baby, perhaps two years old, toddled forward from its mother's side unnoticed, and came toward us, its little, dark face alight with interest in our strange appearance.

I smiled and held out my hand toward the youngster, whereat the stillness was broken by a cry of horror from the mother, who clasped her protesting baby tightly in her arms and ran from us, shrieking.

This trivial happening hurt me. I had not minded the angry silence of the natives, but their belief that I could or would harm a little child was unexpectedly painful.

"We seem highly welcome guests here!" I commented bitterly to Smith.

"'Tis the way of savages," he replied encouragingly, "to greet honored guests in silence."

"I have never heard so," I contradicted.

"Pooh, man," he scoffed. "Never pull so long a face! One would think you were scared."

"I am," I answered frankly. "And if you were as scared as I, you would be running away."

His jaunty confidence and calm assurance in his own lucky star, annoyed me. Then I reflected that two white men marching to probable death, might be better employed than in bickering like cross children. So I choked back further ill-feeling, and we proceeded on our queer march.

We had reached the hill and were mounting its slope between the huddles of native dwellings, toward the great house on the crest. As we came out upon a little plateau on the hilltop we found ourselves at one end of a short avenue bordered by totem-poles and leading to a wide, rough-hewn doorway which was curtained by an arras of sewn panther hides.

As we reached the doorway, the curtain was drawn aside from within. We entered, followed by the sub-chief. The rest of the band remained outside in the totem-lined avenue.

We found ourselves in a large, low hall, whose sides were hung with weapons, animal-skins and utensils of various sorts. At first glance the place was not wholly unlike many an English country house's assembly-hall; except that it was dirtier and quite devoid of decorative taste.

There were perhaps a score of men standing about the room on either side of a rude dais at its farther end. They were in more or less gaudy attire. I guessed them to be sub-chiefs and councilors.

On the dais itself sat a very splendid figure. He was very tall and of great breadth. The scalplock of his otherwise shaven head was nearly white.

His lean face was seamed with war scars and crisscrossed by a thousand wrinkles. Yet his aspect was not one of age. And his fierce eyes blazed with a quenchless fire. There was, moreover, a stateliness and cold dignity about the man that must have struck every beholder.

He was clad in a mantle whose groundwork seemed to be the dyed and softened hides of animals. Over this were sewn countless fox-tails. About the throat was a necklace of polished wolf-teeth.

Rude, massive circlets of dull, yellow metal banded the bare arms. The feet—and the incongruous effect was laughable—were incased in a pair of worn-out, down-at-heel, much-patched, old-fashioned English jackboots.

Such, at a glance, was Powhatan, self-styled "King of America," and probably the wisest, most powerful chieftain in all the Western Hemisphere.

On either side of the copper-hued monarch stood a half-naked savage who gripped a knobbed war-club, and who had a way of gazing eagerly at the king as looks a dog who waits for its master to throw a stick.

Smith, as ever, took the situation in his own hands. Walking quickly down the long room, between the rows of silent courtiers, he halted in front of the dais and, in his broken Indian dialect, cried:

"Hail, Powhatan! Greetings from the white manitous across the big water to the emperor of all the red men—greetings!"

To my surprise, Powhatan rose from his seat, his grim face breaking into a smile, and advanced to the edge of the dais.

"Brethren, hail!" he said in his deep voice. "You are welcome. All I have is yours."

Powhatan came down from the dais and led us to seats of honor near by.

"I have long awaited you," he went on; "and it warms my heart to see you."

He signaled to a group of women who crowded one of the small curtained doorways behind the dais. They disappeared. I tightened my hold on my sword.

But in another moment the squaws were back again carrying in to the room wooden platters piled high with venison and wild fruits.

As the platters and earthen cups full of some brownish, sweetish drink were set before us, Powhatan asked:

"Why have you honored my poor hut by journeying so far to it?"

This was Smith's opportunity. He rose impressively and began his oration. He told in flowery diction how he had journeyed from the home of the manitous, far beyond the rising sun; how he sought to honor America and bless its natives by conferring our presence upon the wilderness land and by founding here a colony.

He went on to say that he had persuaded his fellow white spirits not to wipe the Indians from off the face of the earth, but to be friendly and merciful to them, in token of which, he said, he had journeyed in person to Powhatan to consent graciously to a treaty of alliance, to receive the Indian king's allegiance, and to accept from him all the food he could spare.

It was a fine speech—had it been addressed to the inmates of a madhouse. But at every glance toward Powhatan's face I read a wisdom as great as mercy was scant. And I wondered why he listened to the oration with such an air of credulous courtesy.

As Smith paused for breath, I muttered in English:

"Keep your sword held where you can reach it with ease."

"Pshaw!" Smith sneered, in the same undertone. "Your dream and your croaking fears were moonshine. This welcome proved it. We are carrying all before us. I know Indians."

"You will know them better ere we are out of this," I muttered.

"Brother," interposed Powhatan suavely, "You say you are manitous. Is it indeed true?"

"True?" echoed Smith indignantly. "Can you doubt it?" Ask your men how we struck flame from out the wet ground, how we spoke with the death-voice of thunder and lightning, how we made birchbark to talk! Ask how our invisible red manitou servant slew three of your warriors who dared to raise impious hands against us. And, if further proof be lacking, ask yourself how I, who came from across the big water, can speak your language as I do."

"Yet," politely argued Powhatan, "I should scarce have thought an all-wise manitou could speak it so very badly."

Smith reddened, and glared suspiciously at the king. But old Powhatan's face was a mask of mild courtesy.

"I doubt you not," continued the king, "nor for one moment did I doubt you. Yet, for my people's sake I wished you to declare your powers before them all, that none might henceforth doubt. Manitous you are. Masters of us you are. And we rejoice to serve and obey you. Will you deign to feast?"

Smith sat down with a great sigh of relief. At that instant there was a sudden commotion from the outer doorway. And a truly terrible creature whirled screeching into the great room.

At sight of the apparition my hair began to rise. Even Smith's stout nerve was visibly shaken.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE FOE.

At first glance one could not tell whether the thing that had dashed into Powhatan's great audience-hall was bird, beast, or human.

It was perhaps four feet in height. Its head was the head of a wide-jawed wolf. Its body was one mass of outstanding feathers of a hundred hues that flapped and slithered at every fantastic step the creature took.

The horns of a stag jutted out between the narrow shoulders. The hands were skinny claws with unbelievably long carved nails.

It spun about like a tee-totum, uttering shrill screeches and pounding on a queer little drum that was slung from its neck.

Then, on second glance, I saw the awful thing was human. The wolf-head was a sort of helmet, under which peeped out a hairless little face, fleshless, withered like a mummy's, and seemingly a thousand years old. The stag horns were but affixed to the feather mantle. And all the dozen other grotesque details of the tiny figure were matters of costume.

On noticing this I felt a wave of relief. Yet so deadly, and so full of crazy hatred was the little monkeylike face that I could scarce endure to look upon it.

And now I remembered a tale long since

told me in an idle moment by Aquia in reply to some of my queries as to Indian customs. He had described to me the weird "medicine men" that attended on the great chiefs, and had told me with perfect sincerity instances of their supernatural powers.

From Aquia's description of such persons' attire I at once concluded, and rightly, that this fear-inspiring manikin was Powhatan's medicine-man.

Had I doubted it, the veneration in which he was very evidently held by all the Indians in the room would have convinced me. They looked at him as at a god.

He whirled about like a wind-tossed leaf, scarce touching ground in his flying gyrations, until he halted of a sudden directly in front of Powhatan. Then I saw he was foaming at the mouth as though in an epilepsy (which I believe he was). He clawed at the king's bare arm with one clawlike hand and with the other pointed wildly at us.

"Kill!" he squealed shrilly. "Kill! Kill! Kill!"

I confess, a chill crept down my back at the concentrated venom in the little madman's cry. But Powhatan listened with unchanged face, though the warriors and councilors along the walls of the room broke into an instantly checked mutter of excitement.

"Kill!" shrieked the medicine-man again.

There was an ominous rustling as men felt for their weapons. But Powhatan, with a single stern gesture, enforced peace.

"Later," soothed the king. "Later we will hear all. Be at peace, O prophet. Leave us for the time."

But the little man, with a wolfish snarl tore away from Powhatan's kindly touch. Twisting horribly in his fit, he again pointed to us:

"Kill!" he yelled. "Kill now! It will be too late if—"

He fell to the ground and writhed in convulsions. His eyes rolled back into his head. The foam-flecked lips grew stiff. Then, all at once, he grew rigid. And from between those stiff lips a voice issued.

It was not the shrill falsetto wherewith his scream of "Kill! Kill" had pierced our eardrums. It was a solemn, deep, sonorous tone that filled the hushed room like an organ-note.

"Too late!" breathed the voice, "too late! Their feet are on our shore. Never again shall they depart. The hour of sight is upon me. Hear your doom, O my children. Hear it!"

A moment more of that dreadful hush. Then again the voice reverberated through the great room:

"I see men—millions upon millions of men—white men—from all over the earth. They pour in upon our shores like storm-waves. They fill the land. They sweep westward. And before their march, the wilderness vanishes as frost breath in the sun. The land shakes beneath the white man's tread. Its waters are swarming with his great canoes. The ground and the fire and the lightning serve him like slaves."

He choked, then broke out again:

"O my people! Lords of the forest and the mountain. You are scattered like chaff. You are slain, you are robbed, you are hunted fugitives, beggars, and at the last you are swept from the face of the world. It is doom! Doom!"

Like a deep bell he boomed out the last word. Then the rigid body seemed to dwindle and the stiff limbs relaxed.

"The hour of sight is past!" whispered Powhatan, his lips dry, his words tremulous. "Carry him to his lodge and tend him until he wakes."

Reverent heads lifted the limp little figure and bore it from the hall. Powhatan, by a supreme effort, regained mastery of himself. At his commanding glance the warriors and councilors slunk back to their places.

"My brothers," said the king, turning to us with grave courtesy, "will you feast with us?"

He seated himself at Smith's side. An attendant, at a gesture from the king, led me to a wide block of wood on which food was set forth. I seated myself and made as if to eat, though Heaven knows I had scant appetite.

Smith, on the contrary, had quite recovered his spirits. He chatted gaily, even boisterously, with the dusky monarch. But I sat still, my eyes furtively sweeping the room and dwelling unnoticed on each other's face.

The air was tense with impending trouble, even as before a furious thunderstorm. Not a face around me showed emotion or excitement. Not a voice, save Smith's, was raised. But a drunken man might have felt that mysterious tension.

Soldierlike, I took in my position. Just back of me was a sharp angle in the hewn logs. Here a strong man might well hold his own for a moment or so against attack. And I noticed the spot.

My straying eyes suddenly fell upon a face that appeared through an opening in the small, curtained doorway behind the dais. And I recognized it at a glance as the face of the "Princess of America."

Unobserved by the rest, she stood there, behind the curtain, her eyes upon mine. I was about to rise and bow, when a forbidding glint in her big, dark eyes checked me.

So, too unostentatiously to attract the notice of the feasting Indians, I continued to gaze at her. And I began to see she was making with her eyes some sort of signal to me.

Her glance would rest first on my face, then shift commandingly to a spot a yard or two to one side. There was a horror of appeal in the look.

And presently I understood it. For some occult reason the princess wanted me to leave my seat and to move to that spot indicated by her gaze. Moreover, she was terribly eager that I make the move without delay.

Not waiting for further proof of her wishes, and affected by that look of anguished pleading, I leaped to my feet and at a single step I was in the spot to which her eyes had assigned me.

As I stepped back there was a crash overhead. Through the thatched roof a monstrous boulder tore its way.

Down it crashed—a ton or so of weight—so close to me that I could feel the wind of its passing.

It struck the block where I had just been sitting. And it smashed the stout slab of wood into splinters, driving the fragments and a part of its own mighty bulk deep into the hard-packed earth of the floor.

Had I held my former place a half-second longer, I must have been crushed not only to death, but out of all semblance to a man. Truly, that look of agony in the princess's wondrous eyes had not been without cause.

My sword flashed out. My back was clapped to the angle of the wall, where none could assail me from behind. The heat of battle flamed up in my heart. Also a rage at this smooth-spoken savage king's treachery, and this sin against the sacred guest law of the wilderness.

Had Powhatan ordered us slain as we neared his village, or had he sent orders to our escort to fall upon us and kill us in our sleep during the march it would have been quite another matter.

But he had greeted us with the "peace sign" (the palm held upward and outward in front of the brow) when we drew near. He had hailed us as brothers. He had promised us friendship and had broken bread with us. And now he had sought to murder me by treachery.

Even in that hurried moment, I understood his motive. While he knew we were not gods, yet he did realize that the white men possessed many "magic" arts unknown to him. And he feared lest some of these same inventions might save us, and perhaps harm him, were we put on our guard.

Ever since the days of Jael and Sisera, the most approved fashion of throwing an enemy off his guard has been to feed him. The whole plot was quite clear.

At my sudden leap backward from the feasting board and the almost simultaneous crashing down of the vast stone through the roof thatch, the whole room was in an uproar. As by magic a ring of fierce-eyed savages pressed about me, hatchets or war-clubs in hand. I stood, sword raised, ready to cut down or transfix the first foe who should be daring enough to venture within reach.

Smith had sprung up and had whipped out his great sword with one hand, while with the other he had drawn his hunting-knife. Nor did he wait to be attacked. At a bound he was confronting Powhatan, his sword-point at the king's throat, his arm drawn back for a thrust.

"At the first blow—at the first move," he yelled to the buzzing roomful, "I shall drive my sword-blade through your vile king. Now, who strikes first?"

There was a pause of consternation, of irresolute bewilderment. It was Powhatan who spoke. Unruffled in his regal calm, and no more heeding the deadly steel at his throat than if it had been a summer fly, the monarch said in cold rebuke:

"Is this the 'friendship' the white manitous come so far to proffer? Do you call me brother, and eat of my food and then spring at me like an angry wildcat because one of the roof-stones has rolled from its place?"

Smith's hot anger seemed to merge ever

so little into perplexity. Powhatan continued:

"Or did your manitou magic cause the great stone to break loose from its fastenings and fall among us? Was it further proof of your powers? If so, it is the most wondrous test of all, for that stone has abode there with its three fellows, on the thatch corners ever since my dead father reared this house."

His manner of contemptuous, lofty reproach would have utterly convinced me that a common accident and tight-strung nerves had betrayed us into our exhibition of dread, had it not been for the memory of the princess's unspoken warning as she had looked at me from behind the deerskin curtain.

As for Smith, he was wholly convinced. Back went his great sword, clanging into its scabbard, and his knife into his belt.

"I crave your pardon," he said, sheepishly enough, extending his hand to the king, who gravely accepted it.

The two resumed their seats, but I called across in English to Smith:

"Here! Over here as fast as you can move. Together we may hold this sheltered position for a minute or two, before they destroy us."

"Sit down," retorted Smith, in wrathful scorn. "Will you shame us both? They will deem you a coward. Sheathe your sword and sit down. 'Twas but an accident. The stone slipped its socket and fell through the roof. That is all."

"A stone as large as that," I answered, "would be visible from the plain below. Powhatan has just said there were four such on the roof; one at each corner. I saw none as we approached."

"You did not notice," rejoined Smith. "He would not be fool enough to lie about a thing we could disprove the moment we leave this house and look up at the roof."

"Smith," I cried, "he does not mean that we *shall* leave this house—alive."

"Will not your follower conquer his fear so far as to lay aside his weapon and partake of the new food that I have ordered brought to him?" queried Powhatan of the captain, looking with scornful amusement at my unchanged attitude of watchful defense as he spoke.

"No," I called back before Smith could reply. "If I must die I will die like a man, not like a trapped hare."

Smith reddened with mortification at my apparently timorous conduct, but turned again to Powhatan, and took up the thread of a boastful tale he had been telling when the mishap occurred.

My ring of enemies had stepped back and were no longer paying heed to me. Yet I noticed they did not return to their former positions in the room. They still remained lounging, between me and Smith.

Nor could I see the princess's face now at the curtain. She had evidently done what little she could to save us and had retired ere the final tragedy should be enacted.

Sword in hand, I maintained my watchful guard, for I knew we were about as safe as though we were in a panther's lair. And I waited each moment for the storm to break.

"Yes," Smith was declaiming in his broken dialect, to the politely interested king. "Three champions were they of the Turkish Soldan, and they challenged every cavalier of Sigismond's army to single combat. One by one did I meet these heathen Turks, and one by one did I leave them dead on the field, whereat our whole army—"

He got no further. Of a sudden a score of hands seized him. Nimble fingers wrenched away his unheeded weapons from his belt, and tripped from behind by some cunning wrestler, Captain John Smith plunged headlong to earth. In a trice he was tied and helpless.

CHAPTER XX.

UNDER THE BREATH OF DEATH.

You will ask why I did not spring to my captured leader's aid, and perform prodigies of useless, suicidal valor in an attempt to rescue him.

I did not do it, for two reasons. First, the whole attack, capture and binding did not occupy three seconds of time. Second, because, at the instant the secret signal for the onset was given by Powhatan, no less than a dozen armed savages formed a human wall in front of me; their brandished weapons menacing my head.

I could not move forward. To throw myself upon the warriors who confronted me would mean that they would at once close in upon all sides of me, and that I should have a half-dozen or more hatchets sunk into my back ere I could strike a blow.

No, though I was doomed, yet my only hope for momentary safety was to stick to my semi-sheltered position and to hold off the enemy, as long as might be, with vigorous sword-play.

As to Smith, I could not hope to reach him, even by sacrificing my life in the effort. His own overconfidence and his disregarding of what he considered my cowardly advice had brought him to his present straits. And I could do naught for him.

Though the ring of savages threatened me, they did not at once attack. They contented themselves with holding me at bay; doubtless awaiting further orders from their king.

Thus while half-consciously keeping watch for the first sign of their onfall, I was able to see something of what was going on in front of the dais.

Smith, wriggling powerless in his bonds, lay prone upon the ground. Powhatan, a gentle smile on his cold dark face, stood gazing down at him. Then he stepped back on the dais and spoke a word of command.

Three or four warriors swung Smith into the air as though he were a truss of hay, and dropped him on the dais at Powhatan's feet.

The king glanced down at him again and said:

"Well, white man, is this the end of your lies and your boasting? Can you call on no magic now to save you? Surely it were a slight thing for so great a magician to free himself."

Smith made no reply. But the face he raised to that of the sneering savage above him bore no sign of fear.

"Your death," continued Powhatan, "was ordained when first I learned of your approach. My war party believed your idle talk of magic and they feared it. Therefore they spared you. But *I* am not a child to be fooled with tricks."

He paused as if to give his captive a chance to reply, but Smith did not speak, neither did he for a single instant abate the glare of cold fury that blazed from his little eyes.

"You are a brave man," vouchsafed Powhatan, "for a white-face, and you have given me entertainment this day. Wherefore, you shall die at once and not by the torture. Your follower yonder will afford us sport enough when we wall him into that corner later, and listen to his screams of hunger and suffocation. Yet if you have the courage, he has the wit. It is sad the two qualities could not have been combined in you, then you might have escaped death."

"I shall escape death," returned Smith, speaking with a quiet certainty, at odd variance with his wonted bluster, "I shall not die."

Even the stolid Powhatan looked surprised.

"I shall live," went on Smith coolly, "to see my life's work succeed. How I shall do it, I do not know, but I do know my destiny, and it is too strong to be turned aside by a gang of redskin savages."

"You speak as one who is certain," scoffed Powhatan, "but I fear none will agree with you."

"I ask no one to agree with me," Smith replied with that same lofty assurance. "But, in this, mine hour of peril, it is borne in upon me that I shall not perish until this land, to which I have devoted my life, is given into the hands of the white man. Until England's foot is so firmly planted on these shores that never can her colonists be driven hence."

He spoke rather to himself than to the glowering savage; and in the last part of his strange prophecy he lapsed unconsciously into English.

"In another tiny space of time," said Powhatan, grimly, "ere the shadows of the sun can move a hand's breadth, this last of your many vain boasts will be as dead as the breath that spoke it."

Smith did not answer. He did not seem to have heard. His truculent, ruddy face was aglow with some mystic light that appeared to spring from within his gallant soul.

"It is in my mind, white man," said Powhatan, after an instant's pause, "to speak to you what is in my heart; that you may bear the message with you into the spirit world."

Again he paused; then resumed:

"When first the white men touched these shores—more than two hundred moons ago —I and my people were eager to be their friends. We crowded down to their ships at the mouth of the Great River. We brought them gifts. What was their return for our welcome?"

Even before he spoke the next words, I well remembered the treatment accorded the simple Indians by the first futile colony

which Raleigh vainly tried to establish on these shores.

"They greeted us with mockery," went on Powhatan. "Some of us they tortured and slew because we could not tell them where to find mountains of yellow metal. Some of us they plied with a fiery liquid that stole away our senses. And as we lay helpless, they robbed us. Some they beat and sought to enslave. Are these the breed of men whom we wish to see living as our neighbors? When once they come here and abide, it will mean naught but dire ill to my people. And they shall not abide here!"

His suavity was gone. He was now the outraged ruler of an outraged race. His eyes flashed as he added:

"I had an only son, whom I loved as I loved none other on all this earth. In a gust of anger I sent him one day from my presence and from the lodges of my people. When I repented me of my wrath, I caused search to be made for him that he might come back and one day inherit my throne. My messengers returned with dust on their heads."

His harsh face twitched, and he hurried on.

"They bore me word that my son, fleeing from my wrath, had gone to the white men on the coast, and that they had slain him and cast him into the sea. With all my braves I marched to the coast to avenge my murdered first-born. I found the great canoes of the white men had long since sailed away. But a village of them was left. Where is that village to-day? And where are its men and women and white-faced children? They, one and all, followed my son in torture and agony to the spirit world, where presently you shall follow, boaster."

Well did I recall the colony whose fate Powhatan had described. It was that sent out by Raleigh under Captain White's command. The colony during whose few months of known life, little Virginia Dare, the first white child in North America was born.

And that colony's fate had ever been a mystery. For when White returned three years later with supplies, it had vanished.

"Bear my greetings to those slain white folk in the spirit land," cried Powhatan, "and kneel there at the feet of my son."

He stepped back. Raising one arm he signaled to the two guards who stood on either side of the dais with uplifted war-clubs.

At his shouted word the two club-bearers rushed forward, chanting a weird death-song. Their sticks were whirled high above their heads, above the helpless head of the bound captive who lay before them.

In another instant the descending clubs would have dashed out Smith's brains. Yet he did not flinch. He scarce seemed to note the impending slaughter. On his face still glowed that strange light from within.

Then it was that something flashed forward, from the curtained doorway, past the king and between the two executioners.

It was the princess.

Not heeding her father's stern shout of rebuke, she threw herself upon Smith's prostrate body. With upraised hands she waved back the executioners.

The whole maneuver was as sudden as lightning. Even the swift-witted savages were wholly dumfounded by it. The two club-bearers hesitated, checking their weapons in the very act of downward flight.

Powhatan was the first to recover himself. Striding forward, he reached out to draw his daughter away from the man whose body she was shielding. But she eluded his grasp.

"No!" she cried, her sweet voice fearless and imperious. "It shall not be, I say. The man is guiltless. He has done us no harm. He and his comrade came here, braving certain death, to save their friends from hunger."

"Back!" grunted Powhatan fiercely. "What has my love for you brought you to, that you seek to baffle my authority? Back!"

Again he made as though to seize her, and again she shrank aside, clasping Smith about the neck, and so protecting him with her slender young body that the guards could not strike at him without striking their monarch's adored daughter as well.

"You will let him live?" she pleaded. "I ask it. I, who have never before asked a gift of you. I ask his life."

Having heard something of the contempt wherewith Indians were said to treat their women, I looked for an explosion of rage from Powhatan, and for possible death to the heroine who so fearlessly defied his authority.

And indeed the mad wrath in the old king's eyes made the supposition plausible enough. But even as I looked, the rage

melted into sullenness, and the sullenness into something very like the smile a white parent accords sometimes to the audacious impudence of a dearly loved child.

The two guards, their clubs still held ready, were looking to their master for orders. Powhatan spoke a gruff word of command, and the executioners fell back to their former posts at the sides of the dais.

The princess sprang up with a little cry of delight and threw herself at her father's feet.

"You will give food to their starving people?" she pleaded.

"Shall I give warmth and shelter to the rattlesnakes that seek refuge under my hearthstone?" he snarled. "Shall I feed and succor those who will repay me by maltreating my people?"

She had slipped a knife from her girdle and was cutting away Smith's bonds. Powhatan made an angry forward movement as if to check her; then stepped back again, with that same half smile on his cold face. Smith freed, rose to his feet, and stood confronting the princess.

"For what you have done, maiden," said he, his deep voice shaken with emotion, "my heart and my life lie at your feet. You have saved a life I do not overmuch value. But you have saved it for the good of a cause that I value above all else. Unborn generations shall bless your name, for you have not only saved worthless Captain John Smith, but America as well."

In spite of his braggart words, his tone held no taint of his wonted boasting. He spoke from the very depths of his soul.

"You talk as though you were free," interposed Powhatan, apparently glad to have found some one on whom he could impress his recently defied authority. "You are not. I have spared you, for the foolish love I bear my daughter, Pocahontas, as I should spare a wounded wolf she wished to protect. But shall I let you and your comrade go back and guide your white-face village to success? A thousand times no. Here you shall remain. If not death, you shall at least know slavery. And for all your lives.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TERMS OF POWHATAN.

THE princess made as though to speak. But her father checked her.

"Here you two white men shall remain," he repeated. "And you shall be the sport and the drudges for the meanest of my people. If that be better for brave men than is swift death, then comfort yourselves in the thought.

"As for your white brethren who await you at the mouth of the Great River, within a week my war parties shall pour in upon them. And those who die at the first attacks will be happiest. The white men shall vanish from these shores like morning mist beneath the noonday sun. I have spoken."

At thought of the Indian raid he so solemnly foretold, my heart went sick, for back there amongst those starving colonists was Dorcas Errol.

And in her moment of supreme peril I should not be beside her to comfort her, to sustain her, to lay down my life for her dear sake.

I had tried hard and vainly to put her from my thoughts, since I had learned that her father had promised her to Smith! But now I found I had made pitifully slight progress in my task of forgetfulness.

She could not be mine. She was pledged to another. To another who, like myself, could not hope to return to her. Yet, in this moment, with degrading and lifelong slavery staring me in the face, all other emotions were thrust from my heart by that one great wave of hopeless love.

A man's heart is strangely and wondrously fashioned, is it not? (So they tell me is the skeleton of the domestic rabbit.)

"There are no terms we can make with you for our release?" queried Smith, the light dying out of his face.

"Are there any terms the caught hare may make with the panther?" mocked Powhatan.

Then breaking once more into savage wrath, he snarled:

"Terms? Yes, there be terms. Give back my dead son to me, alive to me and well, and you shall not only return to your people in safety, but I will feed them and grant them protection!"

He laughed, harshly, as he spat forth the wildly impossible conditions. And, as I have said, an Indian seldom laughs save in mockery or when inflicting pain. The king's fierce laughter was not good to hear.

Yet, in the midst of his ferocious, ironic mirth, the laugh on his lips turned to a

gasp. From every part of the room, the stolid warriors and councilors broke into an amazed shout.

For, through the great gaping hole in the roof thatch left by the fall of the boulder, a man had just dropped. Landing lightly on his feet, he sprang to the dais.

It was Aquia.

The sinewy giant appeared in no way excited as he faced the king and the rest of the assemblage. His high-bred, coppery face was emotionless

"I am here!" he said.

That was all. For, with a cry more animal than human, Powhatan had thrown himself upon the newcomer.

At first I thought he was attacking him barehanded. But I was wrong. The old monarch was hugging Aquia to him, fondling his face and head, mumbling strange, crooning words that I could not catch.

And all at once I understood. But Smith still stood open-mouthed with wonder, until Aquia said:

"The terms are fulfilled. You will hold to your share of the pact, my father?"

"The pact?" stammered Powhatan, not for the moment understanding.

"As I lay hidden on the roof, seeking a chance to save my white brothers here," explained Aquia, "I heard you take the pledge to spare these men, to set them free and to succor their followers on the coast yonder, if your son were restored to you alive and well. I am here."

"These white men be manitous after all!" muttered Powhatan. "You were on the roof? On the roof of my lodge? Did their magic snatch you from the spirit land and place you there?"

In a dozen brief, guttural sentences Aquia told his story. The white men of Raleigh's ship had not slain him, as the inquiring messenger had been led to believe, when he fled from his father's people to the English.

Instead, Raleigh had persuaded him to take service with himself and to accompany him to England. And Aquia, being cast off by his own race, had accepted.

In England he had dwelt as Raleigh's servant, until Sir Walter had been cast into prison. Then, as I knew, he had taken service under Smith, and had later come with us to America.

On learning of our plan to visit his father, Aquia had consented to join us, but had planned to hide ere he should reach Powhatan's village, for he believed his father still held wrath against him, and would order him to death.

Then, when the war party had assailed us, Aquia had dropped at once into the long grass and undergrowth of the glade, with all the secretive power of a trained Indian warrior. He knew he could better serve us by watching over us from a point of safety than by joining us in a captivity which he was sure would have a fatal termination.

While crawling to safety through the grass he had come upon one of the braves who were stealthily approaching us in like fashion. The brave had struck at him with a hatchet. Aquia had warded off the blow and had sunk his own hatchet in his assailant's brain.

Then he had sped onward toward the shelter of the higher growth. On his way thither he was seen by one of the war party who lurked in a tree. The man in the tree was raising his bow to shoot him when Aquia had caught sight of the archer. His own arrow sped first, and the tree-climber had dropped dead.

Aquia had followed close on our trail as we were conducted toward Powhatan's village by the war party. Seeking a chance to free us, he had been near the camp, that last night, when I managed to go forth by myself into the forest. And, following me, he had shot the savage who was about to kill me.

Lurking in the woods near the village when we had entered the king's house, Aquia had bided his time, and had crept unseen from hut to hut until he neared the great house itself.

Then, when all the loungers outside were peering in through the wall crevices to one side and through the doorway in the front at something of wild interest that was transpiring inside, he managed to reach the house on the opposite side and to draw himself up to the thatch.

He had looked down through the opening just as Powhatan had voiced his ironic terms for our release. Not until his father had cast aside his wonted stoic reserve and ecstatically embraced him did Aquia know he was forgiven.

Up to that moment he thought his appearance among us would be the signal for his own death. But he knew Powhatan's pledged word to be inviolable, and on that he had relied to save us. He was calmly

risking his life for ours, an act which, when it was explained to him, drew from old Powhatan a snort of genuine contempt.

Wheeling about on his clustered warriors who had come crowding near the dais, Powhatan singled out the sub-chief who had been the leader of our captors. Beckoning him forward, the old king angrily demanded:

"Did you see no trace of my son when you searched the trails during the march?"

"Yes," replied the scared sub-chief. "We found his trail after the two men were slain in the glade, and again where the warrior was shot last night, and each day we saw his trail where he was following us. Each morning we saw where, in the night, he had circled our camp."

"You saw this?" roared the indignant monarch. "You saw this, and yet you set none of your braves to follow up the trails and capture him?"

The sub-chief looked foolish.

"The white men," he muttered, "told us he was not mortal, but was their red manitou servant who was accompanying them unseen, and who could strike men dead at their command. He slew three of us, and—"

"And so you didn't bother to hunt him up!" guffawed Smith. "You thought a man could leave a trail and yet be invisible! And you had no wish to share the fate of your three comrades."

The subchief glowered, and, at a swift nod from Powhatan, fell back among his fellows.

"Princess," went on Smith, taking Pocahontas's little hand, "all America shall one day know and honor your name. You call yourself the 'Princess of America!' Posterity will know you as the 'Preserver of America.'"

CHAPTER XXII.

AFTERWARD.

THE hopeless little settlement of Jamestown had grown. The feeble roots of colonization had at length struck deep and firm into American soil.

Thanks to Pocahontas, we had weathered that first bitter starvation year. And now, other and better folk had come out from England by the ship-load to swell the ranks of our colony and to give it a surety of success.

The tattered sail-cloth tents and rude dugout huts had given place to log houses, and a church raised its holy tower above the clustering roofs. Jamestown was a thriving colony. Captain John Smith had not lived in vain.

But neither he nor I had been able to reap the benefits of what we had sown. Scarce two consecutive weeks had I rested in the settlement, and he had enjoyed little more repose.

We had been hither and yon; toiling, surveying, exploring, making treaties with the more distant tribes. And now I was but just returned from accompanying him on his trip of exploration to New England, where he had once purposed to plant a second colony.

I had been rowed ashore from our little ship; while Smith had gone across the harbor to consult with the captain of a larger vessel which on the morrow was to weigh anchor for England.

It was early summer twilight when I landed and walked up the dusky lane toward the settlement.

Somewhere amid the trees a belated mocking-bird was singing out its heart to the rising moon. The fragrance of wild honeysuckle was heavy on the warm air. Ahead of me twinkled the lights of the village houses.

Everything seemed wondrous beautiful and peaceful; and as I looked ahead toward the distant lighted windows, I felt a sharp tug at my heart-strings.

For it all intensified my own bitter, hopeless loneliness. Ahead of me were homes. I was homeless. In those homes were women, happily waiting for their husbands to return from their day's toil. Who, on all this broad earth, watched for me or cared if ever I should come back?

These be morbid and babyish thoughts for a man who is nearing forty. And for the most part, I had drowned them in hard work and in perilous adventure. But tonight they rushed in upon me with a force I could not stem.

And I fell to thinking miserably of that day when first our ships neared Jamestown, and of the picture of home and of love that I had so eagerly, so hopefully set before Dorcas Errol. The memory well-nigh unmanned me; for strive as I would, I could not forget her, nor abate one atom of my mighty love for her. During my few visits to Jamestown, I had avoided her.

I felt sure she would understand why. A woman, I think, always knows when a man loves her. And, when I was near Dorcas, I could not for the life of me keep the love out of my voice and my eyes.

And even such unspoken adoration was not seemly toward a betrothed woman; nor was it loyalty to my stanch comrade, Smith. Wherefore, I had kept away, not only from Dorcas, but from Jamestown as well.

Nor had I been able to talk of her with Smith. That very day, as our ship had drawn into harbor, he had clapped me on the shoulder in high glee, and had exclaimed:

"Well, lad, the New England work is done. The savages be at peace with us, and Jamestown flourishes. 'Tis time to draw breath and to enter into the benefits of our labor. My own wandering days are done. I shall settle down now upon my plantation. And next week Dorcas and I shall marry!"

His blithe words had been as gall to me. Yet I had forced myself to make fitting reply of a sort, and had soon found excuse to go to another part of the deck where I could be alone with my keen wretchedness.

To-night, as I swung up the lane toward Jamestown, my resolve was made. I would at once take up a plantation somewhere far beyond reach of the settlement, and there would eke out the rest of my miserable life alone with my bitter-sweet memories.

So deep was I in my thoughts that I did not raise my eyes until just beyond a sharp turn in the lane I came suddenly upon a white-clad figure. It was a woman. And my heart as quickly as my eyes told me it was Dorcas Errol. Also, that she was weeping.

At sight of me she furtively dried her eyes, and spoke my name in a cordial greeting that was none the less tremulous.

"My father told me the New England ship had been sighted," she said, talking hastily to hide the tremor in her voice. "And he bade me come down toward the dock to meet Captain Smith on his return. He is not with you?"

"No," I said dully. "He stopped to speak with the outward-bound ship's captain, to order from England some household goods, I believe. He tells me your marriage is to be next week."

She did not answer, but stood, her hands clasped, looking at me as though I had struck her.

"Next week?" she murmured at last. And her sweet voice was dead.

For a minute we two stood there looking dumbly at one another, in the moonlight, while the mocking-bird in the holly-tree near by sang his heartbreak song, and the flower fragrance filled our senses.

We looked deep into each other's eyes, this maid whom I loved and I, and each read there the soul and the sorrow of the other.

Then—I know not how it chanced—of a sudden I found myself clasping Dorcas to my breast, pouring forth Heaven-knows-what mad words of love, covering her white, upturned face with a thousand kisses.

And her dear arms were about my neck, and her wondrous eyes were looking love into mine. Oh, the miracle of it all! I shall be dust when I forget one atom of it.

It may have been a minute, it may have been a century, that we stood clasped thus, in a paradise of our own. Then I grew sane. Very gently I released her and put her from me.

"I crave your forgiveness," I panted. "I did not mean to be so base. I entreat you to forget it."

"But why?" she sobbed. "Why? We love each other. I have loved you ever since that terrible night in London. Even in the shipboard days when I strove so valiantly to hate you. We love each other, and we belong to each other. Why should you call it 'base'?"

"It is not base for you," I returned, "for you do not stop to realize that you are betrothed to another man. But, for me, who am that man's sworn comrade, there is no excuse. Oh, I have betrayed the trust he places in me! I shall never dare look him in the face again. I must go. I can never see you again, dear heart. And so, good-by, and Heaven bless you!"

"No!" she wailed. "No! It is *not* wicked. I have never loved Captain Smith. My father ordered me to wed him. And—and I thought I could obey even though it broke my heart. But, with the memory of your kisses on my lips, I know now I *cannot*."

"Oh, it was disloyal of me!" I groaned. "It was unforgivable."

"Yes," said a heavy voice behind us. "I think you are right, Master Clyde. But when the steed is stolen, what boots it to moan because the stall door was not locked?"

We turned to confront Captain John Smith. He had come up the lane from the dock, unnoticed by us. In the moonlight his keenly expressive face was drawn and ghastly.

"You have heard?" I queried, as Dorcas shrank back.

"I have heard enough," he answered heavily.

"I have no excuses," said I, "but this lady is blameless."

"No, no!" cried Dorcas, her fear giving place to her love. "It is I—and I alone who am to blame! I—"

I stepped between her and Smith.

"Captain," I began, "I have wronged you. You will demand satisfaction, of course. I am at your service."

He made no reply for the moment, but stood tugging at his great beard and looking from one to the other of us from under his bushy brows. At last he spoke.

"Dorcas," he said very gently, "as I drew near just now, I heard you cry out that you have never loved me, and that you know now you cannot force yourself to marry me. Is that true?"

She nodded her head.

"I am sorry," she added simply.

"Clyde," asked Smith, "how long have you loved Mistress Errol?"

"From the first," I made curt answer.

"And you?" he asked her.

"Always," she replied.

He looked down, in thought, and for a time none of us spoke.

"You loved her," said Smith at last, "yet never till to-night told your love?"

I assented.

"For all these long months," he resumed, "you have been my true comrade even though you believed I had won the woman you loved. I wish I had known. And yet—I loved her, too. More perhaps than either of you could understand—or would care to understand."

To hear bluff, swaggering Captain John Smith speak thus of loving, was unbelievable. Yet we, who noted the new tone in his voice as he spoke, could not doubt his words.

"I am so sorry! So sorry!" breathed Dorcas, laying one hand impulsively on his arm.

But Smith drew back from the touch as though it burned him. He turned again to me.

"I tricked you into coming to Virginia," he said, "and I am repaid. Listen to me, both of you. In half an hour the council shall receive an order from me, as president, sanctioning and commanding your marriage to each other. Even Mark Errol dare not disobey that."

"Oh!" cried the girl in amaze.

"If I loved you less," he said simply, "I think I could not do it. You do not understand that now. But some day you will."

He stepped forward and held out his hand to me, his eyes misty with unconcealed emotion.

"Good-by, lad," he said almost affectionately. "We have been leal comrades, you and I. And now we come to the parting of the ways. To-morrow a ship sails for England, and she will carry a certain Captain John Smith—soldier of fortune and utter failure."

"You are going back to England?" I cried, incredulous. "Why, your whole life is bound up in the Americas!"

He laughed bitterly.

"I have two children," he murmured. "One is Virginia, one is New England, and I own not one foot of ground in either. I have carved this colony out of the wilderness. I have saved it from destruction. And yet its people hate me and secretly conspire for my ruin. I had a friend. I had a—sweetheart. Henceforth, I shall have neither.

"My life-work shall endure, but I shall fail. A hundred years from hence, when Virginia and New England are flourishing provinces, the name of the man who made them will be forgotten."

"It will never be forgotten," cried Dorcas eagerly, "either by this country or by us!"

He smiled sadly, then, stooping with the grace of a courtier, he kissed her white little hand.

"It is better," he said bravely, "that a man's work should endure than his happiness, or even his memory. Yet you two will think of me, sometimes—perhaps?"

Ere we could reply he had strode past us and was out of sight beyond the bend of the lane. We never saw him again. Nor did America.

And so, our arms about each other, Dorcas Errol and I walked toward Jamestown and—happiness!

THE END.

Roost of the Tumbling Q.

by Howard Dwight Smiley

ROOST WALTERS, so named by his friends because of his proclivity to perch on the corral fence and ruminate for hours at a stretch, was in an embarrassing predicament; in fact, he was "plumb scairt," as he expressed it.

And Roost was not a coward by any means. He was as brave a man as ever came out of the West, only, just then, he was somewhat out of his environment. On the range or in the mountains, the mining camp, the corral, and the frontier cow-town, he was quite himself and at his ease, but here, in the waiting-room of the Union Depot, where he could cast his eye around and, within a radius of fifty feet, see more people than were contained in the whole county he had come from, and every one a stranger who looked at him askance, or ignored him altogether—this was enough to make any cow-puncher a little uneasy.

Thirty-six hours before, Roost had arrived in Kansas City with a car-load of steers belonging to his employer, the owner of the Tumbling Q ranch. These he had duly delivered at the stock-yards, and having received in payment for the same a certified check for eleven hundred dollars, he had started out to see the sights of the city. His boss had given him a week's leave-of-absence and Roost had come prepared for a good time by bringing along three hundred dollars of his own savings.

He had intended to remain in Kansas City seven days, but twenty-four hours had been quite enough to convince him that this was no place for an open-air man. After he had narrowly escaped death a dozen times, under the wheels of street-cars and automobiles, been jostled and pushed about by the crowds, guyed by newsboys and hoodlums, he was quite ready and anxious to hit the back trail for the Tumbling Q—and peace.

And now, to cap the climax, he had found, on his arrival at the station, that his pocket had been picked of the wallet containing his money and his employer's check, leaving him stranded in a big city without friends or funds.

He had discovered this loss when called upon to pay for his ticket back to Cactus City, Arizona. The agent had waited with bored impatience while Roost made a frantic search of all his pockets, and when the bewildered Westerner started to explain his predicament he was promptly interrupted with a curt request to move along, and give the other ticket-buyers a chance. It was obvious that the agent was not interested in Roost's misfortune.

And now, sitting there in the waiting-room, his hands plunged deep in his trousers-pockets and his chin on his chest, Roost was reviewing the situation. The one thought that stuck uppermost in his mind was:

"If I go cavortin' back home without that check the old man's just naturally goin' to bust me wide open, that's whatever."

He believed he knew his employer well enough to be certain that that individual would not accept an explanation of the loss, reasonable or otherwise. The owner of the Tumbling Q was a man who insisted on "delivering the goods both ways," and failure to do so was an unpardonable offense in his eyes.

Roost had carelessly allowed himself to be robbed of what he believed was eleven hundred dollars of real money belonging to his boss. That he could easily have stopped payment on the check did not occur to him. Roost was not versed in the banking laws.

As he sat there pondering this phase of the situation, several men rushed by him, and one of them, carrying a heavy grip, stumbled violently against the cowboy's foot and sprawled on the floor. This caused the owner of the outraged pedal extremity to straighten up with a yelp of pain.

The man was evidently in very much of a hurry, for, scrambling to his feet, he seized his grip and without a word of apology, or even a glance in Roost's direction, he rushed away to catch his train.

"You darn mav'rick!" grumbled Roost after the retreating figure. "Who do you think you're walkin' on?"

He leaned over to examine the injured foot and discovered a small envelope lying close beside his toe. He first carefully inspected his boot, wriggling the toes.

It was a small manila envelope with the name of the railroad company printed on the front. Roost picked it up and could feel that it contained something, but not until he had made a complete and exhaustive examination of the exterior did he raise the flap, which was unsealed, and examine the contents. This was a long, narrow strip of pale-green paper, folded several times.

"Good for one first-class fare to Chicago, subject to conditions given below," read Roost as he unfolded the strip.

"Hello," exclaimed the cowboy in surprise, "blamed if that mav'rick ain't done gone and lost his car-fare, same's me!"

Instant sympathy for a fellow sufferer caused Roost to spring to his feet and hurry away in the direction the man had taken.

He remembered that the fellow was dressed in brown, and he kept his eyes peeled for clothes that color in the crowd.

No suit of that hue caught his eye, however, and after a minute's search it occurred to him that perhaps the man was not yet aware of his loss and had already boarded his train. Roost at once made a bee-line for the gate. Reaching there, he would have passed through had not the gateman intercepted him.

"Ticket, please."

"You ain't seen anything of a man in a brown suit hereabouts?" asked Roost excitedly.

"Why, yes, I see several hundred every day," answered the gateman with a touch of sarcasm. At the same time he reached for the ticket that Roost held open in his hand.

"Chicago train right over here, track three," he instructed, punching the ticket, and returning it. "Might be that your friend, Brown, is already aboard."

"P'raps so," agreed Roost as he started for track three. "Mebbe I can catch him before she pulls out."

The car porter insisted upon another examination before he would permit Roost to enter the train, but once aboard, the cowboy went from coach to coach in a hurried hunt for a man with a brown suit. He found several, but inquiry proved them to be not the one he was looking for.

He continued his search until he reached the rear coach, and had started on the return trip when he suddenly discovered that the train was in motion.

"Great jumpin' jack-rabbits!" he exclaimed as he started for the nearest platform. "I've gotter get off!"

He found the brakeman just closing the vestibule doors.

"What's eating you?" that individual inquired as Roost attempted to jerk one of the doors open.

"I've gotter get off! I don't want to go to Chicago!"

"What're you doing on this train then?" demanded the brakeman.

"I was lookin' for a man," answered Roost ambiguously.

"Well, go ahead and find him, then," advised the brakeman with a grin. "You'll have plenty of time. This is a through train and the next stop is Jennings, fifty miles away."

"And I can't get off before then?" cried Roost in dismay.

"Not unless you jump through a window," grinned the brakeman. "I wouldn't

advise you to try that, however, as you might get mussed up."

Roost pondered over this new phase in the situation for a minute and then turned with a shrug of his shoulders and reentered the car. He made his way to the smoker and sat down.

"Now go ahead and do your darnedest," he growled. Roost apparently addressed this remark to that indefinable something that seemed to be directing his destinies just then. "I'm goin' to stick her through now if I bust a leg and go to jail. This here ticket reads to Chicago and as I can't find the owner I reckon I might's well use it and go there as anywhere, seein' I don't dast go home without that check."

He continued ruminating along this line until some one touched him on the shoulder.

"Want to join me and my pardner in a little game of eucher?" inquired a voice at his side.

The cowboy glanced up to find a square-visaged face, with a black cigar sticking out of one corner of its mouth, gazing down at him.

Roost shook his head negatively and subsided into himself again.

"It's only a little friendly game, just for the fun of it," urged the other.

Roost shook his head more positively this time. "Don't never play for fun," he growled.

The man shrugged his shoulders and moved off down the aisle. Shortly he returned with another passenger and was met by two more. The four took seats facing each other across the aisle from Roost and the game was soon started.

For perhaps ten minutes it proceeded quietly, during which time the conductor passed through the car collecting tickets. Roost surrendered his without comment. He had become quite reconciled to whatever the fates might decree.

Suddenly the voice of the man who had invited him to play rose above the din of the train.

"Betcher ten dollars!" it blustered.

Roost glanced across the aisle with a slight show of interest.

"Betcher twenty you ain't," answered the man who sat opposite the first speaker. He was a fat, pudgy individual with a huge red necktie and nose to match, and a derby hat cocked at the same angle as his opponent's.

"Put up your money," promptly ordered the first man, and simultaneously both dived into their pockets and produced wallets from which they counted out some bills and heaped them in the middle of the board the porter had furnished for a table.

"Here, mister, you deal this draw," invited the fat man, shoving the remainder of the deck over to his left-hand neighbor, a short, round little gentleman, with a bald spot and a celluloid collar, whose face expressed the same degree of alertness and intelligence as a half-grown bull-pup's.

"Certainly, gentlemen, certainly," he acquiesced, swelling with appreciation and importance at the commission. "How many, gentlemen?"

The bettors drew two cards each and then came the show-down. Square Visage held three jacks and a pair of aces, which he displayed triumphantly only to look very much surprised and crestfallen when his opponent laid down three queens and a pair of kings.

"I win!" announced Fat Man with a loud guffaw. "I reckon you ain't so much of a poker-player as you think you are. Guess you'd better stick to straight eucher from now on, hey?"

"That talk sounds like it was made to order," was Roost's comment to himself. "Now, if I ain't mistaken, our little bald friend is due to get stung directly."

He made a good guess, for after several more rounds, Square Visage discovered that he had another poker hand. Roost noted that he did this on Fat Man's deal.

"I've got some more good money that says this here hand beats anything around the board," announced Square Visage.

"I ain't got anything but a pair of deuces," said Fat Man, throwing down his cards with an expression of disgust. Then suddenly he leaned over and glanced at Bald Head's cards.

"Hully gee!" he exclaimed in apparent surprise. "You've got a peach of a hand there, ain't you, pardner? You ain't going to lay that down, are you?"

Little Bald Head studied his cards wisely for a minute while Fat Man continued to urge him on.

"Why, yes," he announced finally, "I guess this hand is worth risking a ten-spot on."

"Betcher twenty," promptly challenged Square Visage.

Bald Head hesitated, whereupon Fat Man whispered disgustedly: "You ain't

going to let a hand like that go for ten little measly plunks, are you? Why, that hand's worth a hundred any day!"

Bald Head frowned and scratched his bald spot dubiously.

"I ain't got that much," he confessed, "but I'll raise the bet to thirty."

"Betcher forty," snapped Square Visage, while Fat Man nudged his neighbor encouragingly.

Bald Head shook his head. "Thirty's all I've got," he said gloomily.

"All right, put it up," rejoined Square Visage.

Wallets were again produced and the money counted out on the board. This time Roost, who was now keenly interested in the proceedings, as were a number of other passengers, suddenly straightened up with a gasp and half rose from his seat, only to drop back again a second later scowling darkly at Square Visage. The attention of the others being centered on the game, they did not notice Roost's sudden agitation.

The finish of the play came quickly. Each man discarded two cards and drew two, and in the show-down Bald Head laid down three kings and a pair of nines, while his antagonist triumphantly displayed three aces and a pair of jacks.

Roost settled back in the corner of his seat, pulled his sombrero down over his eyes, and from under the brim furtively watched Square Visage while the latter coolly gathered up the stakes and stowed them away in the wallet.

"I'm goin' to get *that* tin horn," was Roost's inaudible decision.

Square Visage and Fat Man endeavored to continue the game with the evident intention of fleecing the fourth man in the party, who had been hardly more than an interested observer so far. But the fourth man had become suddenly suspicious, and excusing himself abruptly he retired to the rear of the car where he buried himself behind a newspaper.

At this point the brakeman passed through announcing that the next stop would be Jennings where the passengers would be allowed twenty minutes for supper.

When the train came to a standstill Roost followed the others out onto the station platform, but he did not enter the lunch-room, for the obvious reason that he had no money. Instead, he rolled himself a cigarette and paced back and forth in front of the depot, thinking deeply and evidently not arriving at any satisfactory conclusion.

In course of time he arrived at the north end of the station and here nearly stumbled over a hand-car that had been pulled up into the shadow of the building.

On the car was a shallow box filled with a number of iron bolts and nuts, of the variety known as fish-plate bolts. The former were about five inches long and three-quarters of an inch in diameter. Roost picked up one of them and examined it intently for a minute, and then a slow grin overspread his face.

"Why, sure," he chuckled softly to himself, "these will be just the checkers! Get a wiggle on now, Roosty, boy; you ain't got much time."

He pulled a long, narrow buckskin bag, half filled with tobacco, from one pocket and quickly emptied the contents into another pocket. He next proceeded rapidly to fill the sack with the nuts, which he unscrewed from the bolts, until it was about half full, then he stepped quickly down to the road-bed and began to scoop gravel into the sack until it was quite filled. He then gathered the buckskin thongs together, wound them several times around the top of the sack and tied them in a double knot, pulling the thongs as hard as he dared without breaking them.

His next move was equally mysterious. He removed from his necktie a stick-pin on which was mounted an irregularly shaped lump of metal about the size of a hazelnut. He twisted the mounting from the pin, threw the later away, and then, with his thumb, pressed the lump of metal into the mouth of the sack so that only a bare fraction of it protruded. He then returned to the hand-car and slipped one of the iron bolts into each of his side coat-pockets.

"There," he remarked to himself with much satisfaction, "I reckon that this outfit will do the business. If I ain't mistaken in my guess them tin horns'll be lookin' for some more easy pickin's about time this train pulls out, and I'm goin' to be the come-on, if they give me the chance."

The conductor was calling all aboard, and Roost hastily crammed the sack into his hip-pocket and reentered the train.

It was as he had surmised. The cars

were no more than well started before Square Visage and his fat accomplice started recruiting two more dupes. Several new passengers had boarded the train at Jennings, and they had little difficulty in persuading one of these to join them. They might have gathered in another of the newcomers, but Roost saved them the trouble by volunteering to take a hand.

His offer was accepted without question, and inside of five minutes the four men were seated and the game was under way.

It proceeded much as the first had. They had played but a few minutes when Square Visage discovered that he held a good poker hand. By a strange coincidence Fat Man had one also. The usual formula of bluffing and betting was carried out, merely for effect, of course, as Roost well knew, the cards were drawn, and Fat Man won, after which the game proceeded as before.

"Now, then," thought Roost to himself, "here's where they try to make a goat out of poor little innocent me. Very good, but watch closely, my tin-horn friends, and remember that the hand deceives the eye."

Several more hands of euchre followed, and then Square Visage remembered a good joke and stopped the game long enough to tell it. The cards were lying on the table, and Roost gathered them together and skimmed carelessly through them while he listened to the story. When it was finished he chuckled dutifully, and then tossed the cards over to Fat Man, whose deal it was.

A sharp observer might have noted that Roost retained several cards, which he concealed in the palm of his left hand, and which at the first opportunity he transferred to a place between his left leg and the seat-cushion.

Fat Man shuffled the cards and offered them to Roost for the cut. The cowboy went through this process in an apparently absent-minded manner. Fat Man picked up the deck, but before dealing he reached into his coat-pocket for a match to relight his cigar. To the ordinary observer the act was innocent enough, but to Roost it bore much significance.

It was exactly what he had been looking for, and he knew he had been "cold-decked." That is, when Fat Man picked up the cards, after Roost's cut, he did so with his left hand, and apparently transferred them to a place close beside his right hand, which was lying palm downward on the board. Instead, however, he merely laid them down to cover them immediately with the left hand, while he raised his right hand, under which was concealed another deck. This he had adroitly removed from his right coat-pocket at the instant he offered the cards for the cut. He had then palmed the first deck and removed it to his left coat-pocket under the ostensible purpose of getting the match.

He now proceeded to deal the cards, and when Roost looked at his hand he was not in the least surprised to find that he held three kings, a jack, and a ten-spot. He leaned back in his seat and waited for Square Visage to speak the piece he knew was coming.

"I've got some more good money that says that this here hand beats anything around the board," that worthy announced.

"I ain't got nothing but a pair of deuces," said Fat Man, throwing down his cards with the same old expression of disgust. He then leaned over to inspect Roost's cards.

"Hully gee!" he gasped, exactly as Roost expected he would. "You've got a peach of a hand there, ain't you, partner? You ain't going to lay that down, are you?"

"Why, I dunno," Roost hesitated. "Looks like it might be worth taking a little flier on, don't it?"

"Betcher fifty I got you beat," challenged Square Visage.

Roost stared at him with an expression of mingled surprise and pity for a moment before replying.

"Say, friend," he drawled finally, "where I come from if a man should offer to bet a little pittance like that there, the boys'd pass around the hat and take up a collection for him; he'd be considered a pauper. Now, if you really want to bet on that there hand and are willing to make a man-sized wager, why, I'm your huckleberry."

Square Visage and Fat Man exchanged quick glances, and both looked happy. Here, indeed, was a come-on after their own heart.

"What part of the country do you hail from?" inquired Square Visage.

"Dawson City, Alaska, U. S. A.," answered Roost promptly. "Just in from the diggings with a nice little clean-up, and on my way to Chicago to visit the folks for the first time in fifteen years." Roost was a fluent liar when necessity demanded.

The two confidence men looked more

happy than ever. Here was a gink who might prove to be a veritable gold-mine, if handled properly.

"What do you call a man-sized wager?" asked Square Visage.

"Why, I wouldn't mind riskin' a thousand on this hand," answered Roost.

Square Visage looked both pleased and disappointed. "I don't believe I've got that much real money with me," he said.

"Well, I ain't either," confessed Roost, "but here's something that'll answer just as well," and he pulled the buckskin sack from his pocket and tossed it on to the board.

It fell with a mighty thud that caused both the confidence men to jump nervously.

"Wh-what's that?" stammered Square Visage.

"Well, sir," began Roost, as he picked up the sack and weighed it tentatively in his hand, "that there little sack oughter assay up at least fifteen hundred dollars in gold, or even more, if I ain't mistaken. There wasn't overmuch United States currency floatin' 'round Dawson when I left, so I just poked this sack o' dust into my jeans as an extra precaution. Lucky thing, too, for I'm mighty near strapped for real cash."

"Do I understand that this sack is filled with gold from Alaska?" asked Square Visage as Roost paused.

"Sure thing. Just wait and I'll show you."

Roost fumbled at the knot for several minutes, but it was evident to all that it was tied too tightly. Then, apparently for the first time, he caught sight of the lump of metal he had inserted in the mouth of the sack and by dint of much prying and twisting managed to dislodge it.

"There," said Roost as he tossed it on to the board. "My partner fixed this sack up for me, and I reckon he fastened it shut so that nothin' short o' a knife would loosen it again; howsomever, I've managed to pry this sample out and you can see for yourself what she is."

Square Visage picked up the lump and examined it closely. There was no question but that it was a virgin nugget of pure gold, and Roost's lamblike frankness and simplicity misled the other into the belief that the contents of the sack were identical with the sample he held.

Without hesitation he dug up his wallet and counted out all the cash he had. It amounted to four hundred and twenty dollars in bank-notes. Then he extracted from another compartment of the wallet a piece of paper which he spread out on the board. This last was a certified check for eleven hundred dollars.

Roost never batted an eyelash, although he instantly recognized the check as the one he had been robbed of earlier in the day. As a matter of fact, Roost had recognized the wallet as his own when Square Visage produced it to make his bet with Bald Head, and it was only that his native wit had prompted him that he might have trouble in proving his property if he resorted to violence that he refrained from throttling the thief on the spot. A second thought had convinced him that strategy would be better than force, and to that end he had worked out this little coup on the confidence men.

He picked up the check and examined it carelessly.

"This is all right, I reckon?" he asked innocently.

"Of course it is," Square Visage assured him. "Just as good as gold. Any bank in Chicago will cash it for its face value any time. Why, the man who signed that check is one of the best-known financiers in the Middle West. The man it is made out to is an uncle of mine, and worth twenty millions."

Roost stifled a grin at this information.

"The boss'll be tickled to death when he hears o' his sudden ascension to great wealth, but I dunno how he'll cotton up to his nephew," was what he thought.

"Well, in she goes then," said Roost. "How much you got there altogether?"

"Fifteen hundred and twenty dollars."

"Well, we'll make it that amount against this sack o' dust. Is that a go?"

"Sure thing," said Square Visage, smiling happily.

He was thinking that this was the easiest bunch of coin he had picked up in many a day, and he promptly pushed his money and check into the middle of the board where Roost had deposited his sack.

Square Visage knew — or believed he knew—that he had absolutely nothing to risk and everything to gain; in fact, he was certain that he knew exactly what cards Roost would hold. He could rely on his partner to take care of that.

On the draw, Roost discarded the jack and ten-spot, as he knew he was expected

to do. He drew a pair of nines which, with his three kings, gave him a full hand. Square Visage also drew two cards, and looked happier than ever when he examined his hand.

The cards were running exactly as he and Fat Man had intended they should, and he was now absolutely certain that he would win. In their exultation they were thrown off their guard for the moment, and neither noticed Roost make a quick exchange of four of his cards for those under his leg.

"Well, what have you got?" demanded Square Visage.

"What have *you* got?" returned Roost coolly. "I'm callin' you."

Square Visage spread his hand out on the board. It consisted of three aces and a pair of jacks.

Roost's cards were lying face downward on the table, covered with his right hand. He had dropped his left into his left coat-pocket. Instead of immediately turning over his cards, he gazed fixedly at his antagonist's hand until both that worthy and his partner were fidgeting with uneasiness. They were anxious to take possession of that sack of gold.

"Well, don't be all night about it," growled Square Visage. "Are you beat or ain't you?"

"I suppose you two tin horns are real anxious to know, ain't you?" Roost spoke softly, but there was something ominous about his voice that caused both men to look up quickly and exchange apprehensive glances. Square Visage instantly surmised that the big Westerner, realizing that he was beaten, was about to make trouble, and immediately began to forestall it.

"Now don't start any funny work here," he blustered. "Turn over your cards and show us what you've got."

"Pleased to accommodate you," returned Roost pleasantly, "but just hang on to yourself, for you're goin' to get the surprise of your life," and with that he inserted the forefinger of his right hand under the cards and flipped them over, spreading them out with the same hand, which he promptly dropped into his right coat-pocket.

For a minute there was absolute silence while the confidence men, and the several passengers who had gathered in the aisle to watch the game, stared at the cards. Roost had turned up four nines and a king!

Fat Man was the first to break the silence.

"Looky here," he roared, "there's something crooked about this here game! That ain't the hand I dealt you!"

"Sure it's crooked," answered Roost calmly. "You and me and your friend there expected it to be so all along. It was just a case o' which o' us could be the crookedest, me or you two tin horns. Looks like I win."

Square Visage's hand was stealing toward the money on the board. He didn't know exactly how it all had happened, but he didn't propose to lose that coin if he could help it.

"Keep your paws off them stakes!" snapped Roost so suddenly that Square Visage jumped. "You so much as touch 'em and I'll fill you so full o' lead that you'll assay six hundred dollars to the ton."

Roost's hands were still in his pockets, and he had now pushed them forward until they protruded over the board. Against the inside of each pocket was pressed a hard round protuberance that very much resembled a revolver muzzle. Both men noticed this and shrank back instinctively.

"I see that you recognize the good old Missouri pocket trick," grinned Roost. "Well, this is just an illustration; I can give you a practical demonstration any time you call for it. Just touch them stakes and *bang* she goes."

Neither of his victimes showed any desire for a practical demonstration.

"Now then," Roost continued, addressing Square Visage, "just shove them hands o' yourn into your pants-pockets and keep 'em there where they'll be safe. And you," he went on, turning to Fat Man, "just reach over and take that wallet and stuff them bills and check and that gold nugget into it and lay it down in front o' me."

Fat Man complied without a murmur.

"And now, you darn coyotes, rise up on your hind legs and get out o' here!"

Roost thrust the wallet into his pocket and followed the other two out into the aisle. As he did so the conductor came hurrying in from the forward car, followed by an excited passenger, who had evidently gone in search of him.

"What's going on here?" demanded the conductor.

"Why, these two gents invited me to join 'em in a little game o' cards and now they're mad," grinned Roost.

"But I understand that you've been trying a little gun-play on board my train."

"Just let me explain," answered Roost easily, and explain he did, beginning with his discovery, in the Kansas City depot, that his pocket had been picked, up to the present stage of the game. When he had finished, a man in a brown suit pushed forward.

"You say you found a ticket for Chicago in the Kansas City depot?" the man asked.

"I sure did," grinned Roost, extending his hand, "and I reckon you're the man who lost, ain't you?"

"I am," the other acknowledged. "I missed it when I reached the gate, but supposed that I had put it into one of my pockets, and as I couldn't locate it at the time, and thought the train was about to leave, I showed the gateman my mileage-book, which had only ten miles left in it, and so got by. I fully expected to find the ticket after I got aboard the train, but failed to do so, as you already know. I must have lost it when I fell over some one in the station."

"I'm the man you tumbled over," put in Roost. "You sure did give my foot an awful wallop, but I followed you right aboard the train and got carried off tryin' to find you. Now, if you'll just let me pay you for that there ticket I reckon everything'll end up all right."

"I don't know about that," said the conductor. "I'll have to turn these two men over to the officers at the next stop as crooks and pickpockets, and I guess you'll have to go along with them for carrying concealed weapons."

"Why, that's so, ain't it?" chuckled Roost. "I 'low you want me to turn over the deadly weepons right now, don't you?"

"Certainly."

Roost promptly produced the two iron bolts and handed them to the astonished conductor. "Them's the guns I done the job with," he said meekly.

The roar that followed brought passengers on a run from the other cars to see what the excitement was. The man in the brown suit pushed forward and seized Roost's hand.

"You're the funniest proposition I ever bumped into," he laughed. "Come along to Chicago with me and be my guest for a week. I'll show you the time of your life."

"Thanky kindly," answered Roost politely. "If you'd handed me that invite a week ago I'd 'a' accepted it right quick, but now I've learned my little lesson, and I'm going to get off at the next stop and go home —this here effeet East ain't no place for an open-air man."

FATE AND THE WINDS.

CARE-FREE o'er the seas, alone,
Untrammeled, my craft I guide;
'Mid dancing spray I take my way,
With never a thought of wind or tide.
The course I steer is mine—my own!
And the seas, forsooth, are wide!

No charted course I ask—not I!
'Tis fate and the winds that blow
Shall trim my sail, 'mid calm or gale,
And whither they will my craft shall go.
I care not where they lead—not I!
'Tis fate, forsooth should know!

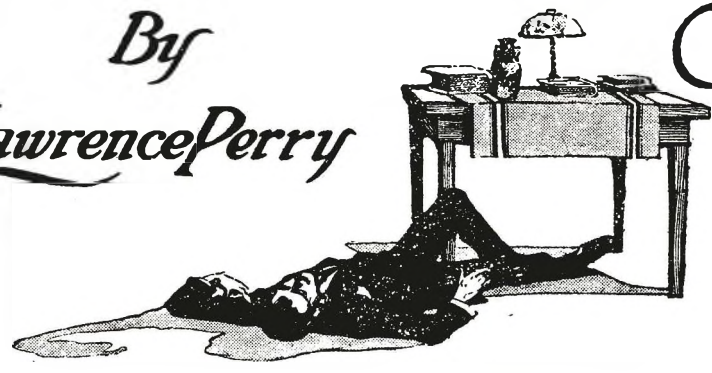
A vagabond I, maybe—maybe!
'Tis a vagabond then would say,
To each a heart, for each a part,
A life to live in his own free way!
The song I sing is mine—my own!
And the fiddler's price I'll pay—I'll pay!

Leighton Demain.

Between Two Alibis

By

Lawrence Perry



CHAPTER I.

THE MAN WHO WASN'T CALLED.

"CONFOUND it! That puts me in a nasty hole!"

Oliver Hazard would have smiled, perhaps, if some one had informed him that the breaking of his watch-crystal would in very truth put him into a hole of sinister depths, with death itself lurking not far off.

Hazard, who was given to superlatives, meant nothing more by this remark than that he would be obliged to run into the watchmaker's and have a new crystal put in the watch, which he had just accidentally dropped.

As it happened, however, his exclamation was in every way justified. That little timepiece lying on the floor at his feet, face downward, little chips and jagged points of the crystal scattered about it, was to mean much more to Hazard than a mere trip to the jeweler's.

But no one told him anything of the sort; and so, shaking his fist in the direction of the office below, he got down on his knees to search for the gold rim which had rolled out of sight.

Hazard had dropped the watch as the result of nervous irritation, engendered by the fact that the clerk of the hotel where he lived had failed to have him awakened at seven forty-five so that he might keep an appointment at the office at ten. Left to himself, he had slumbered until eight-twenty. Then, to complicate matters, his watch had slipped from his fingers as he hurriedly dressed.

Of all days this was the most awkward for Hazard to be without his watch. He had an unusually large number of appointments to keep, and a train to catch in the afternoon.

"Hang it all!" he muttered. "I'll cut breakfast and take in the watchmaker's instead. And I'll make it up at luncheon."

With angry mutterings, Hazard pawed the floor, and at length retrieved the missing rim. Then he clapped the watch to his ear and lost something of his febrile intensity when he found it ticking away as serenely as ever.

In the course of making his toilet, however, he once again succeeded in lashing himself to a fine pitch of mental unrest as various things went wrong. First he gashed himself deeply with his razor. Then he dropped his collar-button. Finally he had to search for his left shoe. But at length he was ready for the street.

Holding his watch in one hand, his stick in the other, he descended by the elevator to the office, where he vented his spleen against the night-clerk upon the hapless manager.

The manager was a good manager in many ways. One of these ways was an ability to judge human nature. He regarded Hazard with sympathy.

"I appreciate your position, Mr. Hazard," he said. "It is really too bad. But are you sure no one knocked on your door?"

"Sure!" Hazard glared at the mana-

ger. "Certainly I'm sure. That's what I'm telling you. I was asleep. I didn't wake up. Isn't that sufficient proof?"

"But if you were asleep," insinuated the manager gently, "how could you be certain that no one knocked?"

"If I was asleep how could I—aw!" Hazard eyed the other with emotions too intense for words; then, turning, he was about to leave when the manager, as though struck by sudden thought, said:

"Why did you happen to sleep late today? And what is your hurry?"

Perfectly meaningless on the manager's part and expressed merely through a desire to placate his guest, these two questions were strongly brought to both their minds not a great while later.

But, as it was, Hazard snarled and rushed into the street. A car was passing, and he ran for it. When it had stopped he remembered about the watch he held in his hand and waved the car on.

The conductor rang the starting bell with an oath. Hazard did not hear him. He would not have cared, anyway. He was thoroughly vexed as he headed for the jeweler's.

Meanwhile, he cast about in his mind for excuses to present to the men in case he should be late at his office to go over some papers of great importance with them, preparatory to their coming in on the Western deal. They were on their way to Washington to see the commissioner of the general land-office. Every minute meant money to them.

So busy was Hazard with this problem that he walked a block past the watchmaker's. This did not improve his mood. Finally with an impatient setting of his jaw he brought up with a jerk, resolved to get himself in hand before proceeding another step.

His mental condition, he argued, was out of all proportion to the causes thereof, and if he was going to have a clear head it was time for him to buck up. As he stood there thus wrestling with himself, his lips, it may be, moving, as was his habit when in this condition, his forehead knotted, his brows wrinkled tensely, several acquaintances passed him.

They observed him curiously, and when he did not reply to their salutations they went on, wondering if he had been drinking or what?

At all events, he emerged from his mental struggle in a more equable frame of mind, and indeed had there not been a sort of gloomy residuum of foreboding, which he could neither explain nor drive away, he would have felt entirely himself. Just what this foreboding was he did not know. He was not at all morbid in his tendencies. Nevertheless, there lurked this morning in his mind a well-registered wish that the day was at an end and that he was safely in bed.

He paused in front of the jeweler's for an instant and, seeing his face reflected in the polished show-window, discovered for the first time that the gash from the razor had been bleeding quite freely, and that the blood was clotted on his cheek. He moistened his handkerchief with his lips and essayed to remove the unsightly gore. He but succeeded in starting the blood afresh, and thus, with the handkerchief pressed against his face, he entered the shop.

CHAPTER II.

A NERVOUS CUSTOMER.

At just about the time Hazard arrived in front of the jewelry-store, the apartment hotel he had left some quarter of an hour previously was the scene of excitement and confusion altogether unwonted in a hostelry of the Chenango's character. Maids were going down the hallway of the floor on which Hazard's room was located with pale, anxious faces. A knot of heavy-set, thick-jowled men were in his apartment, turning things topsyturvy and conversing in low tones. Outside the door a bluecoat stood on guard.

In the lobby a group of reporters were pestering the manager with questions. He readily answered those that could be answered, and at the rest shrugged his shoulders.

In the corner the telephone-girl, her blond hair in disarray, was nervously working a plug back and forth in its hole to hurry a dilatory Central girl, scowling meanwhile at a man standing by her elbow, who was roughly demanding to know what the matter was, anyway. Finally she got her connection and leaned to the transmitter eagerly.

"Hello!" she called. "This 4141 Beaumont? Has Mr. Oliver Hazard been at his office this morning? All right. Yes, I'll wait. Oh, thank you."

She turned to the man.

"No, he hasn't been there," she told him.

The man shook his head in a satisfied manner.

"That's right," he said. "You can bet he ain't been there. It's just what I said. Well, we'll hear from Regan in a minute. He ought to be at Hazard's office now."

In another corner two men with bulldog jaws were browbeating the negro elevator-boy. He had told the same story ten times, and now they were making him tell it again.

"I done tol' y'all," he was saying, "dat Mistah Hazar' binged de elevator-bell about ten times as do he was in a hurry, an' dat w'en he stepped into de car he done appeahed flustered lak and all het up. Dere was a cut on his cheek, an'—an' dat's all I know, gen'l'men, 'fo' de Lawd!"

"All right," replied one of his inquisitors, who bore an authoritative air. He went over to the clerk's desk and addressed his companions:

"The case looks clear enough," he said. "Now, you boys go out and bring in this fellow Hazard. Harrigan, you go down to the Union Station. Williams, take the freight-steamer docks, and the rest of you run down his connections. We'll leave Regan at the office. Now, beat it, all of you, and remember, the old man wants action. See."

So the men disappeared, and the authoritative person, lighting a big, black cigar, began forthwith a series of quick, staccato interviews with various guests of the hotel as they were presented to him by the manager.

He got little in the way of information from them. They had heard nothing unusual during the night. Hazard, so far as they knew, was a decidedly inoffensive man, pleasant, likable. They would as soon have suspected a clergyman of guile of any sort as Hazard. He was not a heavy drinker; had, in fact, never been seen to take a drink. His habits were orderly.

In short, the nature of their answers was hardly of a sort to meet the views of the man who asked the questions. But they had no effect upon him other than to establish in his mind the conviction that poor Hazard was the slickest customer with whom he had ever had to deal in the course of his professional experience.

Meanwhile, all unconscious of the ferment at the Chenango Hotel, Oliver Hazard pushed open the door of the watchmaker's and stood drumming nervously with his fingers on the glass case while the jeweler attended to the wants of a patron who had preceded him into the store.

"I have broken my watch-crystal," said Hazard when the jeweler at length faced him. "I am somewhat in a hurry. You can put it in while I wait, can't you?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply, as the jeweler took the chronometer and glanced at it. "Don't want it cleaned, do you?"

"No," snapped Hazard, with the same sort of irritation a man feels when his barber asks him if he wishes a shampoo. "I told you I was in a hurry."

"Oh, you could leave it, you know," suggested the man.

"I don't wish to leave it," was the sharp reply. "I need it all the time. And I am in a hurry."

"Certainly," and the jeweler glancing at the watch again.

"Of course you saved the rim?" he added. "It's missing. Or do you want a new gold rim? They are not very expen—"

"No!" interrupted Hazard explosively, "I have the rim, of course."

He fumbled in his overcoat pocket and then shifted his hand to the other side. Each time he withdrew it empty. With an exclamation of annoyance he began a search of the pockets of his inside coat, then of his waistcoat, and finally of his trousers.

"Well," he said finally, "I haven't it. I must have left it at the hotel. How provoking. I'll go and get it."

"All right," smiled the jeweler. "Nothing to get excited about." He gazed at Hazard's gashed cheek and added pleasantly: "Must have been in a fierce scrap this morning?"

"Eh?" Hazard looked at the jeweler curiously.

"I say you must have had a mix-up this morning?" said the man, indicating Hazard's face.

"Oh, yes," Hazard grinned in spite of his ill-nature and following the inclination of all naturally timid men to appear warlike, he winked at the jeweler.

"You ought to see the other fellow," he said.

"Ha! Ha!" The jeweler was a jovial man.

"Oh, by the way," added Hazard suddenly bethinking himself to inform his office as to his tardiness, "may I use your phone?"

"There it is," was the hospitable reply.

But the number was busy. This set Hazard to fidgeting again. Finally he angrily told Central he didn't want the number at all, and banged the receiver on the hook.

My, my!" exclaimed the sympathetic jeweler, "you must not allow yourself to be so upset right after breakfast — nervous indigestion."

"I haven't had any breakfast," said Hazard testily, "and I already have nervous indigestion." He paused. "Let's see. Oh, yes, you wanted the rim. I'll go right up to the hotel and get it."

"You might as well leave the watch," suggested the jeweler then, with an eye to business.

"Oh, of course." Hazard placed the timepiece on the case and hurried out of the store.

He had not gone two steps when he remembered he had left his stick behind. He hurried back into the shop, seized it and rushed out again.

The jeweler shook his head sadly.

"That man's booked for locomotor ataxia, or neuritis, or something of the sort, if he doesn't watch out," he said to himself.

As Hazard walked up the street a newspaper reporter, a small, undersized fellow, who knew Oliver by sight, almost ran into him. The reporter, who appeared to be as much in a hurry as Hazard, stopped abruptly with a half gasp, his eyes staring out of his head.

Hazard met his gaze full, but was too filled with other matters to recognize the face of a very slight acquaintance.

"Howdy do, Mr. Hazard?" said the reporter.

Hazard started and glanced at the man.

"Oh," he replied. "Good after—I mean morning. Good morning!"

He swept by without stopping. At first the reporter seemed about to seize him by the arm. Then, apparently, he thought better of it. He followed Hazard for half a block, then darted into a telephone booth.

"Central," he cried, "give me police headquarters."

CHAPTER III.

A FRIEND AND PASSERS-BY.

HAZARD went about half a block farther, when a sudden thought concerning the missing rim occurred to him. He stopped and placed his hand in the little change pocket which was fitted in his overcoat, near the top of the right side pocket. And there reposed the rim.

"How asinine of me!" he ejaculated.

Then he smiled. At least he had saved the time that would have been consumed in going back to the hotel. This served to start him on the road to good humor.

He turned and hurried again in the direction of the jeweler's, drinking in the sunlight, sniffing the fresh morning air, and, in fact, whistling a merry little tune. Hazard, in good sooth, was a mercurial fellow, up one moment, down the next; a man of moods, whose chief characteristic was the shortness of their duration.

So good was he beginning to feel that when he received a hearty slap on the back he did not jump as he would have done five minutes before; merely looked behind him with a smile of inquiry.

It was his friend, Hugo Preston, a patent lawyer, who linked his arm through Hazard's and proceeded to accompany him down the street.

"Whither away, Hazard?" said Preston. "This is an unseemly hour for you to be abroad. What is it? Have you lost your fortune?"

"Not yet, Hugo," laughed Oliver. "I was in a hurry this morning and broke my watch-crystal. When I got to the jeweler's I found I had left the rim, and so I started back to my hotel to get it."

Preston stopped short.

"Your hotel!" he exclaimed. "Have you just been there? What time was it? Did you just come from there?"

"No," was the placid reply. "I was about to tell you. I thought I had left the rim in my room, but when I had gone this far on my way back I discovered it in my change pocket."

"Oh!" Preston seemed about to add something else, but he changed his mind and walked along for a moment in silence.

"By the by," he said then, "how is the charming and gracious Miss Hinkle?

Oliver blushed.

"Oh, she's quite well, Hugo. Very well, in fact."

"That's good." Preston considered a second. "I don't wonder you blush," he added, "for there be sundry rumors linking your name with that of the Lady Marion."

"Aw, stuff! Nonsense!" Oliver shook his head vigorously.

"Come, Oliver," urged Preston. "Between friends, you know. If I am not the first to hear the good news I shall feel hurt."

"Well"—Hazard weighed his words—"whenever I have anything to tell, if I ever have, you'll be the first to hear it, Hugo, but there's nothing doing now."

"Oh, cut it out!" was Preston's disgusted rejoinder. "That won't go down with me."

"It's a fact, just the same. Now, look here, Preston, I'll tell you just where I stand. I love the girl, and I think she cares a lot for me, but I'm not sure."

"Well, why don't you ask her outright?"

Hazard regarded his friend soberly.

"I'll tell you why," he said. "I have not got my business in just the right shape yet. The prospect looks good—things will come my way. But you know a new business is an uphill fight. Capital comes in small doses, and so we have to go along on a piker basis instead of letting fly with both barrels all the time.

"Miss Hinkle has been accustomed to an easy life, and when she marries me, if she ever does, I want her to go on in the same way."

"That's all very fine," scoffed Preston, "but no sensible girl expects to begin where her father left off."

"Of course not." Hazard shook his finger earnestly. "Nevertheless that is theory, partly. I want to present facts to Miss Hinkle before I definitely ask her to marry."

"Well, you know best." And Preston changed the subject. "Money, money, money!" he said bitterly. "It's a queer world. Those who have it have millions more than they really need, and those who haven't it have not half as much as a beggar wants."

"That's right," agreed Hazard. "I tell you, Hugo, the only way to get along rapidly in this world is to go out with a club, knock down somebody who has money, and take it away from him."

Preston flushed.

"I'm game," he said quietly. "That or anything else."

"Well, I'm not," smiled Oliver. "Of course I was only joking. But at the same time I beg leave to tell you there's nothing the matter with me that money won't cure."

"That's the way with every one," was the gloomy reply.

Hazard quickened his steps, having instinctively felt for his watch to learn the time, and found it missing.

Preston relinquished his friend's arm at the corner and turned off in another direction.

"Good-by, Oliver," he said. "I may not see you for some time."

Hazard looked up.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing," replied Preston. "But I say, Oliver, you know what gossip is. If you ever hear anything bad about me, keep your own opinion until you get an insight of the thing from me personally, will you?"

Hazard looked at Preston strangely.

"Are you crazy?" he asked. "You talk like an idiot."

Preston laughed.

"Oh, it's all right. I'm feeling a bit out of sorts this morning. Therefore, don't mind me."

"All right. So long," and Hazard was on his way.

He lost no time in reaching the watchmaker's shop. He had just entered and closed the door when the newspaper reporter who had accosted him a little while before passed in front of the place in company with a box-built man with close-cropped mustache and heavy-soled shoes.

"He was going right along here," the reporter was saying, "and seemed in a great hurry. I spoke to him and he jumped as though he had been shot, and I could see he did not recall me."

"Which way was he going?" asked the man.

"Right up this way."

"That leads toward the hotel. Well, we'll follow along. One good thing, we know he's still in the city. If you're sure it's Hazard you saw."

"Sure it's Hazard!" The reporter sniffed. "What I'm not sure of, Bill, I keep my mouth shut about. That's the way we hold our jobs in this newspaper game."

"Well, if you say so," rejoined the other. "It's funny, though, that nobody else has seen him."

"That may be," asserted the reporter, "but I saw him all right. I don't care if no one else in the world saw him. What my eyes tell me is good enough for me."

"All right. Find him again, and show him to me," said the man shortly.

Thus the two hurried along the street, while Hazard, all good humor now, addressed the jeweler with a broad smile.

"Well," he said, "you see I'm back again."

"So I see," replied the jeweler.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ARREST.

THE jeweler took the rim and picked up the watch.

"You were not very long in making the trip," he observed.

Hazard's impulse was to tell the man that he had found the rim in his pocket before he had got half-way back, but he checked this when he reflected that the other would probably consider him a stupid ass to have overlooked the very pocket in which he naturally would have placed the golden circle. So he contented himself merely with observing that his hotel was but a short distance away.

Having selected a crystal, the jeweler bent over the case, adjusting the glass, at the same time keeping up a volley of remarks, being by nature a very loquacious man.

"Let's see," he said, glancing at the clock, "you were in here about nine-fifteen. You were gone about twenty minutes."

"You are very exact in your observation of the passage of time," remarked Hazard.

"Naturally," returned the jeweler. "Oh, quite naturally, seeing that time plays—ha, ha—a very important part in my profession."

"That is true," Hazard agreed.

"Yes," continued the jeweler, "you were gone almost exactly seven minutes. And now," setting the watch, "it is nine-forty."

"Yes, nine-forty," repeated Hazard. "I must hurry."

The jeweler handed him the watch.

"Beautiful morning, isn't it?" he observed.

"Yes," replied Hazard. "How much is this?"

"Half a dollar," said the jeweler briskly. Then he added: "Yes, a beautiful morning. It's a great thing to be free, able to drink in all the sunlight and fresh air you want, isn't it?"

Hazard handed him a fifty-cent piece.

"Thanks," the jeweler went on. "Freedom, liberty! We don't appreciate our blessings, I suppose. Money is everything to us."

"It is to me," observed Hazard, "or almost everything. You give me the gold, and you can have the sunlight and the air."

"Ah! Ah!" returned the jeweler with a deprecative wave of his hand. "There speaks the thoughtless man of affairs. Well, I hope you never lack for either. I mean sunlight and air."

"Thanks, I hope not," said Hazard. "For they will keep me alive and healthy to enjoy the money I may make."

"To be sure." The jeweler laughed heartily. "Well, good day."

"Good day."

Hazard went out into the street. He remembered the office, and stopped to telephone the information that he expected to be at his desk within the next fifteen minutes.

Then with a relieved toss of his head he once more emerged into the street and headed toward the street-car line two blocks away. A newsboy ran by, calling "Extra!" and a flashing glimpse of a black headline gave intimation that something of an unwonted nature had happened in the city that morning.

Well, he would not call the boy back. One could never believe what extras printed. In the afternoon he would buy his favorite evening paper, the *Register*, and read the real facts of the case.

But he had paused an instant, and as he resumed his onward course the newspaper reporter and the thick-set man came up behind him. They slowed their pace when within fifteen feet of the unconscious Hazard and allowed him to remain that distance ahead.

"Well," demanded the reporter, "why don't you round him up?"

"If you knew anything about my game," was the reply, "you would not ask that."

"Well, I've got an edition getting ready to go to press," remonstrated the other.

"Wot do I care for your edition?" was the reply. "This case ain't so strong as the old man thinks. But he may lead us to a clue. Let him go on."

"Clue!" scoffed the reporter. "Isn't he himself as much of a clue as any one wants?"

"Well, we've got him, ain't we?" was the reply. "Don't go off so at half-cock."

"But there's always the chance he'll give us the slip."

"Is there? Well, he won't give me no slip, you can gamble on that."

The while Hazard hurried on until he reached the corner, where he stood, waiting for a car.

The reporter and the other man also waited a dozen feet away. As the car came to a stop Hazard swung on, and the two men did likewise, taking positions on the rear platform, while Hazard went inside.

"Wot d'ye think of that?" said the heavy man. "He's butting right into the business part of the city."

"Nothing like nerve," replied the reporter.

In the car, as it chanced, was one of the guests of the hotel, a man who had a room on Hazard's floor, four doors up the hall.

Hazard changed his seat and sat beside this man.

"Good morning," he began cheerily.

"Goo-goo-good m-m-m-m-morning," replied his fellow tenant.

"Beautiful day?" Hazard went on.

"Y-y-yes," stammered his friend.

Hazard looked at him curiously.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Not feeling well?"

His friend laughed boisterously. He was never feeling better, he said. But he edged cautiously away from Hazard, at the same time glancing uneasily out the car-window. Finally he arose.

"Well, good day," he said suddenly. I—I believe I'll get off here."

Hazard waved to him genially.

"Good-by," he rejoined.

"Seems in good spirits," whispered the reporter, who had been busily engaged in making notes on the margin of his newspaper.

"Yes, a nervy customer. That is, if the old man's dope is right. It's a queer case, all right, all right."

"I think it is," said the reporter.

"Well, it looks—it certainly looks so—exceptin' his actions now. He's the queerest gink I ever see."

At the moment Hazard, who had been engaged in reading the panel signs, noticed that the car was passing his corner. Springing to his feet, he made suddenly for the front door. The reporter and his companion dashed through the car after him, treading on men's toes, knocking bundles from women's laps, and raising havoc generally.

In his haste Hazard did not wait for the car to stop, but sprang to the street in the middle of the block. After him jumped the man and the reporter, who, alighting on the slippery asphalt, stumbled against his companion. The result was a spectacular spill.

As the thick-set man fell he reached out a muscular hand, and just succeeded in catching Hazard by the tails of his overcoat. Hazard, brought to a sudden stop, lost his balance and toppled over backward, completing a group that appealed to the risibilities of several onlookers.

Hazard's eye-glasses went one way, his hat another, and when he struggled to his feet, the big man's hands still grasping him, he was the angriest man in the city.

"What—what—what do you mean, you ruffians?" he spluttered. "What do you mean by throwing me down this way?"

He raised his cane threateningly. The big man caught it and glared at Hazard.

"Come, none of that," he growled. "Tried to make a getaway, did you? Well, you had a swell chance with me on your trail."

"To whom do you think you are speaking?" roared Hazard, reaching down to secure his hat and his glasses, which were broken. "Unhand me, or I'll call for the police!"

The man recoiled for an instant and glanced at the reporter with eyebrows raised questioningly.

The reporter nodded emphatically.

"Call the police, will you?" the big man jeered. "You'll call the police! Well, go ahead."

Hazard gazed at him dazedly.

"What is this, anyway?" he demanded. "Are you crazy? What do you want?"

"What do I want?" guffawed the detective—for, as will have been surmised, that is what he was. "I want you, that's what I want."

"Me! There has been some mistake."

"Mistake! Yes, that's what they all say."

"That's what *I* say," snapped Hazard, "and you'll find it out directly."

The detective laughed and tightened his grip on Hazard's sleeve.

"Will I?" he chuckled. "Will I? And maybe you'll find out something, too."

He threw his coat open and displayed his shield.

"Well?" said Hazard patiently.

"Well," said the detective, "the old man wants to see you."

"Wants to see me! Oh, no! Who do you think I am?"

"I think you're Oliver P. Hazard. Do I get you right?"

"I am Oliver P. Hazard," replied Hazard in a bewildered manner.

"Then," said the detective slowly, "I get you right. Oliver P. Hazard is the very identical gentleman I'm looking for."

CHAPTER V.

FACING THE CHIEF.

HAZARD had the average citizen's respect for—and fear of—the law. He also had the failing that most good men possess of looking guilty in direct ratio to the efforts they make to appear innocent. He stepped back, flushed, stammered, and gulped.

"You want me," he whispered. "Why—why—you—I—I—what have I done?"

The detective laughed. He was experiencing the thrill all hunters feel when the prey is within their grasp.

"Wot hev you done?" he mocked. "That's a question to be decided later. All I can tell you is what you're charged with having done."

"Oh—ah!" Hazard tried to smile. "Charged—oh, yes. Well—well—well—what am I charged with hav—hic—ing done?"

"Murder," said the detective grimly.

"Murder!" fairly shrieked Hazard. "M-m-murder! You lunatic! Murder! Ha, ha, ha! What's the joke?"

"Aw, cut it out!" replied the detective. "There's no joke. We want you on suspicion of being the murderer of Harold Griffith."

Hazard's knees refused to support him longer. He sank to the sidewalk, whence he was jerked to his feet by the detective's strong arm and held thus, his legs wabbling as though his body had suddenly been transformed into lead.

"Harold Griffith!" he cried, suddenly galvanized into speech. "You fool, you liar, he's alive. I was talking to him last night."

"You were, eh?" said the detective. "Well, you won't talk to him to-night; for he's dead—murdered."

"Murdered! Where?" Hazard eyed his captor wonderingly.

"In your room, this morning." The detective jerked him roughly. "Now, come along. We're collecting a crowd, and this ain't no place to chin. If you're all right, why, you'll have to convince the chief. It won't do no good to talk to me."

"But," protested Hazard, "I am in a great hurry. Come with me to the office, and I'll telephone him."

"Aw, stop yer kiddin'," cried the detective irritably. "Now, are you comin', or shall I pull you?"

"Why, I'll come, of course, but allow me to inform you that somebody'll suffer for this business."

"That'll be all right," was the detective's unsympathetic answer. Seizing his prisoner by the arm, he escorted him in the direction of the Central Office.

There was no question that Hazard was thoroughly frightened, despite his conviction that it would require but few words with the chief to clear everything up and set him free, with humble apologies from every person concerned in his arrest. But there were disagreeable thoughts running through his mind.

In some Sunday newspaper—it was last Sunday—he had read the pathetic story of a man imprisoned twenty years and then released upon discovery that his life sentence had been imposed upon an innocent man. He recalled having read, somewhere else, a story of several men whose lives had paid the forfeit to justice, which had, in their cases, been really blind. And he knew enough of business to know that right in every instance was not self-evident; in fact, was entirely submerged in many ways.

And he had read a sufficient number of detective tales to know what circumstantial evidence can do when facts, harmless of themselves, are corelated by the skilful manipulations of human sleuth-hounds. This gave him a thought.

"What made them think I murdered Harold Griffith?" he asked of the detective. (The reporter had disappeared.)

"His body was found in your room," was the reply.

"But—"

"Shut up," interrupted the detective brutally. "You do your talking to the old man."

Thus adjured, Hazard closed his lips and walked silently beside his captor.

A few persons followed the two, attracted by the incident attendant on leaving the street-car and the subsequent scene. But for the most part they excited little attention. One or two business acquaintances passed, and nodded to Hazard, who returned their

salutations as though nothing were the matter. Apparently they had not read the extras. Thus thought the unfortunate prisoner, who by this time had recalled the meaning of the glaring head-line of the newspaper.

It must be said that Hazard did not fill the picture of a murder suspect as he hurried along by the side of his stalwart guardian. A trifle below medium height, with thin, scholarly features, blinking, near-sighted eyes, and quick, nervous steps, he could hardly be designated as of the criminal type in any sense of the word. That was why the detective did not handcuff him. His pride would not permit even a thought of it. If he could not take Hazard to headquarters without handcuffs, why, then he would quit the force and take to needlework.

As they reached a corner the detective turned and pushed Hazard into the main business street, where the prisoner was very well known. One elderly man paused and patted him on the shoulder.

"I believe in you, my boy. It's an outrage," he said, and passed on.

"Thank you, Mr. Ponsonby," murmured Hazard.

A newspaper photographer snapped them at close range, but not before Hazard had placed his disengaged hand in front of his face.

Some friend of Hazard's jostled into the photographer and knocked his camera to the street, breaking it. There arose the sound of a fight, but the detective did not look back.

They reached the building in which Hazard's office was located. He passed it with averted face. Business matters must wait; he had more important things on his mind.

Presently they came to a lowering gray structure with two green lamps standing sentinel on either side of the steps. On the porch a knot of reporters were grouped. Some one spied Hazard and the detective, and in an instant the two were surrounded by cameras and excited faces.

"Where did you get him, O'Brien?" came from all sides.

The detective grinned and shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Nothin' doin' till ye see th' old man," he replied. "Or, say," he added maliciously, "ye'll read all about it in the *Star* in a few minutes. Yer friend Tomkins was next."

The next second the detective, his prisoner, and the newspapermen had swirled into the dark corridor. O'Brien led Hazard down the hall, and finally thrust him into a room with a barred door. It was, in fact, a small cell with another door leading somewhere in the rear.

The door which the hallman had opened clanged shut, and there was the sound of a sliding bolt. Hazard had got into a hole, surely and without doubt. The place contained no furniture of any sort. High overhead was an incandescent lamp. Walls and floor were of naked stone.

Hazard knew it was but a temporary halting-place, and as he stood waiting his mind flew over his strange situation in an effort to find some satisfactory explanation. That Harold Griffith had been found in his room dead seemed certain. No doubt he had committed suicide. But why?

Griffith had certainly seemed in fine spirits the night before, and nothing in his life or prospects, that Hazard knew of, would warrant his desire to snap the fatal cord. And yet if he had committed suicide, why would not that fact be apparent without all this ridiculous nonsense—or, rather, tragic nonsense?

On the other hand, who possibly could have had any motive for putting Griffith out of the world? Hazard knew his friend to have been a man of exemplary character, with no bitter enemies. Again, how had Griffith got into his room?

It was all a puzzle, a mad whirl, a nightmare. Above all, Hazard realized he must keep cool and make a straightforward impression upon the chief of police, whom he knew by reputation as a strict enforcer of the law, but withal a man of good sense and open-mindedness.

How could he best impress him? Not by anger. That would imply guilt, as it had with the detective. But again, not with too great *sang froid*—that would indicate the hardened criminal. Nervousness, while natural in any case, might also be construed into a guilty bearing.

The best way was to be natural. But how could he be natural when placed in such an unnatural plight? He was fast approaching mental disintegration when the rear door opened and O'Brien beckoned him to come forth.

Hazard obeyed promptly, and found himself in the office of Chief Hawkins. The chief himself, seated at his desk, was look-

ing over some papers, and did not even glance at the prisoner as he was ushered in.

He was not an imposing man. He had a bald head, a close-cropped, reddish mustache, and blue ferret eyes that could concentrate themselves into pin-points. Having signed several documents, he looked up and regarded Hazard with quiet gaze.

"Ah," he said, and his voice was soft, "sit down, Mr. Hazard. O'Brien, shut that office door. Higgins"—to his secretary—"get your note-book."

His orders were promptly and quietly obeyed. The chief nodded and turned once more to Hazard. His voice was still soft.

"Mr. Hazard," he began, "I am sorry to tell you that you are under suspicion of having committed a grave crime. Harold Griffith, of this city, was found dead in your room at the Chenango this morning, not long after you left."

"How was he killed?" asked Hazard eagerly.

The chief smiled pityingly.

"He had been struck on the head, causing a fractured skull, which in turn caused death, instant death."

Hazard essayed to speak, but his breath caught. The chief waited a moment, and then, with his gentle smile, continued:

"I am about to ask you a number of questions, Mr. Hazard," he said; "and it is my duty to inform you that anything you say will be used against you in your trial—that is, if it is decided wise to hold you for trial."

"I'm sure I can't think of anything I could say that would militate against me, Chief Hawkins," rejoined Hazard. "I wish to assure you that I know nothing whatever about this terrible matter."

"Just so," replied the chief kindly. "Well, let us see if we cannot straighten the thing out."

Hazard nodded.

"Yes, sir, I desire that of all things."

Chief Hawkins inclined his head and focused his eyes upon Hazard's face. They fairly gleamed with their intensity. They caught Hazard's weak optics, and held them as a magnet holds a piece of steel. Then the chief's voice rang as pitilessly as the clash of sword against sword.

"Oliver Hazard, why did you kill your friend? Come now, quick! Out with it!"

Hazard jumped to his feet.

"I didn't kill him," he said. "As Heaven is my judge, I did not do this thing."

"Very well." The chief's voice was soft and kindly again. "If you will please answer my questions truthfully, I'll give you the opportunity of convincing me that I am wrong."

CHAPTER VI.

HIS TWO ALIBIS.

HAZARD sat back in his chair and eyed the chief. Nature was beginning to assert itself, and he was reacting from the strain and shock of his ordeal to a mental state approximating the normal.

"Well?" The chief regarded him searchingly. "What have you to say?"

"Nothing, sir, except that I am absolutely innocent of—of the thing you charge."

"Don't lie," warned the chief menacingly. "You tell the truth, and it may not appear so serious as the case now looks."

Hazard caught a ray of hope from the fact that the chief undoubtedly was fishing. He realized that to convict for murder, proof of that fact must be established beyond reasonable doubt. That cheered him.

Then, too, he recalled, now that he had his mind in working order, that he had at least two alibis, the jeweler and his friend Preston.

However Griffith's body got into his room it had got there after he had left at about nine o'clock. And he had gone straight to the jeweler's. It would do no harm to ascertain the time the body was discovered.

"Chief, may I ask a question?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"What time was Harold's body discovered?"

"That's none of your business—just now."

Hazard smiled for the first time.

"Well," he said, "I left my room at nine o'clock, and the hotel five minutes later. If Harold Griffith got into my room, he entered it after I went out."

"Can you prove that?"

"Yes; a maid looked in my room as I left it. I saw her at the door. She stepped in for a moment and then went out, closing the door."

The chief allowed a momentary expression of disappointment to flash across his face. He thought a moment. Then he snapped out viciously:

"But you went back to the hotel again."

"I did not, and you know I didn't."

Hazard was quite at ease now. The situation seemed to be coming well into his hand.

"Oh, *I know* you didn't!" mocked the chief. "Don't be so sure about that."

"Perhaps you don't know it," admitted Hazard testily; "but I know it."

"Where did you go when you left the hotel this morning?"

"To the jeweler's — a man named Schmuck in Liberty Avenue."

The chief pressed a button.

"Send around to Schmuck's jewelry-store on Liberty Avenue," he said to the bluecoat who responded, "and bring Schmuck in here to me. Hurry!" He turned again to Hazard. "What did you go there for?"

"To have my watch fixed. I broke the crystal this morning."

The chief started forward.

"Oh, you broke your watch-crystal this morning. How did that—did Griffith strike it in the struggle?"

"No, Griffith didn't strike it," blazed forth Hazard. "I was dressing in a hurry and dropped it."

"I see. Why were you in a hurry?"

"I had an appointment at my office for ten o'clock. The clerk failed to call me at 7.45, as I requested him to do the night before. I overslept until 8.20."

"Oh, you have a pretty clear recollection of the various times at which things happened!" The chief sniffed sarcastically.

Hazard suddenly arose in his chair with indignation.

"Look here, chief," he said, "I don't like your attitude. I assume it to be as much the duty of the police to clear an innocent man as to convict a guilty one."

"True," admitted the chief. "When I believe you are innocent I'll do everything in my power to clear you."

"But why do you think I'm guilty?"

"You'll learn that in good time. Now, then, what made you strike Harold Griffith?"

Hazard looked at the chief silently.

"Answer me!" roared the officer.

"I did not strike Harold Griffith," replied Hazard.

"But he struck you."

"Did he?" said Hazard. "I did not know it."

"Where did you get that blood on your cheek—that cut?"

Hazard laughed now.

"Razors," he said, "have been known to cut before, especially when one is shaving in a hurry."

The chief paused and looked out of the window in deep thought. Hazard followed his gaze.

How beautiful the sunlight seemed, how supernally beautiful, now that he was fighting to be out in it. He could hear the trolley-bells clanging, the sound of hoofs on the pavement, the cries of the newsboys, and all the noises that were a part of the city's life.

After all, liberty was something he had long undervalued. When he left this room, a free man, he would never again growl at petty tribulations. He had never appreciated how happy his life had been.

At length the chief faced him.

"Mr. Hazard," he said, "I am pretty well convinced that the killing of Griffith was no premeditated affair — that it came about through sudden impulse. Now, if you tell the whole truth, it will be a good deal better for you in the end."

"I understand your position, Chief Hawkins," smiled Hazard. "It would be a fine thing for your reputation if I should admit that I killed Harold Griffith. But, you see, the truth is that I didn't. And the truth also is that the city is going to pay me some money for this outrage before I am through."

"You say you went to the jeweler's?" questioned the chief, ignoring Hazard's statement.

"Yes."

"What did he do?"

"Why, he fixed my watch. I didn't go to him to press my clothes."

The chief flashed a sudden glance at Hazard.

"I think you'll find you will be a great deal better off here if you curb your inclination to be fresh," he remarked.

"I beg pardon," replied Hazard quickly. "I do not wish to be 'fresh.' But you must realize that my position is an extremely exasperating one."

"It will do you no good to make it worse," replied the chief.

"I said I was sorry," Hazard reminded him.

"All right." The chief leaned forward. "Now, see here, Hazard. Here are the facts in your case so far as we have collected them: This morning, at an hour to be determined, Harold Griffith entered your room. You were there, and you, Hazard,

killed him, struck him on the head as you would a dog, and left him there dead. Murdered! Murdered by you, Oliver Hazard.

"You lie!" shouted Hazard.

"Why you did this we shall establish sooner or later."

"You—"

Hazard sprang to his feet, and was starting toward the chief when O'Brien reached out with the palm of his big hand, hit Hazard under the chin, and sent him flying back into his seat.

Hazard lay crumpled there for a moment, and then straightened himself out, little angry blotches coloring his cheeks. He had never been struck that way before.

"You have a temper, I see," remarked the chief.

Hazard did not reply. The chief regarded him musingly.

"I think," he said, "that you are hardly in the mood for conversation at present. We'll keep you with us here to-night, instead of sending you to the city prison, and in the morning, I imagine, you'll be more reasonable."

"Keep me here to-night!" cried Hazard.

"Why not?"

"But I have told you I am not guilty. You have nothing to prove that I was guilty; no motive—nothing. Why, it's absurd! You must see that. I have important business to attend to. I shall be at my office or at my hotel if you should want me. Oh, I have no desire to run away. I have nothing to run away from, and nowhere to run to if I had. You are a sensible man, chief. You certainly do not think I am guilty."

Chief Hawkins looked at Hazard steadily without replying.

As a matter of truth, he was beginning to have a well founded idea that perhaps, after all, a mistake had been made, and that Hazard was as innocent of this crime as he himself was.

Hazard's whole bearing gave unequivocal hints of veracity. He certainly did not act either like a murderer or like a man who had anything to conceal. If he was playthe part of a good citizen, arrested on charges that were not well founded, he certainly was a fine actor. And the chief knew enough about human nature to realize that Hazard was no actor, whatever else he was.

A man of the criminal type Chief Hawkins would have known how to handle, or even the man who beyond peradventure had committed an offense charged against him. But Hazard's general demeanor had baffled him. He shook his head.

"As I say," he frowned, "you may be in a more reasonable mood to-morrow morning. We'll try and see that you are."

Hazard was about to reply when there was a stir in the outer office. There came a knock at the door.

"Come," called Hawkins.

The door swung open, and Schmuck, the watchmaker, accompanied by a detective, entered the room.

"Ah," said the chief, rubbing his hands, "here is Mr. Schmuck. Good morning, Mr. Schmuck. Have you ever seen this gentleman before?"

Schmuck adjusted his eye-glasses, and looked at Hazard.

Then he shook his head.

"No," he said finally, "I have never seen him. Not that I remember."

"What!" cried Hazard, leaping to his feet.

"O'Brien," roared the chief, "if that man speaks again until I tell him to, smash his head in."

O'Brien moved swiftly to Hazard's side.

"Now, then, Mr. Schmuck," said the chief genially, "you say you never saw this man. He is charged with murder. He said he stepped in at your shop this morning to have a crystal put in his watch."

Schmuck uttered an exclamation. He stepped over and looked at Hazard closely.

"Oh, yes," he said; "he did."

"He did! You old fool! You just said he didn't," snarled the chief. "What do you mean? Be careful now. No lies."

"I'm not lying, chief. I didn't recall when I first looked at him. But he certainly did come into my shop this morning to have his watch fitted for a crystal."

"All right," was the ungracious reply. "Now go on and tell us all about his visit."

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOOMERANG.

SCHMUCK wrinkled his brows, giving the impression of a man who intends to strain all his faculties in the interests of truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

"Well," he began, "I had breakfast at the usual—"

"What's your breakfast got to do with this man?" interrupted the chief.

"Why—er—er—nothing," he replied.

"Then cut it out. I don't want to know what you had for breakfast or when you had it. And I don't wish to know how well you slept last night. What I want is any information you can give me concerning this man Hazard's visit to your shop."

"Yes, sir; yes, sir. Well, let me see. It was about nine or five minutes after—"

"Yes, yes," said Hawkins impatiently.

"I had just finished selling a small gold ring to a customer when the door flew open with a bang, and in rushed this gentleman."

"Ah, rushed," observed the chief encouragingly. "He was then—he appeared to be just a little bit in a hurry. Is that right?"

"Oh, yes, sir; he appeared to be in a great hurry. He—he—yes, I recollect now, he even said he was in a hurry."

"Said he was; yes, go on."

"Yes, he said he was in a hurry. He had some sort of a business appointment, he said, and was late."

"Yes."

"You know I love to talk—so Mary, my wife, says, and I suppose I do. Anyway, I started to pass the time of day with him, and he seemed quite upset about it. He said he was in a hurry."

The chief smiled.

"All right; in a hurry."

"Yes, sir; a hurry. And then—"

A sudden thought occurred to Hazard, and his heart almost ceased beating as he looked at the jeweler with a face that had lost its expression of supreme confidence, and now showed signs of open trepidation.

"Well—and then?" The chief was tapping his desk with his pencil.

"And then—"

The jeweler paused and scratched his head. Evidently some hidden, or half distinct memory was trying to break through to the surface of his consciousness.

Hazard felt cold chills running up and down his spine. A silent prayer that this man might be stricken with a complete loss of memory went up from his inmost soul.

The chief had evidently sized Schmuck up as the most hopeless and least valuable of witnesses.

"Well, and then?" he cried. Then what? You fixed his watch?" he added suggestively.

"Oh!" the jeweler's face lightened. "Oh, of course, I fixed his watch."

"Thank Heaven!" Hazard whispered this to himself, and a great, warm wave of relaxation swept through his body. But he straightened again in a moment when he found the eyes of Schmuck fastened thoughtfully upon him.

"I fixed his watch," continued Schmuck dreamily, "and we talked."

"What did you talk about?"

"Why, we talked about liberty and freedom—or, yes, I remember, this man said he would rather have money than all the sunlight and fresh air in the world."

"Ah!" The chief darted a glance at O'Brien. "He—ah, seemed to think money was about everything in the world, eh?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, sir; about that."

"I see," observed the chief. "Well, what else?"

"There was something else. I am trying to think. Now I know."

"What do you know?" asked the chief.

"He had blood on his cheek. He held his handkerchief to it."

"Anything else?"

"Yes, something else, but I can't think what it is."

"Important?" asked the chief, whose interest was beginning to wane somewhat.

"I feel that it is." Schmuck raised his eyes to the ceiling.

"Well, you sit there a moment and think what it is. Take your time. There is no hurry at all. Nothing to get flustered about. Just think and remember I want to know everything."

The chief picked up a cigar and snapped the end off with a gold cutter.

Hazard sank back in his chair. The chief, watching him out the corner of his eye, had not been long in noting that the jeweler was verging upon something that the prisoner did not relish.

An inspiration came to Hawkins. He looked full at the prisoner.

"Perhaps Mr. Hazard can help us, Mr. Schmuck." Then, slowly and deliberately: "Mr. Hazard, you have heard what Mr. Schmuck has said about something having slipped his mind. Cannot you assist his memory? What was this incident that Mr. Schmuck appears to have forgotten?"

Hazard gasped incontinently. What should he do? Should he tell and then explain? What would the effect be? A torrent of conflicting emotions thrilled him,

"Well," said the chief, "if you are not afraid—if you are so certain of your innocence, you surely can have no objection to jogging Mr. Schmuck's memory."

At that moment a great impulse prompted Hazard to tell the truth, and he had just opened his mouth to speak when an exclamation from Schmuck interrupted him.

"Oh, I remember now," the jeweler cried. "I don't think it is so important after all."

"Tell us and we'll see," said the chief.

"Why," went on Schmuck, "when he came into the shop he held out his watch to me saying he had let it fall and broken the crystal. I looked at it and saw that there was no rim—"

"No rim?" The chief had risen and had approached the jeweler. "There was no rim? Well, what of that?"

"I told him there was no rim and asked him if he had it. He said he had—"

"Yes, yes. Well, had he?" The chief eyed the jeweler hungrily.

"No." The jeweler glanced at Hazard as though to refresh his memory. "No, sir; he didn't have it. He thought he had. He looked through all his pockets and said he could not find it."

"Yes?" from the chief.

"I asked him if he did not want to buy a new one and he said no, that the old one would do. He said he *would go back to the hotel and get it.*"

The jeweler ceased speaking and there was a tense silence. Hazard stared at the chief with the dauntless eyes of a cornered animal. O'Brien stared at Schmuck. The chief deliberately lighted his cigar. Then he looked at the jeweler.

"Did—did—he—go back to the hotel for the rim?" There was a quaver of excitement in the officer's voice.

"Yes." The jeweler's voice was barely audible. "He went back."

"Ah, he went back!" There was a volume of meaning in the chief's tones.

"Yes, sir; he went to get the rim—to his hotel."

With a wild cry Hazard sprang from his chair, and then, standing in front of it, the hand of O'Brien on his collar, he craned his neck toward the chief, speaking so rapidly that his words fairly tumbled over one another.

"What he says is true," he cried. "I *did* tell him I had forgotten the rim—and I thought I had. I *did* start toward the hotel, intending to go to my room to get it. I had not gone more than two blocks, though, when I remembered I had placed it in the change-pocket of my overcoat, which I had overlooked in the shop, and there I found it. So I did not go to the hotel. I did *not* go to the hotel. I turned around and went right back to the jeweler's. He will tell you that I was gone but fifteen or twenty minutes. He will tell you that. He remarked upon it."

"Is that true?" asked the chief.

"Yes," replied the watchmaker thoughtfully. "I recall remarking that he had made a pretty quick trip."

"Yes, and what did he say?" asked the detective.

"He said—he said that—oh, yes, I remember; he said that the hotel was only a short distance away."

"Yes, and he was right," asserted the chief. "It is not a great distance away."

"This is outrageous!" cried Hazard. "I—"

"Now," broke in the chief, motioning him to be silent, "you had your chance. I asked you to refresh the memory of this man upon this point and you did not do it. No, you did not do it. You were afraid—"

"I was not afraid," cried Hazard.

"Then why didn't you?"

"I—I—did not want the jeweler to think I was such an ass as to have overlooked the rim, so I did not tell him I had found it in my overcoat pocket."

"That is not answering my question," persisted the chief. "I asked you why you did not refresh the memory of this man."

"I was going to, when he spoke," said Hazard.

"But you had plenty of time before he spoke. Why did you hesitate, if you had nothing to hide?"

Hazard hesitated now for an instant.

"I could see what you might think," he replied at last.

"Yes, you could. Now you know what I think. That'll do for a while. You can go back in that little cell there and try to decide whether you can enlighten us any further, without the help of other witnesses we may call." He shook his fist at Hazard and added: "What I want before I'm done with you is a clean breast—a clean breast, see?"

(To be continued.)

The Catcher Comes Back

by William H. Greene

"CURLEY" McGRATH'S girl, Mary Truesdell, objected to his becoming a professional baseball-player. This was inconsistent, for it had been Curley's prowess on the diamond while at Truxton University which had captivated her, in the first place. But inconsistency is a woman's prerogative, and often one of her chief charms, the existence of which she will indignantly deny, through excessive modesty, no doubt.

This is a mistake. Anybody can be consistent. But to be really femininely inconsistent requires brains and imagination—and nerve. No mere man could ever do it.

If Mary Truesdell had not been an expert at this sort of thing she could never have helped McGrath out in the end, as she did. By all the rules of logic she should not have cared anything about what became of him. She even said herself that it was a matter of the utmost indifference to her. She never gave him a thought—and she hated him. Yet she helped him out when he was in trouble.

Young John J. McGrath, known as Curley since his early youth, for the usual reason, was a natural ball-player. A man can learn to play the violin, write poetry, or paint pictures; but ball-players are born, not made.

He had "made the team" at Truxton as a freshman, played every infield position except pitcher, and in his senior year, as catcher and captain of the team, had led them, through many hard-earned victories, to the intercollegiate championship.

Through all this Mary Truesdell had been very proud of him. It was nice to be engaged to the most popular man in Truxton. They were to have been married soon after his graduation—as soon as he was settled in some good position. She supposed all a college man had to do was to let it be known that he was willing to accept a high-class position, and any firm would be glad to take advantage of the opportunity.

Curley had also entertained some such ideas at one time, but long before his graduation he began to suspect that the business of getting a job was not so simple as it sounded. When he began looking for one in earnest he found this suspicion to be quite correct. College graduates without technical training were not in demand, and the salaries he was offered insulted him, until he got used to hearing their figures.

He had been sent through Truxton University by his mother, who would not hear of any other plans for him. Her boy should have the best. He was an only child, and his father had died so long ago that Curley could scarcely remember him. Mr. McGrath had not left a great deal of money, but by such sacrifices as only a mother will make, and such scheming and management as only a mother can accomplish, she had made ends meet, and Curley had missed none of the fun of college life.

He had accepted it all as a matter of course, as sons usually do, but after the last ball game, when he went to look for her in the grand stand, where she sat with Mary Truesdell, he noticed that she wore the same old-fashioned plush coat and black

silk dress that she had worn to the very first game he had played in, as a freshman.

He had always associated her with these clothes in his mind, and would have found it hard to picture her dressed in any other way, but he noticed for the first time that the plush coat was getting just a little worn and shabby, and though she smiled proudly upon him, her face seemed drawn and tired, and older than he had ever seen it look before. Her hair was getting very gray, and her hat looked funny and odd beside Mary Truesdell's stunning affair.

So when the question arose whether he should accept the offer from the big league to catch for the Blankport "Black Sox," at a salary which would buy his mother sealskin coats, new dresses, and willow plumes, and fill out the hollows in her cheeks—or take up a very gentlemanly position with a very high-class firm, at a salary of eight dollars a week, with a chance of promotion to ten—he chose the former, in spite of Mary Truesdell's objections.

It should be said in justice to Mary that she was anxious to meet all present expenses with her own ample income, if he took the eight-dollar position, and would gladly have bought a whole storeful of clothes for Mrs. McGrath, if she had known how to suggest it. Nor did Curley ever tell her that he and his mother were in immediate need of funds. But she did not want to be the wife of a professional ball-player. One might as well marry a prizefighter and be done with it.

"Some prizefighters are very nice fellows," said Curley.

This was the beginning of a most tragic scene.

"They may be nice fellows," she replied, "but that's no reason why I should marry one of them."

"I should say not. I only want you to marry me."

"But if you cared for me as you say you do, you would have some consideration. You think more of baseball than you do of me."

"You know I don't," he denied miserably, "but it's good money, and I can't afford to turn it down. I don't intend to be a ball-player all my life, and it's only for the summer season anyway. In the fall I can look for something else."

"In the fall you might go into vaudeville," she suggested with cutting sarcasm, "and do a monologue like 'Swat' Clancy. Do you remember the grammar he used?"

"You know very well I'd do nothing of the sort," Curley replied indignantly. "But I can't see any harm in being a ball-player for a couple of seasons. It's the only way I have of getting the start I need."

"Your picture would be in every package of nasty Turkish cigarettes, and in all the horrid sporting papers. Ugh!"

Curley could think of no satisfactory reply to this, though it did not impress him as being such a terrible calamity.

"It's for your own good, dear," the girl went on persuasively. "You are capable of better things."

"I've got others to think of beside myself."

"Your mother? Does she approve of your becoming a professional ball-player?"

"She thinks anything I do is O. K.," he answered, smiling.

"You're spoiled," declared the girl.

"I guess I have been," Curley admitted.

"Well, I'm not going to spoil you any more. You'll just *have* to give up this foolish idea."

"I can't," he insisted stubbornly.

"Then you'll have to give me up, that's all."

"But Mary," Curley begged, "won't you please be reasonable?"

"You are the unreasonable one," she said, melodramatically. "You can choose between me and baseball."

Curley knew he was choosing between her and the chance to buy his mother the sealskin coats and the good times she needed—in fact, to return some of the "spoiling" he had received. So, with a pale face and slightly shaking voice, he said "Good-by forever," took back his gold, in the form of a modest engagement ring, and all was over between them.

II

THE almost phenomenal success of Curley McGrath with the Black Sox is a matter of baseball history which every one who reads the papers knows all about. Before the season was half over, though only a youngster, he became known as the fastest, coolest, "headiest" catcher in the league, and his batting average was second only to that of the great Swat Clancy, of vaudeville fame.

Popular with fans, fellow players, and managers alike, his pictures appeared in the sporting sheets and on cigarette cards, as Mary had predicted, and he began to

know such fame as his college successes had never brought him. Newspapers paid him well for signed articles about the game, vaudeville agents offered him big salaries, and booking over the "big time," and authors approached him with everything from five-act baseball melodramas to monologues. Money came in easily, and Mrs. McGrath was showered with every luxury that Curley could possibly think up or get his friends to suggest to him.

Mary Truesdell pretended absolute indifference to, and even ignorance of, all this. Mr. McGrath's affairs were not of the slightest interest to her. In fact, she rather resented the way people insisted on talking about him in her presence. Even strangers on the street-cars would remark: "Well, little Curley McGrath threw out six men at second to-day. I guess that boy is bad, eh?"

It was exasperating. And the newspapers simply "flaunted him in her face." She tore up one perfectly good evening paper, which she had just paid a cent for, threw it down on the floor, and stamped on it, simply because it had a big black headline across the top of the front page reading: "Curley McGrath knocks another home run."

In the mean time a classmate of Curley's, who had graduated with him that year, was making hay while the sun shone. A good many Truxton fellows would have been glad to assume the rôle vacated by Curley, but Joe Standing seemed to be the successful one.

He was a handsome fellow, an entertaining talker, with excellent manners. Not an athlete himself, he knew all about all kinds of sports, and was willing to bet you that the next man who passed would wear a derby, or a soft hat, or tan shoes, or black. He would take either end of any proposition, was known to be "game," and every one said his word was as good as his bond. Probably it was better.

Miss Truesdell entered into her new friendship with this man with a zeal which might have been called spiteful. They were constantly together, at theaters, dinners, dances, motoring, everywhere but at the ball games. Curley, seeing and hearing of this, clenched his teeth a little tighter and played ball harder than ever.

But Standing was clever enough to see that the girl's cordiality to him did not quite ring true, and could hardly miss guessing the reason. So he began at once to think up a plan for removing all thoughts of McGrath forever from her mind.

It was not enough that she was angry with his rival. If something could happen which would make her lose her respect for him! That was the idea.

He felt no personal animosity toward the ball-player, but was sincerely fond of Mary Truesdell, so he set his scheming, gambler's brain to work upon this problem of removing the one obstacle which stood in his way.

III

It was one evening toward the end of the season, when Curley's popularity was at its height, that Joe Standing called upon him at the Cosmopole Hotel and requested a private interview.

"McGrath," he began bluntly, when they were seated in Curley's room, "I've been asked to approach you on a very delicate matter. In fact, I may as well say at once that I am here representing Fred Berg, the gambler, and his crowd."

"Then I guess that's about all I want to know," said Curley. "I don't want any messages from that bunch of crooks."

"Let me say what I've got to say and get it over," proceeded Standing. "You have been picked as the youngest and newest, as well as one of the most dangerous players on the Black Sox, to—er—receive this message. Berg and his friends, including myself, have placed the last dollar we could beg, borrow, or steal on the Bloomington 'Buccaneers' to win the pennant. They looked like winners a week ago, but now the Black Sox are in first place, as you know, and, without flattery, you are the principal cause of it. Now the Buccaneers must win the pennant. That's all. You will only have to 'throw' a couple of games now and then to let them nose you out. A catcher is just the man to do the trick without any one getting wise. The transaction will pay you just five thousand dollars."

McGrath realized that he was in a position where he had better keep cool and have his wits about him. So he restrained his desire to throw Standing out of the window, and said:

"I'm surprised that you, a Truxton man, should come to me with such a proposition. But you always were a good talker. I suppose that's why they sent you."

"I came simply because I am not known to be connected with Berg, and your being seen with me will not arouse suspicion," the other explained. "If you were seen talking with Berg, for instance, it would queer you. But if you accept our proposition, we will play fair and protect your reputation in every way."

"I have every confidence in you, of course," said Curley, "but I'd rather keep my reputation so that it doesn't need protecting."

"Never mind the heroics," sneered Standing. "We'll treat you right if you treat us right."

"And if I refuse?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. McGrath," said the gambler. "I tried to have them pick some other man for the 'goat,' but they wouldn't. I'll speak frankly to you. If you refuse, Berg and his friends know how to get even. Your promising baseball career will be cut short. There are many ways of getting a man 'in bad.' Things will happen to place you under suspicion, and with a mediocre catcher in your place, the Buccaneers would probably win the pennant anyway."

"I see," rejoined Curley, still keeping his temper. "Well, you can go back and tell the Black Hand society that they can't bluff me. Now get out, before I throw you out."

This was exactly the answer Standing had expected and desired. He departed, rejoicing, and Curley went to bed with an uneasy feeling that he was in a disagreeable and perhaps dangerous position. But in the morning he laughed at his fears and did not even mention the matter to any of his friends.

This was a mistake which a more experienced man would not have made. If he had told his manager the whole story at once he might have saved himself a lot of trouble.

That day the Buccaneers arrived in Blankport for a series of five games. Curley went on the field that afternoon feeling slightly nervous, and made more errors than he had ever been guilty of during an entire season. He couldn't tell just what was the matter. His judgment of distance was gone and he felt slightly "rattled." He threw a mile over second base's head, and fumbled the ball, letting men home who should have been out.

He tried his best to brace up, but could not, and he began to get confused and see things in a blurred, uncertain way. At the bat he did nothing but strike out. The score was 6–0, in favor of the Buccaneers, and every one in the grand stand and bleachers could see that it was almost entirely the catcher's fault.

In the clubhouse afterward, he received a scolding from the manager which ranged in style from the most biting sarcasm to the bluntest brutality, and ended by accusing him of being either drunk or crazy, or both. He denied the former, but admitted that he might be somewhat "batty."

That same evening, in the hotel lobby, when several of the players and their friends were standing around within earshot, Fred Berg, the gambler, appeared among them, nodded to one or two of the men whom he knew, and tapping Curley on the shoulder, said in a loud stage-whisper: "That was great work you did in today's game, McGrath."

He winked meaningly and sauntered away, leaving Curley too surprised to answer him.

That was all; no more was said. But it was enough, under the circumstances, to arouse suspicion, and Curley might have been accused of "throwing" the game, and suspended at once, pending proofs, if his manager had not liked him and believed in him.

He now told the whole story of how Standing had approached him, and the threats he had made in behalf of Berg. The manager believed him, though Curley could offer no proofs, and the whole matter was kept very quiet, as no manager wants any member of his team accused of crooked work. When such things get into the papers the public is only too ready to jump at the conclusion that all baseball is "fixed" and that nothing is "on the level." The box-office then suffers.

The next day McGrath played, if possible, a worse game than before, and the Buccaneers won by a score of 7–2, which put them up in first place again. The third game was no better. Buccaneers 4, Black Sox 0, appeared on the score-boards all over town, while the crowds groaned.

Curley wondered if something could be the matter with his eyes. The sunlight hurt them sometimes, and he saw queer, blinding flashes, just at the times when he made his worst errors. These errors always seemed to occur at the most critical moments in the

game, when his blunder meant one or more runs for the opposing team.

One cloudy, threatening afternoon, when the light was not, of course, so strong as when the sun shone, he managed to put up a fairly good game, showing, aside from a slight nervousness, almost his old form. This led him to believe that his eyes might have developed some weakness, but several of the best oculists agreed that his vision was unusually strong.

He began to lose his nerve and imagine all sorts of things, as his improvement proved to be only temporary. The next game fell on an unusually hot day, and he established a new record for errors, as if to make up for the one game he had played decently. After this disappointment he went to pieces about as rapidly as a player can, but still the manager stood by him, doing everything possible to help him and keep his courage up.

This "slump" of the new catcher could not, of course, be kept out of the papers. Every "fan" was discussing it. Mary Truesdell still refused to read the base-ball news, but she overheard enough to gather that Curley McGrath had gone to pieces, and every one was wondering why.

Standing's plan was working excellently so far, but he went just a little too far, as people of this kind always do. When the first small item questioning McGrath's honesty crept into print, he thought he was doing a clever thing when he cut the paragraph out and showed it to Miss Truesdell. She made no comment, but appeared thoughtful during the remainder of his call.

When he had gone she sent out and bought an evening paper which she knew contained a first-class sporting page, and made an earnest attempt to read the account of the day's ball game.

> Smith had singled. Jones walked, and Brown and Ellis fanned. Clancy clung to O'Brien's liner and the Buccaneers took up the stick. No runs. Second half: King's fly fell into good hands at center and Dinklehaus swung like a gate, etc.

She understood something of baseball, but this was too much for her.

"What absurd language! I'll just go to the game myself to-morrow and see what's the matter," she decided. "Curley—Mr. McGrath—may be stubborn and a brute, and all that, but he never did a dishonest thing in his life, and I know he could not."

The following afternoon found her in the grand stand, armed with a big pair of field-glasses. She meant to find out what was wrong with Curley McGrath. Men were so stupid. The idea of accusing him of "cheating," as she expressed it.

Curely had been told by the manager that he could have one more chance that day.

"Go in and make good now, or it's 'curtains' for you," he said.

In the first inning he took his place behind the bat. The first man up had two strikes called against him and swung at the third, missing by a foot. The ball was high and Curley also missed it, letting it get clear past him so that he had to run back several yards for it.

The batter looked astonished, and then started for first base as fast as his legs could carry him. Curley made a wild throw to first, and the man was safe. This was unheard of, and the crowd sent up their first disgusted groan. The manager was all but put off the field for using improper language.

Another wild throw to second base saw this same runner safe on third. The second man up was one of the Buccaneers' best sluggers. He got two strikes, but hit the third ball in a straight line into the short-stop's hands. The latter held onto it, putting the batter out, and threw the ball home in plenty of time to make a double play.

Curley fumbled and the man was safe. One run for the Buccaneers, and only one man out. More hoots and hisses from the fans, and bad language from the manager.

After this Curley made no bad breaks for a few minutes, but the visitors were batting well and managed to get three men on bases. The man on third was doing his best to "get the catcher's goat," pretending that he was going to try to steal home. He ventured too far from his base, and Curley made the proper play under the circumstances. That is, he threw swiftly to third, trying to put this man out before he could get back to the bag.

But the ball went ten feet wide of the mark, on the outside of the foul line, and was thrown with such force that before it could be recovered two of the men on bases were home safe, and the third was trying to make it. The ball was again thrown to Curley, and this time he managed to put his man out.

But he had let in two unnecessary runs, and again the grand stand and bleachers yelled their disapproval.

"Y' ain't playin' bean-bag, ye big stiff!" piped a small boy, and everybody laughed.

And so for six innings Mary Truesdell watched Curley make errors which a kid on a vacant lot might have been ashamed of. At the bat he never even came near hitting the ball, and some one shouted "Get a balloon," when he struck out for the third time. The score was now 9–1 in favor of the Buccaneers, a man informed her.

"Three groans for Curley McGrath! Get the hook! Give him the gate! Back to the bush league!" shouted the more excitable fans, as Curley dropped a foul which he should have caught easily.

Two more runs came in. "Eleven to one!" groaned the big man who was keeping score.

Puzzled and astonished, Mary Truesdell tried to think. Curley had never played like that at college, even when he was a beginner. She could not understand. Letting her eyes wander beyond the field to the near-by houses, the roofs of which were crowded with people watching the game free, she endeavored to think of some possible solution of the mystery.

Suddenly her attention was attracted by a powerful, blinding light which flashed in her eyes for a fraction of a second, and was as suddenly withdrawn, leaving her blinking and confused. She looked in the direction from which this light seemed to come, and saw something odd in a window of one of the houses not far from the grounds.

A man was standing by some very brilliant object, which glittered in the sunlight and sent forth a slender ray of light, which at the moment pointed upward and seemed to fade out within a few feet of the reflector which was its source. She raised her glasses and watched the man working with this instrument, which he could shut off with a curtain at will.

Mary thought at first that it might be some sort of camera, but evidently it was not.

The man was also watching the game through field-glasses. He removed the curtain from his apparatus, and just at that moment Curley McGrath came up to the bat again. Each time he swung at the ball Mary imagined she saw a flash of light from the strange affair in the window. As she expected, he struck out, but not as another man might, missing the ball by a trifle. He struck wildly, blindly, and missed by feet instead of inches.

McGrath was the third man out and the Buccaneers now came to the bat. In his position as catcher the girl could not see his face, though his back was not directly toward her either. As he crouched close behind the batter she got a partial side view of him, and by watching closely she was almost certain she could see a glint of something very like sunlight on the wires of the heavy, protruding mask he was wearing, though the part of the field in which he stood, by the home plate, was now in the shadow of the grand stand.

A strange suspicion was forming in her mind, which she was timid about wording definitely even to herself. Perhaps her woman's ignorance on the subject of baseball and sports in general was leading her into the invention of an absurdly wild, impossible theory.

She *wanted* to find out something which would solve Curley's difficulties and prove that he was all right. She admitted this now. So probably her desire to help him was running away with her imagination.

Yet she knew that Curley could play ball if let alone, and she knew that he was not "throwing" the games, as that horrid newspaper article had intimated. Therefore there must be some outside influence working against him. And the suspicion in her mind became stronger.

The people were jeering at him again now. She bit her lips in anger and the tears sprang to her eyes as she watched him crouching patiently in his place, his big shoulders hunched forward, evidently trying his hardest in spite of the insults that were being hurled at him. Brushing aside this weakness, and with it all her former feelings of hesitation and timidity, she decided that she would do something at once to find out if there was anything in the queer theory she had formed.

But when this decision was reached she did not know just how to proceed. If she only had some one to advise her!

Glancing about somewhat helplessly, her glance fell upon the big fellow who had informed her of the score. He was a good-natured, kindly-looking man, and did not seem at all the kind that would try to flirt. Evidently his one desire in life at that especial time was that the Black Sox might win the game.

Also he appeared to be the sort of man who would understand all about sporting subjects and would be able to deal intelli-

gently with the situation—if there was any situation to deal with. Mary's suspicions were still rather vague, but the man's appearance inspired confidence.

Anyway, this was no time to worry about etiquette and propriety. She would speak to him, tell him what was puzzling her, and ask his opinion. So she touched him upon the arm as the best way of attracting his attention, for his eyes were riveted upon the game, and the crowd was very noisy.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but would you mind taking these glasses and looking at that open window over there where the man is standing with that shiny thing?"

"Certainly, miss," replied the man, evidently a trifle surprised, but taking her field-glasses and looking in the direction she indicated.

In a second he let out a startled oath, what he saw making him forget for the moment that he was in the presence of a lady.

"Pardon me, miss," he said, "but that's a queer looking arrangement up there, and it surprised me. I'm glad you called my attention to it. How did you come to notice it yourself?"

"A strong light flashed in my eyes," she replied, "which seemed to come from there."

The man whistled softly.

"This may be a big thing," he went on, impressively. "You may have dug up the biggest kind of a scandal. Anyway, we'll look into it. I'm a detective. My name is Kennedy, and my friend here is Kid Grover," (indicating a small, flashily dressed young fellow at his side). "Take a slant up at that window, Kid," he went on, after Miss Truesdell had acknowledged the introduction. "What do you make of it?"

Mr. Grover took one look through the glasses and said simply:

"Gee!"

"Don't that look queer to you?" asked the detective.

"Betcher life, cap."

"Then we'll get busy and look into it. You deserve all the credit for discovering this game, miss," Kennedy added, turning to Mary, "and if you'll come with us we'll guarantee to see that everything is done smooth and polite, and that you won't be scared or in any kind of danger."

"Of course I'll come," she said eagerly. "Let's hurry."

The three of them slipped quietly out of the grand stand, around the corner, down a side street, and five minutes later Kennedy was unlocking, with a skeleton key, the front door of a vacant house a block from the ball-park, while Kid Grover guarded the back. The latter joined them in the lower hallway, and they tiptoed up the stairs to the third floor.

They could hear voices in a back room, the door of which was closed. Carefully trying this door, they found it to be unlocked, and, opening it cautiously about a foot, they looked in upon a strange scene.

A small, light-haired fellow, wearing heavy spectacles, was bending over an ingenious arrangement of mirrors, while beside him, watching the ball game from the window, through a pair of field-glasses, and directing the movements of the smaller man, stood Curley McGrath's rival, Joe Standing.

The two were evidently not in the slightest fear of any interruption, and were so intent on the business in hand that they did not notice the arrival of the newcomers, who had now carefully pushed the door half-way open, and stood silently watching them. If there had been any doubt about the game they were playing, their conversation would have been sufficient to convict them.

"Now get ready," said Standing. "McGrath is at the bat again. Now—flash! That's it. Strike one. He missed it by a yard. Now—again! Ha, ha! Strike two. He nearly broke his back. Once more—now! Fine. He's out. Listen to the crowd."

From the bleachers and grand stand arose the angry hoots and groans of disappointed fans.

"Vell, I guess diss vill about finish dot catcher, yes?" said the small man with the spectacles.

"He's to be taken out, I heard, if he doesn't make good to-day, and he certainly isn't making good," replied Standing. "The whole team is rattled now, anyway, and it's a cinch the Buccaneers won't have much trouble getting that pennant. If they do, however, all we have to do is throw our little light in some other player's eyes. The day the pennant goes to the Buccaneers you and I, and some others, will be on 'Easy Street.'"

No wonder poor McGrath had been able to play only on cloudy days.

The listeners had heard enough to re-

move all possible doubts as to the nature of the scene they were witnessing. They had unearthed one of the most audacious plots in the history of baseball or any other sport —ingenious in its very simplicity and novelty, which its inventors counted upon to protect them from suspicion. They had been too careless and confident even to place guards about the house in which they operated, so secure did they feel in the strangeness of their scheme.

And they might have been justified in this feeling but for one bit of carelessness—the flashing of their reflector in a girl's eyes as she sat in the grand stand.

Detective Kennedy was too excited to keep still any longer. He knew the thing would be a great "boost" for him. Big people would probably be implicated and a giant swindle prevented. It would be in all the papers, and he would get the credit, or most of it.

"Throw up your hands!" he snapped, swiftly drawing his gun. "We've got you with the goods and the game is up. Better take it quietly, and make no disturbance."

The two offenders seemed far too demoralized with surprise and fear, as they whirled and looked into the muzzle of his weapon to attempt to make any "disturbance." They held up their hands as directed, and said nothing.

"Spoilin' the game, huh, you crooks," said Kennedy's friend, Kid Grover, his mind still intent on his beloved baseball. "I just ought to hand youse one, and if it wasn't for the lady—"

"Don't mind me, Mr. Grover," put in Miss Truesdell.

It was not until she spoke that the astonished Standing recognized her.

"What are you doing here?" he growled, flushing darkly. "This affair is nothing for you to be mixed up in."

"Oh yes it is," she replied, "and don't be impolite or my friend, Mr. Kid Grover, will 'hand you one.'"

"Tickled to death, any time you say, lady," said the gallant Kid.

"The game is over," announced Kennedy, looking out of the window. "Just run down-stairs, Kid, call up the clubhouse and ask Kingston, the manager, and Curley McGrath to come over here right away. They'll be interested to see this outfit."

The Kid disappeared, and in his absence the detective put in the time handcuffing the prisoners, and with Miss Truesdell examining the reflecting apparatus which had played such havoc with poor McGrath's career. In an incredibly short time the Kid returned with the two ball-players at his heels.

"Couldn't see a phone handy, so I just went after them," he explained.

"Mary—Miss Truesdell!" gasped Curley, in confusion.

"Curley—Mr. McGrath!" the girl mocked, teasingly.

The scene which followed was one of rejoicing for all except Joe Standing and his accomplice, from whom a full confession was drawn, implicating Fred Berg and his crowd of "sure thing" gamblers, and stating at exactly what games he had used his reflector to upset Curley McGrath's playing. These games were afterward canceled by the board of directors of the league, which put the Black Sox back in first place, where they remained, with Curley's assistance, until the pennant was captured.

Curley McGrath "came back" immediately to his old form, and even better, playing with a dash and vim which he had never shown before. This surpassing activity may have been due to good spirits, on account of his also having "come back" in another and entirely different game.

Any time at all now you are liable to see an item in the paper about Mr. John J. McGrath and Miss Mary Truesdell, "both of Blankport," etc. But don't look on the sporting page for it. It will have nothing to do with baseball.

A CONTRAST.

OUTSIDE the window one was stirred
Such sight of slavery to see;
Inside, within its cage, the bird
Sang its sweet song of liberty.

Tom Masson.

Shifting Suspects

by Marie B. Schrader

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MILDRED TEMPLE, residing with her widowed mother in a small Western town, expects to be quietly married to one Huntly. On the day preceding the ceremony, while Mrs. Temple is away, a masked man arrives at her home, binds and gags Mary, the maid-servant, and forces Mildred to mount one of two horses he has provided and ride with him for a long distance into the mountains. Arrived near a lighted cabin, he amazes her by taking his departure and saying that she may never see him again. It is night, there is no other refuge at hand, so perforce she accepts what hospitality the Indian squaw, only occupant of the cabin, has to offer. Meantime Sheriff Border is summoned to the Temple residence and admits that the case has a most peculiar look. He is still more amazed when Huntly tells him that he had expected to wed Miss Temple the next day.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE GRILL.

"YOU mean to say you expected to marry Miss Temple to-morrow?" exclaimed the sheriff, completely dumfounded.

"Yes. Why not?" replied Huntly.

"I never heard about a wedding," explained the sheriff.

"How could you? That's perfectly natural. No one was told except the immediate family and one or two intimate friends in the East. Neither Mrs. Temple nor Mildred cares for a lot of fuss and feathers, so we decided to say nothing until after the event. Such an occasion creates so much talk in a little town like this."

"That's true," replied Sheriff Border. "But somehow a wedding without talk doesn't seem like a real wedding. You've got to expect that."

"I know Mrs. Temple will tell you about it later on," proceeded Huntly. "In the confusion she neglected to mention it."

"Well, this is exactly like a novel," declared Border. "'Bride kidnaped! Distracted bridegroom!'"

He paused suddenly and looked at Huntly.

"Only," he added, "you don't seem so much distracted."

"Oh, but I am," said the young man. "I assure you I am."

"Humph!" exclaimed Border.

"Just because I didn't give way to a burst of useless language, and tear my hair, and make a scene—"

Border studied Huntly attentively.

"You ain't the kind to make a scene," he remarked reflectively.

"That's just it," replied Huntly. "I see that you begin to understand me."

"I think I do," said the sheriff.

"It's like this," continued the young man: "In the East, where I come from, we do all we can to restrain our feelings. In the West it is different."

"Thank Heaven for that," fervently exclaimed the sheriff.

"I beg pardon," observed Huntly.

"No offense," said Border. "Only it must be an awful tough job to keep from saying and doing what you want to."

"Oh, one gets accustomed to putting a clamp on his real self. A little practise

makes perfect, you know. And when everybody is doing the same thing it really isn't half so difficult as you would imagine."

"I suppose not," replied the sheriff.

"As a matter of fact," continued the young man, "I am in a terribly upset state."

"Do you mean it?" asked Border doubtfully.

"I certainly do," said Huntly. "How would you feel if you had come a long way to marry the girl you wanted—the only one you ever really cared about—and then, at the last moment, have some terrible catastrophe like that occur?"

"I don't know," answered Border. "It's too much for me. And you came out here just to marry her?"

"I did," replied Huntly. "She's worth coming such a distance for, don't you think?"

"Well," thoughtfully replied the sheriff, "I ain't ever had the honor of knowing the young lady, but her mother seems a fine woman, and—and—"

Suddenly he thought of the money in the family.

"I guess she must be *worth* the trouble," he added with significant emphasis.

But Huntly ignored the accented word.

"Oh, she is," he assented calmly.

Huntly apparently took no notice of the sheriff's effort to penetrate his inner thoughts, but continued in a careless fashion:

"The news was a great shock, I assure you. I was talking with Mrs. Temple about to-morrow when—"

"Where were you when you met Mrs. Temple?" asked the sheriff.

"Why, somewhere on the main street," replied Huntly. "I don't remember exactly where. I was on my way here to see my *fiancée.*"

"Was she expecting you?"

"Now, really, my dear sir, I suppose she was, but I couldn't say definitely. Very naturally a young lady who intended to be married the next day would expect a call from her *fiancée* the evening before, don't you think?"

"Where had you been previous to your meeting with Mrs. Temple?"

"Oh, strolling about the woods somewhere. Really, the country about here is fine. We haven't anything at all like it in the East."

"Yes, yes, it's a fine country," admitted Border, "but how long were you strolling about in it?"

"That I couldn't say. For several hours possibly."

"Then you weren't in town when the abduction occurred?"

"From all accounts I must have been some distance away," replied Huntly in nonchalant tones.

"Did you meet anybody in your walk?"

"Can't say that I did. If any one passed I don't remember it. My dear man, when a fellow is going to be married next day, he is hardly in a state of mind to notice everything that crosses his path. Very naturally he is thinking about the young lady."

"I see," commented Border, but as a matter of fact he didn't see at all. He began to look upon Huntly as an Eastern mystery, and one which didn't particularly appeal to him.

"But why all these questions?" demanded Huntly, looking Border straight in the eyes.

"Merely trying to get things untangled," replied the sheriff.

"I don't see where *I* can be of much assistance."

"Oh, but you can," declared Border." "You see, I will have to get you to take charge of affairs."

"Me? Why?" asked the young man in surprise.

"Why, because you were to have been the young lady's husband. Poor Mrs. Temple needs some one to take the burden off her shoulders."

"Of course," said Huntly, "I shall only be too glad to do all I can."

"Well, then," continued the sheriff, "that's some help. I have my own ideas in regard to this affair."

"So you remarked," replied Huntly, coolly. "And what are they?"

"There can be only one reason for the abduction."

"And that is—" inquired Huntly.

"Money! Ransom!" he declared.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Huntly.

"Why impossible?"

"Because—because, no one here knew that Miss Temple is heiress to a fortune."

"How can you be sure of that?"

"Mrs. Temple, herself, told me that she had been very careful not to let it be known that Mildred would inherit several hundred thousand when she comes of age."

"Then she hasn't reached the time yet when she will receive her money?"

"No. Her father was most particular in his will to make provision against her getting it before she was old enough to appreciate its value."

"I see. Evidently he had not thought of her being married so early."

"Evidently not. He did not refer to the possibility of her marrying. He supposed, of course, that her mother would guide her selection as to a husband."

"And did she?"

"I may say that Mrs. Temple approves of me," proudly replied Huntly.

"And Miss Temple?"

"She loves me devotedly."

The sheriff studied him for a moment, but made no reply.

"We are extremely congenial," continued the young man. "We like the same things. She is a girl who appreciates the very best in everything."

"And you are prepared to give her all the fine things she likes?"

"I will do the best I can," answered Huntly. "Of course, I cannot provide for her in the style of a millionaire, but I will do the best I can."

"Until she inherits her fortune?" suggested the sheriff.

"Why, yes. After that, she has nothing to worry about. But what makes you think that ransom was the motive in this case?"

"There's nothing else to think," replied the sheriff. "Some one who knew about her fortune decided to make a lump sum of easy money. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

We had hardly finished speaking before one of his men entered with a white envelope, which he had found under the door.

Border tore open the cover quickly.

"What do you think of this?" he exclaimed. "It's just as I said."

He handed the paper to Huntly, who read the folowing:

> Miss Mildred Temple will be returned home safe and sound on payment of $20,000 to be placed in the blasted tree by Silver Creek Bridge. No tricks, or the death of the girl will be the answer.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN IMPORTANT DECISION.

"WHAT did I tell you," triumphantly exclaimed Border, pointing to the note. "Was I right or wrong?"

Huntly did not answer the sheriff's question. He was busy reading the communication over again.

"The man in the black mask didn't lose much time in making his wants known, did he?" went on the sheriff. "Seems to be pretty much in a hurry to get his money. This is the quickest demand I ever saw, and I know something about the ransom business, too. This ain't the first one that's come under my notice."

"Why?" asked Huntly. "Do they usually wait a while before asking for the cash? I don't see anything very precipitate about the affair."

"You don't, eh?"

"No."

"Well, generally the abductor keeps the stolen person—usually a child—long enough to make the parents sufficiently worried to be willing to pay the demand without hesitating. This time the man seems to have known his parties pretty well."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this; the fellow in the black mask knew exactly what he was doing, and who he had to deal with. No doubt, he knew that there was only the mother to battle against, and that she would fall an easy prey when it came to a reward. Any mother with a fortune would gladly give up a big part of it to get her child back unharmed without delay. The man who sent this note figured all that out."

"Oh, he's clever, all right," granted Huntly.

"He's a brute," declared Border, facing Huntly and stared straight into his eyes; "and Heaven help him, if I find out who he is."

"I—I think I would better inform Mrs. Temple of the latest development," said the young Easterner.

"One moment," interrupted Border, laying a restraining hand on the other's arm. "We haven't finished yet. There's still a few details to be talked over."

"Very well, then, only I thought that the sooner she knew the better."

"That ain't half as important as what I've got to say to you right about now," rejoined the sheriff.

"Go ahead," said Huntly coolly.

"It's this. I want to know where *you* stand in this affair?"

"Where I stand?" repeated Huntly, opening wide his eyes.

"I don't see why that question should

give you any cause for uneasiness, Mr. Border."

"But it does, Mr. Huntly. You haven't expressed any opinion as yet on this subject."

"There seems little to be said. My *fiancée* has been kidnaped—evidently for purposes of ransom, as you surmised in the start. We must get her back at once."

"You mean by giving in to the demands of the man who sent this paper?" asked the sheriff.

"I mean nothing of the kind," answered Huntly. "My plan would be to find her ourselves. The demand for $20,000 is preposterous."

"Then you will advise Mrs. Temple not to pay it?"

"Certainly. At least not until we have left no stone unturned in our efforts to locate Mildred."

"There! That's the way I like to hear a man talk," exclaimed the sheriff.

"You don't think any one will harm her?" anxiously inquired Huntly.

"I'm not worrying about that," replied Border. "This is all a money game, believe me. Now I must lay my plans for the search."

"You can count on me," said Huntly.

"In what way?"

"I'll go with you. Is it a go?"

"It is," and the sheriff grasped the young man's hand. "That's the way I like to hear a fellow talk."

"What time in the morning do you propose to start?" inquired the Easterner.

"In the morning?" repeated Border in surprise.

"Yes. Make it as early as you like, you'll find me on hand. I won't leave the house to-night, for I am afraid Mrs. Temple may have a nervous collapse."

"Great Heavens, man, do you suppose I am going to wait until morning to look for that girl?"

"I don't see how you can very well do anything else," replied Huntly. "Much as you might want to set to work earlier, it would be impossible."

"You don't know Sheriff Bob Border," declared that valiant gentleman.

"You mean that—"

"I mean that there is no time to be lost. The sooner we get a start the better. I expect to leave here within the next fifteen minutes. Are you with me or not?"

"With you, of course," declared Huntly. "Only I didn't see how you could do anything in the darkness."

"Leave that to me. My horse knows every trail around here. What I don't know she does, so between the two of us we will come pretty near reaching the proper destination."

"But I have no horse," objected Huntly. "I don't see how I can get one before morning."

By way of answer Border called one of his men.

"Say, Jim, slip around to your house and bring us another animal. Mr. Huntly here thinks he would like to join us in our little excursion."

The man was off in a jiffy.

"And now," went on Border, "I guess you'd better break the news to Mrs. Temple and tell her what we are going to do."

Huntly left the room, but soon returned accompanied by Mildred's mother.

"Mr. Huntly has told me the news," she said.

"Yes. It's good news," replied Border, "for at least we now know the reason for the crime."

"But that doesn't bring my child back," moaned Mrs. Temple, wringing her hands.

"Mrs. Temple insists upon paying the $20,000 demanded," said Huntly.

"Oh," said Border, looking from the woman to the man. "That's no more than I expected. Most women would rather give up all the money they've got in the world than wait a few hours."

"A few hours?" repeated Mrs. Temple. "Do you think I shall see Mildred that soon? But I can't wait. I prefer to pay the money. What is money compared with my child?"

She looked with appealing eyes at Huntly.

"I am sure, Ned, you will agree with me, won't you?" she added.

The sheriff fixed his gaze on Huntly and waited for his reply.

"Twenty thousand dollars is a great deal of money," the young Easterner said reflectively.

"I tell you it's nothing. Nothing at all," declared Mrs. Temple. "To hold my daughter in my arms once more, to know that she is here in her own home, that is easily worth the paltry sum."

The sheriff shook his head and still watched Huntly. That young man now noticed this and became rather nervous.

"It is for you to decide, Ned," continued Mrs. Temple. "You are to be Mildred's husband, and you will know the wisest thing to do. I leave it to you."

"There's only one thing to be done, Mrs. Temple," said the sheriff, "and that is to pursue this man and make him give your daughter up."

"But he might kill her," objected the mother.

"I reckon not," rejoined Border; "not so soon at any rate. He's no doubt got her hid somewhere near by. He wouldn't dare stay in the same place for fear of being discovered. We'll get him, and then—"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Temple. "Don't murder any one. All I want is my child."

"But I must remind you, Mrs. Temple," went on the sheriff, "you've got to think about the future—about other people's children. If we let this fellow get off free with a reward that will encourage other desperadoes to do the same thing. It will set a bad example."

"The sheriff is right," declared Huntly at last. "I, too, can hardly wait for Mildred's return, but we should at least try to find her before we give in to the demand for money."

"All right, then, Ned," said Mrs. Temple. "But do hurry. You'll never be successful, and we shall have to pay the money in the end besides losing valuable time. I don't know how I am going to stand the anxiety."

"Well, sheriff," and Huntly spoke in cheerful tones, "now that everything is settled, I am ready to start whenever you are."

"We'll make it this very minute," and Border led the way to the front door.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIGURE IN THE BUSHES.

BORDER led the way to the spot where the masked man had hitched the horses.

"Where are we going?" asked Huntly.

"To find out something I want to know," replied the sheriff. "Here, Tom," he called to one of his men. "Let's have that lantern. I want to examine these hoof-prints more carefully than you did."

"Oh, there were two horses all right," said Tom.

"I believe that," replied the sheriff, "but that don't satisfy me."

"What more can you expect to discover?" inquired Huntly.

"I'll answer that question in just a minute," and Border dropped to his hands and knees and looked closely at the ground.

Huntly and Tom stood near by watching him curiously.

"There ain't nothing there," Tom remarked.

"Don't be too sure," and the sheriff held the light still closer to the ground.

At last he raised it triumphantly.

"I thought so," he announced with a chuckle.

"What is it?" asked Huntly.

"You found something!" observed Tom.

"You bet I did. The rest is easy."

He motioned to both Tom and Huntly.

"It's like reading writing," he went on. "Couldn't be any plainer. One of those two horses had a loose shoe," said the sheriff, pointing to the hoof prints.

"Sure enough," exclaimed Tom. "I never thought of that."

"Two horses and one with a loose shoe. It's a cinch," said the sheriff. "We'll run them down in no time. Go get the boys together, Tom, while we decide on the best way to start."

Tom did as ordered, and the rest of the men gathered quickly. Word had gone about that they were to follow the abductor, so when the sheriff called upon them, each man was ready with his horse and a bite of provisions for a long ride.

The sheriff and Huntly mounted their horses and the cavalcade set off, Border leading the way and following the hoof-prints.

"I can't imagine anything so clumsy," he remarked. "Wouldn't you think that the fellow would know better, boys?"

"You sure would," replied one of the men. "He can't be so very smart after all."

"He was smart enough to get away with the girl, all right," said Border dryly. "The question now is, can he keep her?"

"Are you sure, though," interrupted Huntly, "that the hoof-prints belong to the two horses used by the abductor?"

"Look here, Mr. Huntly, they couldn't belong to any others. Who is going to hitch two horses at that particular time in that particular spot? Answer that."

Huntly couldn't for the moment, but after careful thought he replied:

"There may be some mistake. Perhaps we are following the wrong clue."

"Don't you worry about that," rejoined the sheriff, "we've got the right one all

right. I'll prove it to you before I am through with this affair."

"I hope so," said Huntly.

"Why, I've got my man *right now*," declared Border, looking keenly at the Easterner.

"Where?" asked the latter, looking around.

"I've as good as got him," finished Border. "This loose shoe will be his finish. Ha, ha!"

"I don't see any cause for merriment," observed Huntly.

"I'm laughing at the idea of a man not having more sense than this fellow. Boys," he added, calling back over his shoulder, "for the honor of the community I hope this piece of work wasn't done by any of our former respected members of society."

This caused a general laugh in which all joined with the exception of Huntly.

"You don't seem to appreciate our wit out here, Mr. Huntly," observed the sheriff. "Well, maybe it *is* a bit strained, but it carries its point just the same."

As he spoke they reached a small stream. Crossing it, they climbed the opposite bank.

"Well, I'll be derned," exclaimed the sheriff. "I can't find them."

Once more he descended from his horse and began searching the ground, the men with him joining in the hunt.

"He must have gone down stream a bit, boys," Border decided at last, "he ought to have had sense enough to do that, if he really wanted to get away with the prize."

The men scattered both up and down stream.

It wasn't long before one of them called out:

"Here they are again, sheriff!"

"Good!" declared Border. "I thought so. He made a little détour, but we'll find that he's back on the same trail again."

He was right. After a short distance the hoof-prints once more emerged into the trail, and the party started on again with the feeling that they were going in the right direction.

"The route is not so easy for a mile or so along here," commented Huntly.

"How do you know that?" asked Border quickly.

"Because I have been here before."

"Maybe you strolled out here this afternoon," said the sheriff, "when you took your walk in the country."

"Oh, no, not this afternoon," quickly replied the Easterner. "It—it was several days ago."

"Oh!" exclaimed Border. "I know every inch of this trail. I know where it leads."

He stopped his horse and waited for the others to come up.

"Boys," he said, "keep some little distance behind, but be within pistol-shot. Mr. Huntly and I will go on. I think it best to separate. You never can tell what will happen."

Following instructions, the men fell behind, while the sheriff and Huntly spurred ahead.

"Mrs. Temple seems to like you pretty well, Mr. Huntly," remarked Border suddenly.

"Yes, she does," admitted the young man.

"And Mr. Temple—?"

"He's dead."

"I know. But before he died? Did he approve of the match?"

"Mr. Temple knew nothing about it," said Huntly. "It was not until after he died that I became acquainted with Mildred. But both she and her mother have assured me that I am just the kind of man Mr. Temple would have liked."

"And the young lady has no brothers?"

"Not one."

"Then who looks after her interests?"

"Her interests?"

"Yes, her inheritance."

"Oh, but I told you she hadn't come into that yet—not until she is of age."

"Oh, I remember now," said the sheriff; "but there are certain financial matters to be attended to. Without a man in the family it must be difficult. Perhaps Mrs. Temple calls on you now and then—just to show her confidence—to handle affairs for her."

He watched Huntly keenly and waited anxiously for his reply.

"Oh, no," replied the Easterner; "I know nothing about such matters. Mrs. Temple employs a lawyer for that."

The men were now going at a rapid pace. The trail lay clear before them, and the hoof-prints of the two horses were quite distinct.

"Did you ever see anything prettier than that?" asked the sheriff. "Oh, this is a pleasure. We'll be there before long."

"Where?"

"At our destination. And unless I'm greatly mistaken we shall be well rewarded for all our trouble."

"Sh!" exclaimed Border jumping from his horse and motioning to Huntly to do likewise.

The sheriff then crept quietly forward.

Huntly caught sight of a dark form moving in the bushes.

"Throw up your hands!" commanded Border as he covered the figure with his revolver.

CHAPTER X.

THE END OF THE TRAIL.

It was a nervous moment for Huntly.

"Throw up your hands there!" again ordered the sheriff, but a rustling sound and an oncoming figure proved that his words were unheeded.

"Another step and I'll shoot," warned Border, moving forward with his weapon ready in his hand.

The next instant his foot caught on a projecting root and he fell heavily to the ground, the pistol being discharged at the same instant.

Simultaneously with the report the dark figure in the bushes made a leap forward.

Huntly, meantime, had drawn his own weapon and held it in readiness for the unknown to declare himself.

But to his amazement he discovered that the dark form was not that of a human being at all. It was a huge, black bear.

Another instant and the beast would have attacked the sheriff. But Huntly was too quick for him. There was a loud report, followed by the sound of a heavy body crashing through the bushes.

"A bear!" exclaimed the sheriff in surprise.

"Looks like it," observed Huntly coolly as he replaced his revolver in its holster.

"And you laid him out?" went on Border.

"Well, anything astonishing in that?"

"No," replied the sheriff, "only I didn't know you Eastern chaps were such good shots."

"Oh, I'm nothing wonderful," said Huntly.

"You saved my life," added Border.

"Glad to have been of service," answered the other.

"You can't do much more for a man than that," continued the sheriff, "and I want to tell you that I'll never forget it."

"Nonsense," rejoined the Easterner. "It was nothing at all. Any one would have done as much."

"Well, who would have thought that we would see a bear!" went on the sheriff.

"I must say I never had the pleasure of meeting one before," said Huntly.

"They're not exactly pleasant acquaintances," proceeded Border, "especially when they are mad and hungry as this one seems to have been. It's all the more wonderful that you landed him since this is your first experience."

The two men examined the carcass.

"My, but he's a big fellow! One of the biggest I have ever seen in these parts," declared the sheriff.

"What shall we do with him?" asked Huntly.

"That's for you to decide. He's yours."

"Well, we can't very well take him along with us, can we?"

"It wouldn't be advisable just at present," said the sheriff with a smile, "especially as we shall probably have a more precious prize to bring back with us. We must be on our way. We can't lose time worrying about a dead bear when there's a young and pretty girl in danger."

"Yes, we must find her," added Huntly. "I make you a present of the bear."

"This is too much," said the sheriff, who had visions of the money to be derived from the flesh and skin.

"A mere nothing—just to show my regard for the sheriff," declared Huntly.

"Say, Mr. Huntly, you're all right," remarked Border, greatly pleased. "We'll just leave the fellow here till we get back. Then I'll send somebody up to cart him into town."

"All right, then. Now on," said Huntly.

"If there's anything I can ever do to show my appreciation, just call on me," remarked Border gratefully.

"Why, you are already going to do something that will please me more than anything you could possibly imagine," replied the Easterner. "You are going to help me get back my *fiancée;* what more could I ask than that?"

The next minute the two men had mounted their horses and were once more on the trail. Meantime they had lost sight of their followers.

"Never mind," said the sheriff, "we

can't lose 'em. They'll be up with us before we know it."

"Where are we going?" asked Huntly presently.

"I'll answer that question before long," responded Border.

Just then he dismounted and began examining the earth.

"We're on the right path," he reported with a chuckle. "I thought so. You can't fool Bob Border—not after these years of dealing with criminals."

"Criminals!" exclaimed Huntly.

"What else can I call a man who makes off with a young girl?"

"What is the penalty?" asked Huntly.

"You see that big limb, there?" and the sheriff pointed toward the right.

"Well, the long arm of the law ain't nothing compared with the strong arm of a tree," added Border.

"An awful death!" shuddered Huntly.

"But one he'll deserve," exclaimed Border with satisfaction. "I'm here to preserve the law, but you don't suppose for one minute that those men coming after me will let him take things so easy as the law hands 'em out, do you? And what can one man say against a crowd?"

They rode on in silence for a few minutes.

"I declare," suddenly burst out the sheriff, "this fellow must have been a green one, sure enough. Why, he hasn't got the sense of a rabbit! On he goes, leaving a trail as plain as the nose on your face. A baby could follow him. I wonder who he is! Can't be anybody I ever met before. They were all clever men and understood their business."

"How do you mean clever?"

"Why, they would have gone to no end of trouble to throw us off the scent. They would have ridden round and back and over rocks and jumped gulleys—anything to mix us up. This is a soft snap. Come on."

The ride lasted some miles farther until suddenly the sheriff dismounted once more. By this time it was broad daylight and everything stood out distinctly. Huntly expressed surprise at the wonderful panorama spread before him. As the mists of the morning were dissipated by the rising sun a scene of unparalleled splendor was spread out before them.

"We must be very high up," he said as he looked down on the valley.

At that instant Border gave vent to an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Here we are," he announced.

"Already?"

"Well, I should say," replied Border. "We must dismount."

"But why?"

"Don't you see these tracks?"

"Yes, but I don't know what they mean."

"Oh," said Border, "I forgot you are from the East. By all signs right and proper I read on the ground as plain as in a first reading-book, that right here is where the man in the black mask and the girl left their horses and began the rest of the climb on foot."

"You don't say so," remarked Huntly, gazing in surprise at the impressions in the earth.

"The horses were left here for a little while, until the abductor could take the girl up the mountain. See?"

"You'll have to explain," said Huntly. "It's all Greek to me."

Border gave him a searching look which, however, in no way ruffled the young man's calm expression.

"You can tell by the way the earth is trampled on," proceeded Border. "Two horses would have to stand here some little time to make all these marks."

"I see," rejoined Huntly. "And you think they went the rest of the way on foot."

"No doubt of it," said the sheriff. "And in about five or ten minutes I'll prove it to you, for we are going to the exact spot."

"You seem to know this locality."

"I do. The man in the black mask didn't count on that."

Once more the sheriff pointed to the ground.

"Here are her footsteps," he cried triumphantly. "What did I tell you? And here," he added with a savage look, "are his! There's no mistake. Follow me."

On they went up the narrow trail which Mildred had climbed a few hours before.

She little dreamed that help would so soon be at hand.

Suddenly the sheriff stopped and touched Huntly on the shoulder.

The Easterner started.

"What is it?" he asked nervously.

"There," and Border pointed to the cabin which was now plainly to be seen, "there is the answer."

A few minutes later the two men stood before the door.

"Open in the name of the law," called the sheriff in stern tones after a thunderous knock.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MASKED ONE.

ALL was silent. No sound gave evidence that the cabin was occupied.

"There's no one inside," declared Huntly.

"Don't you believe it," rejoined Border, and once more he repeated his command.

"Open, or I'll break down the door."

And to emphasize his meaning, he knocked loudly with the butt of his revolver.

The next instant there was the noise of some one moving about, a bolt was withdrawn, and the door opened.

At first the aperture was only a crack, so that the occupant of the cabin could inspect those on the outside.

Sheriff Border, however, boldly shoved his foot inside.

Holding his gun on a level with his eyes, he was prepared for anything which might happen.

Huntly, too, was keyed up to a high pitch. He stood close behind the sheriff, with his own revolver ready for instant use.

It was a nervous moment, for neither man knew what an examination of the interior of the cabin would reveal.

Whoever was on the other side of the door tried in vain to close it again.

Border applied his broad shoulders, and the next moment the barrier gave way.

The two men started back as the Indian squaw stood before them with folded arms.

"Mornin'!" she said in her low, guttural voice.

"Never mind about that," replied the sheriff.

"What want?" demanded the squaw, barring the entrance with her body.

"You know what I want—who I want," answered Border, starting to push his way in.

"No go in," said the squaw.

Border seemed to have a second thought.

"I am not going to take any chances," he remarked aside to Huntly.

Turning to the woman he said:

"All right. But you come outside a moment. I want to ask you something."

The squaw stepped beyond the door, closing it behind her. As soon as she did so, Border seized her arms.

"Now, I guess we won't have any trouble," he cried. "Lend a hand here, Huntly. We'll fix her so she won't interfere."

"No kill," begged the Indian.

"Keep quiet," cautioned the sheriff, as he gagged and bound her.

Together the two men carried her a little distance from the house, and left her there.

"I don't believe there's anybody else in the cabin," remarked Huntly.

But Border merely looked wise.

"You can't tell a thing about it," he said. "It's my opinion that the squaw was not alone. At any rate, we'll investigate. Now, ready once more."

As he spoke he drew his gun and prepared for surprises.

Followed by Huntly he again approached the door, which had been rebolted on the inside.

"You see," triumphantly exclaimed the sheriff. "What did I tell you? Now to find out who is on the other side."

"In the name of the law," he said, beating on the door.

There was no answer.

"Open, or I'll break down the door."

Still no response.

"Very well, then; here goes."

There was a crash as the door gave way against the sheriff's powerful frame.

There came a feminine scream. The next instant they were face to face with Mildred Temple.

The girl stood there with her pistol in hand, evidently prepared to defend herself.

She was just about to pull the trigger when her eyes fell on Huntly.

"Ned!" she cried.

"Mildred," he answered.

Then she flung herself against his breast.

"Am I dreaming," she sobbed, "or is it really you?"

"Oh, it's all right," said Huntly, as he placed his arms protectingly about her.

"It's too be good to be true," she almost sobbed. "Oh, what a terrible night!" and she shuddered.

Just then the sheriff coughed discreetly.

"Oh, I forgot," said Huntly. "Mildred, dear, this is Sheriff Border, who started the search for you. If it hadn't been for him, none of us would have had the first idea of what to do or where to go."

Mildred turned to Border with a smile.

"I can't tell you how grateful I am, and shall always be to you, Mr. Border," she said.

"Yes. The sheriff has done a great piece of work, in such quick time, too," went on Huntly. "We can never thank him enough, can we, Mildred?"

"Indeed we can't," replied the girl.

It was Border's time to speak now.

"If it hadn't been for Mr. Huntly here," he said, "I would never have been able to finish the rescue."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the girl.

"Oh, he just saved my life," explained Border, "by killing one of the biggest bears I have ever seen in this part of the country. The beast was making dead for me. I stumbled and fell. The next minute it would have been all up with me if Mr. Huntly hadn't landed a bullet right in the bear's forehead."

"Oh, that was brave of you," said Mildred, her eyes shining with pleasure at the story of her lover's pluck.

"It was nothing at all," modestly answered the young man.

"Excuse me, Miss Temple," went on Border, "I don't like to interrupt this tender meeting, but would you mind telling us about this strange abduction?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Mildred. "It's all a mystery to me. Why anybody would want to kidnap me is something inexplicable."

She then related the story of the happenings concerned with her leaving home.

"My poor, little girl," murmured Huntly sympathetically, as she finished.

"Well, it's all over now," she said, "and let's forget it. Take me home to my mother. I know she must be nearly distracted."

"But what became of this man?" the sheriff wanted to know.

"I haven't any idea," answered Mildred. "As I told you, he left me after pointing out the cabin."

"When did he say he would return?"

"He said that I would never see him again."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the sheriff.

"Yes. I was afraid of him, and never dreamed that he would leave me as he did. He even handed me my pistol, which I didn't know I had, and which had fallen from my dress. He told me too keep it, that I might need it later on."

"Well, I'll be blowed," exclaimed Border. "He was a cool one, all right."

"Oh, he was cool enough," said Mildred. "I asked him why he was carrying me away, and a great many other questions, but he always laughed, and I got no information whatever from him."

Border shook his head.

"What did he look like?" he asked.

"I can only tell you about his figure," replied the girl. "He wore a black mask, and only his eyes gleamed through. Since it was night, of course, it was impossible to learn the color of these. They might have been blue or black, for all I know. He was tall, with broad shoulders."

She looked from Border to Huntly.

"About my build?" asked the sheriff.

"No," replied the girl with decision. "I should say," she added thoughtfully, looking closely at her *fiancé*, "that he was just the height of Ned here."

Huntly started.

"You must be mistaken," he said.

"Why, no I'm not," declared Mildred frankly. "He was very much like you, dear, very much."

Huntly looked at the sheriff, to find the latter's keen eyes studying him closely.

Neither spoke.

"His voice wasn't the same—not anythink like yours, Ned. It was much deeper," Miss Temple went on.

"Then the man with the mask said he wouldn't return?" said the sheriff, changing the topic.

"Yes, but I am afraid he might come back after all," declared Mildred. "The sooner we get away from here the better."

"You are quite right," agreed the sheriff.

Just then Mildred's eyes fell on the squaw.

"Please, please, set her free," she said.

"What! To run and tell your captor what has happened? It wouldn't be safe," answered the sheriff.

"Oh, no, I'll take her home with me as my maid. I have taken a fancy to her."

CHAPTER XII.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

THE squaw gave way to expressions of great joy as soon as the gag was removed from her mouth.

Mildred helped unbind her hands, and then assisted her to her feet.

"There. There, Watonka," she said. "I won't let any one hurt you."

The Indian woman elected to stay close beside the girl. She didn't trust the two men.

"I don't see how you can be so forgiving, Miss Temple," observed the sheriff.

"This poor creature is not to blame," said Mildred.

"She was merely following orders. When I explained things to her she told me she would help me to escape."

The squaw nodded her head by way of confirmation.

"She's really very good and kind," continued Mildred. "I think I would have gone crazy last night if she hadn't had some humanity in her."

"I'll see what I can get out of her," declared the sheriff. Then, addressing the Indian woman, he said sternly:

"Now, Watonka, I want to know all about the man with the mask."

The squaw shook her head.

"Who is he?" demanded Border.

"No know," affirmed the squaw.

"You don't know?" repeated Border.

"No know," said the squaw again.

"These Indians!" exclaimed the sheriff in exasperation to Huntly. "They are enough to drive a sane man mad."

Turning again to the squaw, he asked:

"Man give Watonka money?"

"No, no," replied the squaw. "He say —'soon.'"

"What else did he say?" demanded the sheriff. "Did he say he would come back soon?"

"He no come back," replied the woman. "He say, Watonka, take care white girl, till I send for her—long time. He show money, much money, and say—'this yours.'"

"You see," said the sheriff, "we know as much now as we did in the beginning."

"Believe me," replied Mildred, "Watonka is all right. She didn't know."

Border looked rather doubtful.

"I'll have to take your word for it," he remarked dryly. "Now, we had better get away. I wonder where the boys are. They ought to be here by now."

"Surely," said Huntly. "They should have been here ahead of us."

"I'll bet they followed the other trail, the one that branches off a few miles below here."

"What shall we do?" asked Huntly.

"Oh, we will let them take care of themselves," replied Border. "We ain't going to linger here any longer than is necessary, for there's no telling what will happen. For all we know we are watched this very minute."

He looked cautiously about, but was evidently satisfied that his fears were groundless.

"Don't think that the man in the mask intends to leave this young lady solely to the guardianship of this Indian," he added wisely. "He's too smart for that."

"How are we going to get Mildred and the squaw away unless we wait for the others with the horses?" Huntly wanted to know.

"We'll have to manage the best we can," answered the sheriff. "My idea is to start home, even if we don't get very far. You and I can walk and let the young lady and the squaw ride. It won't be long before we get back to where the other trail crosses this one. By that time the boys will have discovered their mistake, and then we can take turns riding and walking."

"Oh, yes, do let us get away," pleaded Mildred. "The place gives me the shivers. I shall never look at mountains again without recalling this terrible experience. Oh, if he were to return!"

"Don't worry about that," said Border in reassuring tones. "We two can protect you. He'll never get you again. Trust to us for that."

With a lingering look in the direction of the cabin, Mildred, assisted by Huntly began the descent up which she had made her way so disconsolately only a few hours before.

"I never was so glad to see any one in my life as you, Ned," she said, as she clasped her arm more closely in that of the young man. "It's just like a romance—the idea that you should rescue me from that awful man."

"It certainly reads like a novel," declared the sheriff, who had overheard. "Mr. Huntly happened along just at the right time."

"I declare," said Mildred, "the resemblance is wonderful."

"What resemblance," asked Huntly.

"Why, between you and the man that carried me away. You even walk something like him. Only the voice is different."

"Look here, Huntly," said the sheriff, with a forced attempt at pleasantry, "if I didn't know that you were going to marry

the young lady here, I might begin to get suspicious of you."

"What, of Ned?" laughed Mildred. "That would be funny, wouldn't it? The idea of a bridegroom kidnaping his *fiancée* the evening before the wedding! A very clever suggestion, Mr. Sheriff, only—only there is one serious drawback to it."

"And what is that?" asked Border.

"Why, the bridegroom would have no reason to kidnap the bride, since on the next day he would have her for his own for all the rest of his life."

"Oh!" exclaimed the sheriff.

"So you see, your theory would fall completely through. I've always been told to look for the motive."

"That's right," said Border. "There's always a motive. No crime was ever committed for a lack of reason, unless through insanity. The man didn't impress you as being insane, did he?"

"On the contrary," declared Mildred. "He seemed extremely well balanced."

The whinny of a horse broke upon their ears at that point.

"Here we are," announced the sheriff, as he unhitched the two animals.

The next instant the squaw and Mildred were helped into the saddles and, the sheriff and Huntly leading the way on foot, the journey home began in earnest.

It was not until then that Mildred began to experience the reaction incident to the great strain she had undergone. It was all she could do to remain in the saddle, and she nearly fell from the horse several times.

Noticing this, Border remarked:

"I reckon you didn't sleep much last night, Miss Mildred!"

"I never closed my eyes," replied the girl. "How could I? The squaw thought me sound asleep, but I was only pretending."

"Well, try to keep up the best you can until you get home, then you can get a good long rest without fear of anybody carrying you off again."

"I fear I won't have much time to rest," replied Mildred. "There are a number of things to be done yet."

"Oh, I forgot about the wedding," said the sheriff.

"I hadn't forgotten," interrupted Huntly, with an affectionate glance at Mildred.

The girl made no answer.

"You won't let this little experience interfere with that, will you, dear?" the Easterner asked.

"Ned," answered the girl, "you won't mind, will you—since it was to be such a private affair—you won't mind waiting another day, will you? Just twenty-four hours?"

"Why, Mildred," exclaimed the young man, "why should we postpone it?"

"Can't you see that I am utterly exhausted? I am sure you wouldn't want to marry the most wretched and forlorn girl in the West, would you? A miserable bride would not be agreeable to any one."

"But, Mildred, I can't bear the idea of putting it off. Bad luck always follows such postponements."

"Oh, there'll be no bad luck in this case," said the girl. "It will be good luck, for a smiling bride is much better than a weeping one, and I know that I shall cry when I get home and see mother."

Huntly was far from pleased, and his face assumed a noticeably dejected look.

"A very sensible idea," observed the sheriff, "if you will permit me to express my opinion. Any girl wants to look and feel her best when she starts on her wedding trip."

"Besides," continued Mildred, "there's something very important to be attended to. I didn't tell you about it, Ned, because I haven't seen you since the telegram came."

"What telegram?" asked Huntly.

"Why, from Mr. Eldridge, mother's lawyer in New York. He is on his way out here, and is expected to arrive this afternoon, just before the wedding."

"Why, what is he coming here for?" asked Huntly in surprise.

"Oh, to settle up some financial matters. I didn't speak of it, because—because, you see mother has planned to give me some of her money—enough to last until I get my own when I come of age."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Huntly in tones which did not disguise his pleasure. "Oh, that fixes everything all right," he added half aloud.

He was about to say something more, but stopped as he noticed the searching look fastened on him by Sheriff Border.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER MAN FROM THE EAST.

THE quartet went on in silence for some time.

Mildred and Huntly exchanged affec-

tionate glances when Border discreetly turned his head.

He had wondered considerably about the attitude of the pair. But from all he observed there was no doubt of the girl's devotion to her intended husband.

Huntly was of the type difficult to read by means of outward actions. But the sheriff decided that he really cared for his *fiancée*.

Once he heard Mildred remark:

"You're the bravest man in the world, Ned."

What more could a woman say to prove her adoration?

Still Huntly pleaded with her not to postpone the wedding. She remained obdurate. At last he gave in.

"I guess it is selfish of me to insist, Mildred," he said, "but when a man has waited so long, he is afraid that something might happen—"

"Why, what could possibly happen, Ned?" asked the girl.

"I don't know. Who would ever have supposed that you would be kidnaped?"

"That's true," said Mildred thoughtfully. "But," she added, with a bright smile, "I promise never to allow myself to be kidnaped again, Ned, for you shall stay right within call until I become Mrs. Edward Huntly to-morrow. After that, I know no one will try to run away with me, for you won't let him, will you?" she asked, with a teasing look.

"Here we are," exclaimed the sheriff, as he called a halt. "There's the other trail."

Assisting Mildred to dismount, the two men then made seats of tree-boughs covered with their coats.

They had not long to wait.

Soon the tramp of horses was borne toward them in the breeze.

"There's where we went wrong, boys," called out a voice.

The speaker then came into sight.

"Well, I'll declare!" he shouted. "Here's the sheriff, and he's got the girl, too."

Soon Border and his companions were surrounded by an interested group, who drank in eagerly the details regarding the rescue.

Each man was only too glad to take his turn in offering his horse to one of the two women, so, proceeding slowly, the party finally arrived at the little town from which they had started a few hours before.

Mildred could hardly restrain herself at the thought of seeing her mother so soon again.

It was with a beating heart she motioned her rescuers to wait while she entered alone.

Mary came to the door, and after opening it cautiously, gave vent to a shriek of joy.

"Miss Mildred! Miss Mildred!" she cried over and over again.

The noise brought Mrs. Temple into the hall.

Mildred rushed into her mother's arms.

"Mother!" she cried, as the happy tears fell.

"My child!" exclaimed Mrs. Temple, sobbing from sheer relief. "Is it possible that you are home again?"

"Yes. It's quite true, mother. I'm safe and sound."

"And that awful man?" asked Mrs. Temple.

"Has gone somewhere. I don't know where," replied the girl. "He was not unkind to me in his treatment—except, of course, in regard to carrying me away."

"Oh! That is something to be thankful for," said Mrs. Temple. "I imagined you murdered, thrown into the river, and all sorts of horrible things."

"Nothing of the sort, mother. I had a long, tiring ride up the mountain, but other than that and terrifying fears, am none the worse for my experience. The only thing I can't understand is why any one would want to kidnap poor little me."

"The sheriff says it was because the man in the mask wanted to get a ransom," exclaimed Mrs. Temple. "I was willing to pay the twenty thousand demanded—"

"Twenty thousand!" repeated Mildred. "Did some one ask that for my return?"

"Here is the note. I would have been only too glad to pay it."

"Why didn't you?"

While they spoke, the sheriff, Huntly, and the others entered and stood a little way off, but within hearing.

"Ned thought it was the best thing for me to do, and I was on the point of placing the money in the blasted tree at Silver Creek, as directed to do, but Sheriff Border here assured me that he would bring you home without the ransom."

"And I kept my word, didn't I?" asked Border, coming forward.

"You certainly did, Mr. Border," replied Mrs. Temple. "How can I ever thank you for all your kindness."

"Oh, that's all right. I am the sheriff, you know, and I have to do such things. It's my business."

"I'll remember your assistance in a more substantial way as soon as my lawyer arrives," said Mrs. Temple.

"I don't want any reward," retorted Border. "That's as bad as asking for a ransom."

"Oh, no," said the mother, "it isn't the same at all. A ransom would have been enforced. This will be a gift presented with pleasure."

The sheriff stammered some unintelligible words as Huntly placed his arm about Mildred's waist.

"You didn't think we would see our little girl so soon, did you, mother?" he asked.

Mrs. Temple smiled at the sound of the word "mother."

"It won't be long before I am really 'mother' to you, will it, Ned?" she asked. "It will be a good thing to have a strong man in the family. I never realized this so much until last night."

"There will be no danger from now on," said Huntly.

"I hope not," said Border. "You ought to be able to take the best of care of the young lady, Mr. Huntly. Anybody who can kill a bear the way you did ought to be able to keep off kidnapers."

Mrs. Temple was then told about the bear and the other details of the rescue.

Mildred also broke the news to her that she had decided not to marry Huntly until the next day.

Just then the sheriff declared that he must be on his way.

"Why not stay to dinner, Mr. Border?" asked Mrs. Temple.

"Because I am going to hunt for the man in the black mask," replied the sheriff.

"You mean that you are going to run him down?" asked Huntly, in unfeigned surprise.

"You can depend on me for that!" declared Border. "You didn't think I intended to let the matter drop here, did you?"

Before Huntly could reply, Mary announced:

"Mr. Eldridge, from New York."

A tall, handsome young man entered the room.

Mrs. Temple rushed forward to greet him.

"Mr. Eldridge," she exclaimed, holding out both hands in an enthusiastic manner, "this is such a pleasure to see you!"

"It's quite mutual, I assure you," replied the visitor, with a smile and a warm return of the hand-clasp.

Turning to Mildred, he said:

"And how is the bride?"

Miss Temple blushed prettily and looked down on the floor.

"I trust I am in time for the wedding," remarked Eldridge.

"Oh, yes, there's plenty of time," said Mrs. Temple. "It has been postponed until to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" repeated Eldridge, in surprise. "May I inquire why?"

"I will tell you all about that later," said the mother. "Our reasons are excellent ones. Have you met Mr. Huntly, Mr. Eldridge? This is *the* Mr. Huntly," she added, with an affectionate pat on his shoulder.

"Mr. Huntly is a very fortunate man," observed Eldridge, with a smile.

"I consider myself so," politely replied Huntly.

Each man instinctively knew that he had met a clever adversary, one who was not to be caught by polite phrases—one who knew how to play the game.

"One day is not so very long to wait—for such a prize," added Eldridge, as his eyes rested in admiration on Mildred.

"Well, after what has happened—" began Huntly.

"I don't understand," and Eldridge looked blankly from one to the other.

"Surely you have heard, Mr. Eldridge," said Mrs. Temple.

"No. Heard what?" asked the lawyer. "I have only just arrived. I came straight here. What is the matter? I trust nothing serious has occurred."

"I know you will scarcely credit what I have to tell you," said Mrs. Temple, "but Mildred was kidnaped last night, and only returned a short time ago. It's strange that you heard nothing about it, for surely by this time it must be the talk of the town. And we have tried to live so quietly here, too," she added.

"Kidnaped!" exclaimed the lawyer. "Impossible."

"I assure you it is only too true."

Mrs. Temple then related the details of the affair.

"Naturally, the poor child is worn out.

There can be no wedding to-night. She must recover from this terrible experience," she added.

"By all means, that is the most sensible thing to do," said the lawyer. "As your legal adviser, Mrs. Temple, I would suggest that the wedding be postponed longer than one day. This is a very peculiar and mysterious affair, and one which should be thoroughly investigated.

"But why postpone the marriage further?" asked Mrs. Temple.

"Merely because I think it advisable on account of what you have just told me," replied Eldridge.

"But I must say I can't see what the kidnaping has to do with the wedding. Mildred wouldn't have put it off a single hour if she were not so utterly exhausted. The poor child is a nervous wreck."

"Then she really loves Huntly?" asked Eldridge in low tones, so that the prospective bridegroom could not hear.

"She adores him," declared Mrs. Temple.

Eldridge, by way of reply, began studying Huntly again.

"I hope she will be very happy," he said. "She is just an unusual girl, so sweet, so unaffected that she deserves just a little more happiness than falls to the share of the average woman in this world."

"Oh, I'm sure Ned will make her happy," replied Mrs. Temple. "He's perfectly devoted to her. Does everything she wants him to. You can imagine how anxious he was when he learned that she had been abducted."

"Any man would naturally have been anxious under the circumstances," said the lawyer gravely.

"He did everything that a man who loves a girl could do," continued Mrs. Temple enthusiastically. "The best proof of his devotion is the fact that he has brought her home safe and sound. He is brave, too, for he saved the sheriff's life."

Mrs. Temple then motioned to Border, who was presented to Eldridge.

"Well, sheriff," said the lawyer, "this is a most extraordinary affair."

"No doubt about that, sir," replied Border. "Nobody seems to have any theory as to who did it."

"Have you?"

"Well," began the sheriff, then hesitated and instinctively glanced in the direction of Huntly.

Eldridge's keen eye noted this glance.

"No," said Border at last, "can't say that I have just at present."

"But you might have later on?"

"I don't know," replied Border. "There's no use accusing anybody unless you've got something to fasten your ideas on. It's dangerous out here to *suspect* a man. You've got to *know*."

"I understand," said Eldridge. "I won't ask you anything more at present."

"It's a good thing you came when you did," remarked the sheriff in low tones.

"Why?"

"Because Mrs. Temple and her daughter, being all alone out here—"

"But you are forgetting the young man who will be Miss Temple's husband to-morrow," interrupted Eldridge, watching Border sharply.

"Yes. I was forgetting him," admitted the sheriff.

"He will become the head of the household," added Eldridge.

Border made a face expressive of his distaste over the idea.

"What's the matter?" asked the lawyer.

"Nothing," replied Border.

"What was the object of this kidnaping?"

"A ransom," replied the sheriff. "Twenty thousand dollars was the sum asked."

"As much as that?"

"Yes. The man must have wanted it in a hurry. The strange part of the affair is that he must have been somebody who knew about the Temples being wealthy, for the people in this town didn't. Things like that get talked about in a hurry. And I never heard a word about their having a fortune. Believe me, the man in the mask who carried her away knew exactly what he was about and how much money he could demand without overstepping the mark."

"But you must suspect some one?"

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't."

"Then you do, but you don't want to say?"

"All I can say now is, I am glad you have come, and if it is possible to persuade the young lady it seems to me it would be a good thing to put the wedding off longer than just one day."

Just then Mildred joined them.

"Isn't it too funny, Mr. Eldridge," she said, "the man who carried me off was very much like Ned here, only his voice was different. I have been teasing the life out of the poor fellow about the resemblance."

"And what does he say?" asked Eldridge.

"Why, he has actually become quite sensitive on the subject."

Eldridge looked at Border, who returned his glance with a knowing look, as though each could read the other's thoughts.

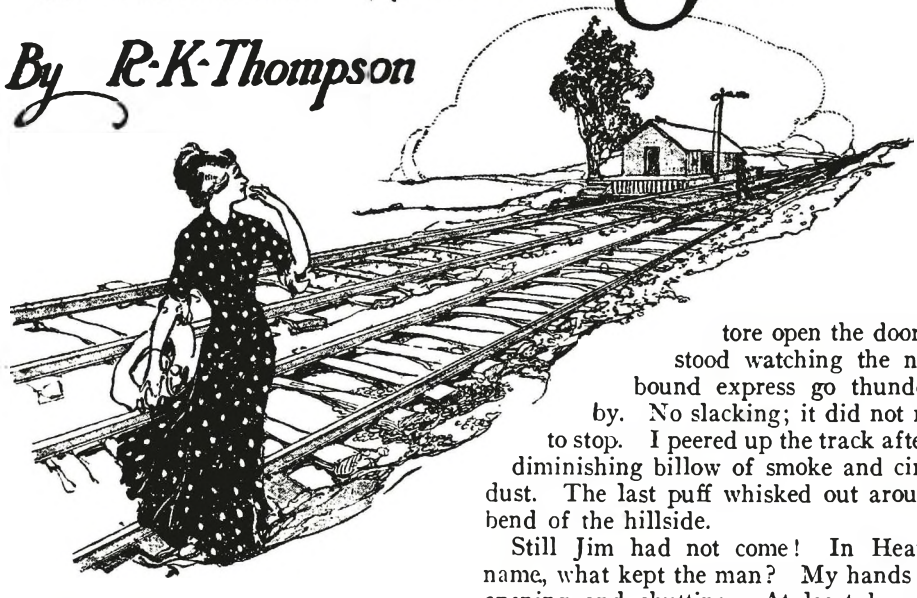
"I'll be going," said the sheriff, as he moved toward the door.

"One moment, Mr. Border," said the lawyer. "I will call at your office as soon as I can freshen myself up a bit. There is a matter of importance about which I wish to consult you without delay."

(To be continued.)

At Lone Willow Station

By R-K-Thompson



I SAID good-by to Margie, and stood on the end of the station platform, waving her out of sight over the crest of the hill. Then I turned, and, raising my two fists to the leaden sky, cursed aloud the fate that made me what I was, a miserable way-station agent in the wilderness at forty per.

Marriage on that— Even the silent air seemed to shrink back before the harsh mirthlessness in my laugh. I stamped across the bare boards of the platform to the office, banging the door to and sinking down in my chair.

My head went forward on my outstretched arms on the littered telegraph table. I had forgotten. I wasn't even a forty-dollar-a-month station-agent, too poor to get his girl. More than that stood between me and sweet Margie. I was—I was—

The five-fifty! Bounding to my feet, I tore open the door and stood watching the northbound express go thundering by. No slacking; it did not mean to stop. I peered up the track after the diminishing billow of smoke and cinder-dust. The last puff whisked out around a bend of the hillside.

Still Jim had not come! In Heaven's name, what kept the man? My hands were opening and shutting. At least he might have written—he could have *written,* safely enough.

Somehow the plan must have fallen through. What else could I think? Eight weeks I had been holding down this fake job, waiting for Jim Whalen to show up, according to previous arrangements, to pull off his burglary with my assistance. So far not a word had I heard from him. I had no assurance that he was even alive. If only something *had* happened to him—but, of course, I couldn't be sure. That was the deuce of it. I was all in the dark. Nothing to do but—wait.

It was just two months ago to a day that Jim had come to me with his brilliant scheme. Somewhere he had kicked up the knowledge that the smelter, ten or twelve miles up the spur from this tiny station, was in the habit of making weekly payments for ore delivered by the railroad into

the safe presided over by the depot's agent. Jim wanted that money. Safe-blowing wasn't in his line; neither was bloodshed or violence. There was another way he had hit on to corral the "long green."

It was all very simple. I was to become the agent; learn the safe's combination as part of my regular duties. Then, some night when Jim dropped in on me, give him the numbers. After which, in the time-honored fashion, I would be bound and gagged.

Jim, escaping with the money, would wait for me, to "whack up," of course. I'd never be suspected. It was dead easy.

He talked me over. Jim Whalen always did know how to get around me; guessed pretty correctly how little back-bone I had, I suppose. Didn't I understand telegraphy? And wasn't I out to make a pot of money soft? That, then, settled it. The deal was closed—shake? We shook.

(It was quite unconsciously, as I leaned against the jamb of the station door that I was rubbing the palm of my right hand against the side of my trousers now.)

Getting rid of the agent already on the premises was a mere detail. I've hinted, perhaps, that the station was lonely? Take my word, it was next-door neighbor to the jumping-off place—as God-forsaken a spot as you can possibly imagine.

That meant the agent wouldn't be exactly crazy about his job. It was easy enough for Jim to lure him into resigning by a bit of fancy lying about some "better position." That worked slick as a whistle.

Naturally the unfavorableness of the station could be played both ways. If the place didn't hold enough charms to keep the man there from jumping at even the description of a straw to get away, wouldn't the railroad be up against it to find anybody anxious to step into the shoes of the fellow who had quit?

When I came along, the very day the agent's resignation was sent in, demonstrating a fairly decent knowledge of Morse, and comon sense enough to run such a jerk-water depot, with the willingness to go there—the road hired me like a shot.

The "plant" was laid. I got on a train for that way-station the same night, taking final orders from Jim.

"Work for your getaway, kid. Remember you're the station-agent—don't ever forget it. Sleep it, breathe it, live it. Never let a soul suspect your being there is a stall. When we've bagged the game, and you ask to be allowed to resign on account of your nerves being to the bad after the 'hold-up,' everybody'll swallow the thing—you'll be able to duck without a come-back. So-long. And, say—you'll not forget to act the station-agent for all that's in you, mind!"

And I had acted. Yes, for all that was in me, and till the heart and soul I threw into the playing of my part at last worked my ruin.

Old man McClintock, foreman at the smelter, who always brought in the weekly payments for the railroad's shipments, believing me a lonesome station-agent dragging out an existence in that isolated depot in the foot-hills—nothing else—took pity on my loneliness. It was his daughter he sent from the cabin a half-mile back of the nearest hill to cheer me when she could. And Margie—

But where was there a spot in her soft woman's heart that would not be touched by the plight of one such as I pretended to be? Poor, forlorn station-agent, cut off from his friends, the whole world, a prisoner here in this barren spot for the few grudging dollars his work brought him each month—yes, soon enough, *she* pitied me, too. You know what they say pity's akin to? It grew into that with her. I saw it coming—made no effort to stop it, cur that I was! More than that, at the end of a month I declared myself. Then we plighted each other.

Was I mad?

Often enough I had writhed over the question in the dead watches of the night, alone in my bunk; but the answer I got was not that. No fit of crazy hope that somehow the thing might all come right had prompted me to ask for and take that decent girl's love. After I'd cast the die that idiot's dream came to torment me, often enough—not before.

It was just because I was so cursed weak. It had been easy to reach out and snatch real happiness, the first that had ever come my way in life. I was always one for the easiest way. So I fell.

Margie never suspected me. I'd stake my life, she'd never in all her life learned the meaning of the word; I played my part so well there was little risk she would have me for a teacher. And that was the worst of it.

Often I'd be talking with her, pretending, deceiving, lying to the innocent child—as I had to-day—and, first thing I knew, I'd be believing in myself! Here, this after-

noon even after she had gone, the spell had lingered for a moment. I had begun to feel sorry that I was a poverty-stricken station-agent without the means to marry—

I brought up, gasping. That was it. Where was it all to end? I saw my folly now as never before. I was caught, trapped; Margie loved me, knew that I loved her—she would expect me to do my part some time soon—I loosed a whining sob.

"I'll quit!" I murmured, striking my thigh with my fist. "I—it's all I *can* do. I'll have to clear out. Jim—to the deuce with Jim! I'm going to bolt. It's now or never!"

But even as I swung on my heel I stopped. There *was* Jim to take into consideration. I frowned in thought. Suddenly the sounder behind me began its hateful sputtering. My station call.

I let it go on racking the silence unanswered. Jim—if I played him false, he might come to find another agent on the job, that would make trouble, there'd be a jail-sentence at the finish for him, and—and Jim hadn't a very forgiving nature. What would he do to me for spilling the beans? A shiver ran down my back. What *wouldn't* he do—

Clack-clack; clackety-clack-clack. The old indecision had hold of me. To cut and run meant punishment by Jim, whenever we met; and meet we would, so long as there were legs under Jimmie Whelan, I knew. But if I stayed behind? *Clack-clack-clackety-clack.* Maybe the plan had really fallen through, Jim wasn't coming, and I could break with him and keep Margie? It was the easy way. *Clack-clack*—

"Shut up!" I shouted.

And then the little wire I had strung, just to kill time, between Margie's cabin and the station, clattered into life. In an instant I had shut off the other sounder, was bent above the toy instrument, breathlessly taking the message from my girl.

"Home," the faltering dot-dashes came. "I love you. Tell me."

At thought of those slender fingers which I had held in mine as I taught her the few words of the code, ticking that message to me—damp-eyed, the lump swelled in my throat. I sent back the answer from the depths of my heart.

"Now tell her," whispered a voice inside me; "tell her the truth. Put an end to this mad business, once for all. You'd better go—clear out. Don't leave her grieving. Tell her—this way."

My hand on the sounder tightened. Yes, this way would be best. I would not have to face those eyes, true blue, and with the trusting innocence in them, the light of timid love, too, which so lately had bathed me—*me*, black-souled sinner that I was! I was going away; it was wisest, and she would have to know—

"I love you," came her message once more.

In that second my blood turned from ice to fire. Yes, I had won her. Weakling, rogue, that I was—she *did* love me, by what miracle I stopped not to fathom. It was all that mattered. I would not give up what was mine.

If Heaven would help me out of this, I swore to Him it would be the straight road for me ever after. I'd never do another thing dishonest, if I starved. Just past this turn in the crooked path—

I answered her message again. And so the voice counseling wisdom within me was silenced. Fool that I was, not to heed it while there was time!

That night I ate no dinner. I had the main wire open and was tapping every conceivable nook and cranny of the adjacent world in a frantic effort to reach Jim, till long past midnight. I must get word to him. Addressing the messages to every cheap hotel and lodging-house I could remember as his temporary stopping-place, I flung the warning, that was a plea, out across the hot wire over my name:

Jim, don't come. Write.

Outside the storm that the dull sky of the afternoon had promised was raging full force. The leaves of the one willow that gave the station its name lashed the rain-soaked weight of their leaves against the grimy pane behind me.

But to these dreary sounds, sitting at the table against the far wall of the office, in the light of the single lamp at my elbow, I gave no heed. The sounder under my hand was silent. But there was that boarding-house in Duluth where Jim had once stopped a fortnight. Again the clatter of the key filled the room. I sat back in my chair, working my aching wrist. What was the name of the hotel in St. Paul? Riley's. I rattled the sounder:

Jim, don't come. Write.

One o'clock. Still I sat at the table, putting forth that pleading warning here,

there, everywhere. Would it reach its destination, serve the purpose for whose accomplishment I would have moved heaven and earth, had I been able?

That I could not tell. Mine was only to try; and that I might leave no stone unturned I went on wiring, hit or miss, to every haunt of Jimmie Whelan's that entered my mind:

Jim, don't come. Wri—

Before the gag touched my lips, I knew it was all up. *Jim had come.* Resigned, I sat stock-still and let myself be muzzled with cloth and cord; I offered no resistance to the rope that went round my arms.

Helpless as a trussed fowl, I was lifted and laid full length on top of the cluttered table. I heard Jim laugh softly.

Then he came in sight, a mask over his face, going toward the safe in the corner. Down on his knees, examining the door, he gave an exclamation below his breath. The door swung open to his touch.

Rising, a tight bundle of greenbacks in his two hands, he shook his head at me where I lay.

"Careless little station-agent," he said thickly behind the muffling mask. "Leaving the safe unlocked—but, that's *real* convenient!"

It was true. I had forgotten to turn the knob when McClintock deposited the smelter's money there that forenoon. Well, what difference did it make? Jim would have had the swag anyway without much more trouble than that.

Dull-eyed, I looked at the little fortune he was holding. Half was to be mine. Sort of a payment for the loss of Margie. Just then, with the stupefying effect of Jim's arrival on me, I didn't mind losing her so much. It was the right way after all.

I was a crook—with the dirty procceds of a crime in my hands, I couldn't stay and take her now. The thing was fate. I had to remain crooked. Well, after my getaway, she'd soon forget all about me—sure, good ones and bad, they always did.

Jim had the money; I wondered why he didn't clear out? I could hear him rustling about on a shelf behind me. What the deuce was he up to? Again he came in sight, carrying an armful of old newspapers and a pair of shears. Kicking out the chair, he sat down, the papers on his knee, and began hacking into them with the shears.

Looking up, he caught my bulging eyes on him above the gag. He laughed aloud.

"I don't mind telling you," he said. "This is how I'll keep all pursuers off my track till I'm clean gone. McClintock, foreman at the smelter's, in Dutch with the men higher up. I've got inside info' they suspect maybe he ain't on the level. Well, I'm going to make 'em think so stronger still. Savvy?"

He waved the shears.

"Gee, but you're thick. I'm making a dummy package to put back in the safe. A bundle of paper, clipped to size, with a genuine bill top and bottom. I lock the door on it. Is the safe blown? It is not. Then that's the package McClintock put in, and took your receipt for this morning. There's been no burglary here. *You* won't tell any tales, I know mighty well. McClintock—will be the goat!"

Once more he laughed, hacking again at the newspapers. Save for the creak of the rusty shears, the moan of the storm outside, there was silence in the little office complete as the tomb.

Curse the gag in my mouth! And curse this twist to Jim Whalen's scheme that was bound to make Margie's father taken for the thief—even after Jim was gone, releasing me, as I took it he meant to do, and I had double-crossed my partner in crime by telling the truth, as I swore I would to save the girl a moment's doubt of her father's honesty—even then, it came to me in a flash, the old man would still be under suspicion.

If, as Jim said, the officers at the smelter had some sneaking idea that square old Angus McClintock wasn't on the level, they'd laugh at the story I'd tell to clear him. For wouldn't they find out I was engaged to his daughter? That would be my reason for "lying." And there would be the dummy package found in the safe, proof enough to convict the old man out of hand.

Something must be done now—quick—to save her. Of course, it was of Margie I was thinking. Her trust in the world's goodness shattered, and with her father as the "goat," as Jim put it—no, that musn't be.

The way, though, to prevent it? Oh, for the gag out of my mouth, the free use of my limbs only for a moment.

Under me my twisting hands at that moment touched the sounder of the toy wire running to the McClintock cabin a half-mile away!

My breath caught in my throat. Here was a way. Perhaps I could bring

McClintock down to the depot before Jim was through rigging this dummy package of his; the robber could be caught red-handed.

I groaned inwardly. That meant I would be nabbed, too. I knew if I blabbed on Jim he would have his revenge by claiming me for his partner, proving it easily enough, and—and there would go Margie's trust in *me!*

But she'd known me only two months. Her father she'd trusted and loved all her life. Which ought I to sacrifice?

I tell you, it was no simple decision for a fellow weak as I'd always been to make. I sweated over it a matter of seconds, before my pent breath let go, I took the sounder firmly in my thumb and finger, and—

"Help—station—quick!" I thumped out on the single wire.

Jim was on his feet, knocking over the chair, the second the key began to clatter. He took a step toward me—then stopped. He was looking from the main sounder to me.

Where I lay, the thing was plainly too far out of my reach to be manipulated. And, of course, the thought must have spun through his mind—what reason would I have to be wiring anywhere then.

"A call, isn't it?" He nodded toward the instrument.

I nodded assent. He frowned at the key, then, shrugging, turned away.

"Well," he remarked, with a grin, "you've gone to bed. Let 'er whang away!"

Thank the Lord, he didn't understand telegraphy, and so couldn't cut out the sounder. Neither could I in my position—and, oh, how I wanted to at the moment! For what if the main line *should* call, thus disclosing the fact that there were two wires running from that room, on one of which I was lying, concealing it from Jim's view?

That was the risk I took, however. And I went on tapping the key under me: "Help — station — quick!" over and over and *over* again.

I thought my hand, cramped at the small of my back, would drop off at the wrist from the strain of working the sounder without betraying to Jim the movement of my muscles.

Five minutes passed. Not a sign from the cabin that my messages were heard. Jim was still hacking the papers to size with those rusty, creaking shears, but already the pile of clipped oblongs on one knee was grown to the height, almost, of the package of bills he had stolen. I worked the sounder under me more feebly now. My strength was giving out. Paralysis was stealing into my hand; soon—soon it would be too late.

Jim got up. He stacked the paper he had cut upon the table beside me, placing a bill from the stolen money top and bottom, as he had said. Now the rubber-band was going around the package. I worked the key just once more, even though I knew it was hopeless to bring McClintock in time.

"Han.'s up, there!"

In the doorway, looking down the barrel of a businesslike rifle, stood grim old Angus McClintock himself. That canny Scot hadn't brought any brass band with him to advertise his coming. My messages had brought him down to the station prepared for a cautious invasion of the office if he valued his skin; he had opened the door and crossed the threshold quite unheard.

Up went Jim's hands. The old man, the gun now dropped for instant action to his hip, advanced and relieved my partner with deft fingers of his Colt. Then, gathering up the shears from the table, he cut my arms loose, leaving me to remove the gag and get up alone.

"A sheriff's posse'll be here to gather you in, my fine laddie, soon's Dan'l there can work the wires," McClintock informed Jim. "After the money from the smelter, was ye? Ha! we've fooled ye, then, this young agent and mysel' betwixt us. Too smart for all your ropin' and gaggin', he were, ye see! And that means rewar-rd for him from the company he works for, with jail comin' to you one long time for the future, I can promise."

Jim turned toward me. And now for it! Mentally, I bade good-by to Margie, forever—then I faced McClintock in readiness to have his gun-barrel trained on *my* breast, too.

And then—and then her father reached out his hand.

"Let's have a look at the face of you," said he to Jim, taking hold of his mask The square of black cambric came away.

It wasn't Jim at all!

This was another thief—an absolute stranger to me!

Jim Whalen had died of typhoid fever in a hospital in Sault Ste. Marie, one week

before the night the station was attacked by the other robber, a discharged employee of the smelter. He afterward confessed that the successful carrying out of his plan to cast suspicion for the burglary on old man McClintock had to do with my murder and the subsequent doing away with my body. Cheerful cuss, wasn't he?

But I've alive, and here's the tale I've told. It ends right where it began—with Margie. We're married now and comfortably settled down, and the past's behind, the future looming brighter ahead of us every day.

For you *bet* I'm straight now, and to stick!

With Sword and Strategy

by Frank Williams

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE scene is laid in the time of Charlemagne, when Pepin the Hunchback, natural son to the king, causes the rumor to be spread that Philip of Brittany, has sent booty captured in the wars into his own province. As his soldiers have all dispersed, he cannot prove by them that he was set upon in the mountains and robbed of the tribute, so asks of Charlemagne that the matter be settled by his combat with a champion that may be selected. This is granted, and Osta the Hun is picked. Him Philip worsts, but his victory is of little avail to him, as soon after he learns through Charlemagne's queen, Fastrada, that Hildegarde, the girl to whom he was betrothed, is about to wed, apparently of her own free will, the misshapen Pepin. While he is at his interview with the queen, there is a cry that the enemy are coming, and Philip places himself at the head of the Saxon mercenaries, who turn on their masters, stun Philip with a blow, and carry him off into the forest. After escaping from threatened execution by the Saxon mercenaries, Philip hastens with his men to Regensburg, where the wedding is to take place, has an interview with Pepin, on whose fears he works to such an extent that the hunchback informs the king the marriage will have to be postponed for a month. He adds a rumor to the effect that the queen is in love with Philip, which so enrages Charlemagne that the Breton flees for his life and is led by Fardulf, the priest, to a monastery in the forest, where he has also bestowed Lady Hildegarde. Hither comes the next day the king with his troops, who greatly outnumber the defenders. The battle goes badly for the latter until only ten men remain to them.

CHAPTER X.

WHILE PEPIN SLEPT.

"COME with me, Philip of Brittany, I will save you." This from Fardulf.

"And have me leave my men? Never!"

"Your men? See!" and the priest nodded to the three wounded, staggering soldiers that defended the door and were selling their lives dearly.

Just then a great roar sounded on each side, and Philip knew that the portals had given beneath the pounding of the attackers.

"Come," cried Fardulf, "you and I are for better things than this. Our time to die is not yet. Across this room, where now the girl is standing, is another door. With that closed and us in the room beyond, I can save you both. Come, drive these fellows in the doorway back for the nonce and then bolt for it."

Even as he spoke the last of the Bretons fell, and Philip realized that the sounds of battle no longer came from the wings of the monastery, showing that his men there were all dead.

"Good, lay on!" he growled and attacked the men in front of him so fiercely that they fell back.

"Now!" cried Fardulf, and they leaped backward to the doorway in which Hildegarde stood.

Philip made to seize her and take her with him, but she avoided him.

"Go in, quickly," she cried, "and shut the door. There is no lock, and I will stand here and hold them at bay. They will not harm me. For my love's sake, let me save you, Philip!"

And again he could not refuse her, though it irked him sorely to give her her way in this. But in the flash of his brain he knew that hers was the wiser course, so he leaped inside, throwing the mighty door to after him.

Fardulf did not hesitate a moment. Leaping to one of the walls, he pressed a spring and the stones swung out.

"In here," he ordered, and Philip entered to find a stone staircase leading downward. An instant later Fardulf had come in beside him and the light of day was obliterated as the secret door swung back into place.

Fumbling forward slowly, Philip felt the touch of the other on his shoulder.

"Let me pass, I will lead," said the anchorite, and the Breton glued his huge form to the wall. Then catching at the other's robe as he wormed by, he followed more rapidly. Fardulf seemed to have no hesitation, and acted as though he had traversed the path before.

"Where are we going?" gasped Philip after a while, almost suffocated by the lack of air in the tunnel.

"You will see presently," replied the monk.

"You seem to be familiar with the place."

"I ought to be. I told the order in the monastery to build it for just such an emergency as this. I little thought that it would save my own life."

Philip remained silent. The more of this man's personality he saw, the more he realized that he was a born ruler—one who not only saw everything, but *fore*saw it. With his equipment of brains and intuition he borrowed on future emergencies, and Philip felt a tinge of envy. Though a skilled and enthusiastic fighter, if need be, Fardulf much preferred to furnish the divine spark of intelligence that moved the puppets across the field.

"Were I a king," thought the Breton, "he should be my archbishop and prime minister."

Finally the ground under their feet began to slope upward, and a faint glow told them that the light of day was being admitted somewhere. The monk proceeded more slowly now, and with great caution, mounting steadily. At last he put back a hand and stayed the soldiers. Then he reached up, gripped a couple of hand-holds, and stood on what appeared, in the dim light, to be the roots of a tree. Suddenly he stepped forward and disappeared, calling to Philip to follow.

Mounting the roots some four feet, the Breton found himself standing in the midst of a gigantic tree-trunk that had been hollowed out up to the first great split of the limbs. The bark, however, had been retained and cleverly masked the entrance.

When Philip stepped to the ground Fardulf swung back this improvised door, whose own toughness was its hinge, and they found themselves alone in the quiet forest. After the turmoil and excitement of battle, and the nervous tension incident upon their escape, this sudden entrance into a scene of complete peace brought with it a reaction.

Without warning, Philip's knees began to knock together and he found it necessary to sit down on the soft moss at the foot of the great walnut. There, in the weakened condition of his body, his mind became a prey to the blackest despair.

"What is there in life for me?" he finally asked the monk. "I now have neither position, honor, love, nor even a body of men at my back. Job, in his most miserable hour, was no worse off than I am, for I have been stripped clean of everything except your friendship. And that has kept me alive when I would much rather be dead."

"Tut, tut!" reproved the other religious man, producing some food and a flask of wine from his capacious robes. "Have some of this, and then growl afterward."

Little by little he forced Philip to eat, and as the warmth and nourishment mounted in his famished body, the Breton came to a more wholesome view of the situation.

"What are we to do?" he humbly asked the monk, throwing himself entirely upon the judgment and counsel of the other.

"Go to Regensburg," replied Fardulf promptly.

"To Regensburg! Are you mad? You should know as well as I that to go there would be comparable to Lucifer returning to heaven. Besides, what good is it to risk my life when there is no chance of ever winning back success? I have 'fallen,' to use a term of the court, and I must say that it wasn't done very gracefully."

Fardulf put away what remained of the food, and with an inward sigh set about the regeneration of Philip, a difficult thing, since the other was big and hard-headed. But the priest wrestled valiantly until, at the end of an hour, the blackness had cleared from the Breton's face and he had once more got a grip on himself.

Thereupon they rose from the foot of the tree and started on their long journey through the woods.

"Where are we?" asked Philip. "And where is Charlemagne's band of soldiers that he led to the attack?"

"We are a half a mile from the old monastery through the thickest part of the forest and in the opposite direction from which we approached it last night. By traveling rapidly we can reach the city before the king and be in readiness for anything that may happen."

"Then you think the king will return immediately to Regensburg?"

"Yes, for his main object in stopping there is to try Felix, Bishop of Urgel, for heresy, and this expedition against you has already delayed him in the examination of the evidence. Furious, and balked of his prey, though he is, his zeal in matters of the church will draw him back to his sacred duty."

For perhaps an hour they walked on in silence. Fardulf, with the manner of one absolutely at ease amid his surroundings, led the way, twisting and winding among the mighty tree-trunks, through clearings, across little streams, and into dark gullies. The sharp eye of Philip could detect no path, but a question to Fardulf revealed the fact that the monk had been a native of the locality and had roamed every acre of those woods when a boy.

Suddenly, with one of those rare intuitions that became so well known later in French history in connection with Cardinal Richelieu, Fardulf stopped abruptly and motioned Philip to silence.

"I feel that we are near some human being. Walk without sound," he commanded, and they began a stealthy advance.

After a quarter of an hour they drew near to a large sunny patch in the forest that denoted a clearing, and redoubled their caution. Finally they achieved the edge of it and, well-concealed behind trees, looked out.

In the midst of the glade stood a magnificent black horse, his nose buried in the grass, and his bridle dragging upon the ground. To their right, at the margin of the clearing, lay prone a small, black figure, its head upon a pillow of moss and grass. Fardulf and the Breton exchanged a significant glance.

The man was Pepin the Hunchback, and he was asleep and snoring.

"Probably ridden from Regensburg on some dirty work?" suggested Philip.

The monk nodded.

"Let's look closer," he answered.

Together they softly approached the sleeping man, and as Philip gazed down upon the one who had caused all his misfortune and misery a great hatred surged up in his heart.

"How easy it would be," he thought, feeling for his sword, "to end everything now with one swift stroke."

But as quickly he put the idea from him, for, much as he hated the crooked creature before him, he could not lower himself to kill a sleeping enemy.

Suddenly Fardulf pointed, and the Breton, following the gesture, saw a folded parchment stuck within the belt of Pepin. This, he knew they must get if possible without waking the sleeper, and Philip motioned the monk to perform the difficult task.

Bending over from behind, the dexterous fingers of Fardulf closed on the parchment and slowly withdrew it. Pepin had loosened his belt when he lay down, and the paper came easily. The snoring continued with undisturbed regularity.

Carefully, cautiously, the monk unfolded the parchment, lest it should crackle. Then he held it up that they both might read what follows:

> The white bird will fly on November 15.
> The money is secured.

That was all. There was no signature; merely the one statement that blazoned it-

self upon their memories as though it had been written in letters of fire. A glance of amazement and wonder passed between the two as Fardulf carefully folded the paper again.

With infinite care he bent down and slipped the end under Pepin's belt. It caught, and he moved it gently from side to side to facilitate its restoration. The action must have disturbed the consciousness of the sleeper, already oppressed by the nearness of the two men, for he stirred uneasily.

Fardulf and Philip drew back swiftly and began to retreat into the woods. Step by step they increased the distance until they had almost reached a point of safety where they might be lost in the mazes of the forest.

But Pepin, conscious of some presence, suddenly sat up, rubbing his eyes, and looked around him vaguely. Then, with the movements of one whose deeds make him suspicious of every circumstance, he turned completely around and peered into the gloom among the trees. His body became tense and a look of fright came upon his face. He rubbed his eyes vigorously once more, and looked again.

But this time he saw nothing, and, after a few moments arose and shook himself as though to throw off the influence of some hateful dream.

"Impossible!" he reassured himself. "The Breton is dead. How could I have seen him there?"

But Philip and the monk, with their hearts in their mouths, were retreating deeper and deeper among the trees, uncertain whether Pepin had seen them or not. At last Fardulf turned their course at right angles and soon led his companion out of all earshot.

"Truly, my lord, that was a narrow escape," breathed the monk at last. "Whether he saw us or not, I know this, that something must be done before we reach Regensburg so that his suspicions may have no support."

"But what?" asked Philip.

"You must be disguised," answered Fardulf. "I will procure you the garb of a monk. It is something I can easily lay my hands on, and, besides that, you will pass less noticed than in any other dress. Because of the approaching trial of Felix, Charlemagne has sent forth a call for all the Frankish prelates in the vicinity to assemble at once. There will, therefore, be a large number of strange clergy in Regensburg, and the presence of an unknown cleric there will cause no comment."

"But where will you find the garments?" asked Philip, not over-enthusiastic at the part he would be forced to play.

"By evening will come to the cave of Edwin, the English bishop whom Charlemagne called from England to his court school. Edwin, finding that he took too much pleasure in the gaieties of the court, resigned therefrom and forced himself into the life of an anchorite. From him we should obtain what we need."

"Lead on," said Philip. "Once more I bow to your wisdom."

All that day they traveled swiftly, seeing no one and hearing nothing except the occasional crash of an animal among the underbrush. With unerring instinct Fardulf followed obliterated paths and long unused trails until, at evening, footsore and weary, they finally reached the cave of Edwin the bishop.

CHAPTER XI.

A NIGHT ADVENTURE.

THE worthy prelate sat outside his yawning doorway, facing the sunset, and Philip noted with startling distinctness the havoc that self-denial and torture had wrought in him. He was bent and old-looking, his skin was yellow, and his hands feeble. Through the robe that enveloped his poor frame the Breton caught a glimpse of the hair-shirt that he always wore next his skin—a perpetual torment.

Approaching the venerable ecclesiastic, Fardulf and Philip knelt before him. It was some time, however, before Edwin could win himself from the contemplation of celestial things and actually realize that he had visitors. Then he welcomed them in all humility and set about making a meal for them.

That night they slept on piles of branches in the safe recesses of the cave, and when they started forth once more it was with a suit of priestly garments under Fardulf's arm. Deep in the woods again, Philip soon doffed and buried his characteristically Breton garb, and assumed the hooded cassock of the monk, not forgetting, however, to fasten beneath it the belt and sword that were indispensable to him.

They had just completed this operation and had started forward when the keen eyes of Fardulf detected something moving in the brush behind them. Immediately he ran to the spot, but found nothing. Yet it was with a feeling of uncertainty that they again took up their march.

An hour later Philip once more remarked the same phenomenon, and rushing to investigate, saw a man in the dress of a Frankish soldier disappearing into the forest depths.

Could it be that here was a spy of Charlemagne? Some one that had seen him change from Philip of Brittany into Friar Dominic, and would now hurry to the king with the information? The comrades, ill at ease, hurried on toward Regensburg, resolutely decided not to turn back, but yet fearful of the reception that might await them.

Finally, at three in the afternoon, when they were only five miles from the city, they sat down to rest and wait for an hour before continuing, as they wished to enter Regensburg under cover of darkness. They had scarcely done so when Fardulf again noticed the man in Frankish uniform, this time very near them.

"I will find out who he is," declared the monk resolutely, "but first you must obey me in one matter."

"What is that?" asked Philip.

Fardulf, from somewhere about him, produced a black woolen hood with two holes cut in it for the eyes to look through.

"This you must wear whenever any one else is about. Also you must bend your figure and limp, for there are many in Regensburg who would know you by your stature alone. You must talk with a different voice, and if any one asks why you have assumed the hood, you must tell them that it is the service of a penance. Quick! Put it on now. I want to talk with that Frank who has been lurking about all day."

Philip quickly drew the woolen bag over his head while Fardulf stood up and stretched out his hands to the mysterious visitor.

"*Frater, pax vobiscum,*" he said, greeting him in Latin. The Frank heard the voice and saw the gesture, but appeared to hesitate. Fardulf encouraged him to draw near and asked what he wished that had induced him to follow them all day.

"Can you tell me, holy father," replied the man, "where I could find my Lord Philip of Brittany. I have searched long—"

With a sudden great cry of delight Philip threw off his mask and leaped to his feet. Then he sprang forward toward the soldier.

"Johann! Johann!" he shouted, overcome with joy, and seized the Breton in his arm.

Quicker than Fardulf, he had recognized the familiarity of the voice and features, although Johann was still many paces away.

"Oh, my Lord Philip!" cried the faithful lieutenant, tears of joy streaming down his face, and for a moment he could say no more, but knelt before his master.

"Johann! And alive!" shouted Philip, scarcely able to credit his senses. "Tell me how you came here and in this hated uniform."

"In the fight at the monastery, when the battering-rams of the Franks broke in the gates on both sides," replied Johann, "we were desperately assailed and had a terrific hand-to-hand encounter. But the numbers of the enemy were too much for us and, at last, all but two or three fell. I, with two others, backed into a corner and continued the battle. But presently a battle-ax crashed down upon my helmet, knocking me senseless to the floor.

"At the same time (I did not learn this until later), a spear-thrust entered my side and I bled profusely. The Franks, thinking I was dead, passed on. It was night when I regained consciousness, and, though weak, I was able to move about. I stanched the flow of blood from my side and crawled about. Dead bodies were everywhere; the Franks had not even buried their own dead, but were eating and drinking up-stairs in the monastery. Charlemagne, I learned later, had already departed for Regensburg, beside himself with rage that you had escaped him. Once the place had fallen, he returned to more pressing affairs.

"To make a long story short, I found a dead Frank, stripped off his uniform and put it on instead of my own. Then I crawled out and made my way toward the camp, where, passing as a soldier, I made friends with a lonely and disgruntled guard and secured food and the story that you had escaped. When I knew that I set forth to find you, and in doing so chanced upon the most remarkable part of my adventures.

"Yesterday I had passed through an open glade and was just about to plunge into the woods again when a sudden sparkle, coming from nowhere in particular,

caught my eye. This sudden flash in the air caused me to stop. Had it come from the ground there would have been nothing unusual about it, but this was different. I retraced my steps and again caught the sparkle. This time I located it in a tree and climbed up to the point where the trunk separated.

"There, in a hollow that had evidently been burned out, was stored a great quantity of what seemed at first to be plunder. But listen, my lord, here is the strangest part of my tale. When I looked at it but a few moments I recognized it as part of the tribute that had been stolen from you under the mask of an attack by the Huns while you were returning from your embassy. Descriptions that I had heard made me certain. More of the plunder was stored in other trees."

"Johann!" cried Philip, elated. "And what did you do with it?"

"I left it there and started forth again in my frantic search to find you. Who put it there, and why, is a mystery, but that it is there at your disposal is the fact, and I hope you will take advantage of it."

Suddenly, like a bolt out of the black, a thought occurred to Philip. He remembered the words of Pepin's parchment—"the money is secured"—and, in a few swift questions, had identified Johann's clearing with that one in which they had found the misshapen prince asleep.

Philip thought a moment, then he turned to Johann.

"Here is the most important commission that you will ever have to execute, he said in a low tone. "Quite by accident you have happened upon a fact that is of inestimable value to me, and, if properly used, will do a great deal toward restoring me to the king's favor. What I want you to do is this: Return to the treasure and bring the most valuable parts of it to Regensburg, to a place that Farduff will tell you of. After that, my good friend, you shall be my companion wherever I go and whatever I do."

"The treasure shall be taken, my lord," answered Johann, and turned to Farduff to learn from him of a rendezvous in Regensburg.

Shortly afterward, all the details being arranged, the two men in priestly garb bade farewell to the faithful Breton, and all three departed on hazardous enterprises, the outcome of which would be either death or glory.

This time Philip put on again the hood that Fardulf had provided, and made shift to become proficient in the other details of his disguise, so that by the time they had neared the city, the one-time hermit expressed himself as satisfied with his bent and limping companion.

Now as they came out into the open road that led to the gates, they fell in with a large company of ecclesiastics. In the midst rode a stout man with a long gray beard, whom Fardulf declared to be the abbot, and all about him the lesser brethren padded along through the dust of the road.

The two newcomers were made welcome by the men of this company, who complained that Charlemagne had ordered them up out of their comfortable lands and houses, and that they were only looking forward to the time of their return. Thence the remainder of the journey was made among monkish comrades. Philip here had his first opportunity to test his disguise, and told his story of penance and injury many times, so that he actually began to believe it himself, and became expert and glib in enlarging and embellishing the same.

The ruse evolved by Fardulf was thus proved entirely successful, for in that day vows and penances were so common as to excite little curiosity save in regard to the details of the offense committed, and the punishment therefor.

When they arrived at the gates darkness had already fallen, and the body of clergy were barely within before the portals were closed and barred for the night. The guards, tired with their long day's vigil, did not examine too closely the thirty or forty men, and, after a cursory inquiry of the abbot, allowed them to enter.

Once inside, Philip and Fardulf separated themselves courteously from their companions and disappeared down a narrow and twisting side street, the hermit in the lead. Near by, across the square, Philip could just discern the outlines of the cathedral and its neighboring palace.

The sight of the latter recalled to him the things that had once been his, but were now no more. There was the woman he loved—for he knew Hildegarde must have returned with Charlemagne — and there were the nobles that had once been his comrades in arms.

There, also, was Pepin, the canker-worm of the realm, eating his crooked way into the very core of the emperor's affairs. It

was not until Fardulf stopped before a low house in a narrow, unlighted street that Philip realized again where he was.

Fardulf knocked quietly but firmly upon the door, and it finally opened, showing the frightened face of Dagobert, Philip's squire, who had not been with his master during the revolt of the Saxons that had carried the Breton away, and had, therefore, returned bewildered to his home to await developments. Philip's last visit to Regensburg, on the occasion of Hildegarde's wedding to Pepin had not, of course been long enough to admit of his attaching himself to his lord, as usual.

Now the young fellow and his aged mother were overcome at the honor thrust upon them, and hastened to make all preparations for the entertainment of such noble guests.

After a hearty supper Philip told Fardulf, who was dropping to sleep with weariness, that he was going forth into the public square for an hour to try the practise of his disguise once more. Muttering a sleepy warning, the monk gave his assent, and Philip, slipping on his woolen hood, stepped into the street and turned toward the palace.

Arrived there, he walked round it many times, familiarizing himself with the lay of the land. He moved with a limp, assumed a bent back, and, to the questions of inquisitive guards, replied in a hollow tone. The soldiers laughed good-naturedly and let him wander about to his heart's content.

He had finally turned away to go back, when suddenly he heard rapid footsteps behind him, and a moment later some one laid a hand on his arm.

"Holy man," said the fellow, whom Philip recognized as a special guard about the palace, "come with me at once. Your services are instantly commanded."

"Where?" asked Philip.

"In the palace," replied the other.

"Are there no bishops at hand that you should call upon a poor, unknown country monk?" remonstrated the Breton in a panic of fear at the possibilities of his situation.

"No!" cried the other angrily. "Will you stand here and argue all night, bumpkin? You are commanded to come with me. Say no more, but follow."

For an instant Philip had an insane desire to turn on his heel and flee, but in a moment he remembered that such an action might result in suspicion.

Much to the Breton's relief his guide took him to the postern entrance, from which the corridors and great halls of the palace could be traversed with little danger of meeting throngs of people.

Up and up he followed, then down long, flagged hallways, dim with sconced candles, until it seemed that the other's object was exercise, and nothing more.

But at last the guard halted before a broad arras that filled an arched doorway, and, signing the other to wait, entered. Inside, Philip could hear a feminine voice in consultation, and then his guide came out and told him to step within.

He pushed the arras aside and limped into a high, square room, in the corner of which stood a wrought-iron bed. A few footstools and a rough bench completed the furniture, but it was not upon these that the eyes of the Breton burned with such fire through his mask.

Upon the bed lay Queen Fastrada, and the monk's heart beat fast with anger and hatred. Looking about him he saw that the guard had disappeared, and that he was alone with the queen, whose pale face, and thin, emaciated body betrayed a ravaging sickness.

CHAPTER XII.

THE QUEEN'S CONFESSION.

For an instant or two Philip stood irresolute. Then, as the eyes of the queen turned toward him, he bowed low and waited for her to speak.

"Father," she said at last, in a faint voice, "draw nearer that I may speak with you in private."

Philip stepped forward, and, at her command, brought a low footstool upon which to sit, all the time watching her face narrowly for any sign of recognition.

"Your name, good priest," she continued when he had settled himself.

"Dominic, your majesty," replied Philip.

"Uncover your face that I may look upon you. I do not wish to speak into a black mask."

"I crave your indulgence," replied the Breton, "but that I may not do. I have made a vow that my face shall not be seen until a happiness that I have long desired shall be mine."

"And what is that?" asked the queen, her curiosity aroused by this strange man.

"That, alas, is buried in my heart and may not be revealed. For what did your majesty require me?"

"Ah," replied Fastrada, and sighed deeply, "I, too, have a secret that consumes me. Day and night it has eaten at my heart, until I can endure it no longer. Therefore I have sent for you that I might confess it. If I am to die, this secret must not go with me."

"But the bishops of the household? Were it not better that they—"

"They are all in conclave with the king, and may not be disturbed. What is the matter, priest? Are you unwilling to perform your duties?" And the queen spoke impatiently.

"No, speak on."

"It concerns one of whom you may have heard even in your country parish; a noble and upright lord upon whom I have brought great misery and unhappiness."

"His name?"

"Philip of Brittany."

Philip could not repress a start, and the queen looked at him piercingly.

"You are amazed?" she added. "Then you have heard of him?"

"Who has not, my lady? All through the realm he is known for his service to the king."

"Yes," and she sighed wearily. "He is the one I have brought to poverty and dishonor, and perhaps to death. And all because I am a woman, and have loved him without avail."

"It were indeed a sin, my lady, since you are already the queen."

"The queen! How empty are those words! I have never loved the king as I have loved this Breton. Listen. Ten years ago, when the Lord Philip came from the lands over which the noble Roland held the fief, he was fair in my eyes. I was but a young girl, the daughter of Rudolfo, a Frankish noble. But even then I loved him, though he would have none of it, being wrapped up in his devotion to Charlemagne. I made advances, and he, laughing carelessly, repulsed them."

To Philip, as he sat quivering with amazement, there came, out of the past, dim recollections of his early years at court, and of the maid whom he had noticed casually, but without eyes for her beauty or her love.

"After that many nobles sought my hand, but I prevailed upon my father to repulse them, for in my heart was but one image. When, at last, I saw that my love was hopeless, I changed, and became bitter. Then I set ambition highest and declared that never would I wed any but the king.

"So, when the queen died, I was already in favor with the king, and in less than a year I married him. The state and splendor and homage that surrounded me seemed at first to bring happiness, but when I found that the king, like others, was a man, the whole structure of artificiality that I had raised fell to the ground, and I found myself eaten by the same fire for the noble Breton as had possessed me ten years before."

"Did he not love you then?"

"Love me? No!" she cried angrily. "He loved a certain Hildegarde, a ward of the king, beautiful as any woman in the land. I hated her, oh, how I hated her for her beauty and the love that she had won, and I vowed that she should not have the Breton, but that I should satisfy my long desire.

"Pepin, the crooked weasel, loved this Hildegarde also, and I besought the king that she should become his wife. Then came the suspicion cast upon Philip over the Hun tribute, and with that power in my hands, I threatened Hildegarde, and made her forswear her lover to his very face. Oh, that night in my tent I could have died for the anguish in his eyes!

"But that, too, failed, and my frenzy of disappointment knew no bounds. Then I conspired with Pepin to force a quick marriage through, and at the steps of the altar itself he refused to marry her, and threw my love for Philip in my very face before the king. When Charlemagne questioned me afterward I lied to him, and said in my fearful anger that the Breton had made advances and forced himself upon me, thus bringing dishonor to his queen and his ward.

"Thereupon the king, wild with white anger, strode forth from the palace, put himself at the head of his soldiers, and marched upon the man I loved. Though it is said he escaped, I feel that he is dead, or else lying wounded in the forest in the direst need. That, good father, is the crime I have done against an innocent and upright man, and I would give all the glory I have known that I might undo it all."

Philip, whose wonder and amazement had waxed stronger with the queen's dramatic recital, sat as though turned to stone,

lost in the mazes of his own thoughts. Anger, tempered by pity for the wretched woman before him, swept through his whole majesty has laid herself open to the sever-

"And do you call it love?" he asked sternly, "when one seeks the injury and unhappiness of the one loved? Truly, your majesty has laid herself open to the severest penances."

"I know, I know!" cried Fastrada in a paroxysm of humility. "Do not spare me, for I fear the pains of purgatory."

"The greatest penance for doing wrong is righting that wrong, whatever the cost," went on Philip. "When that is done this life or the one to come need hold no terrors."

"But how can I right the wrong?" inquired the queen, raising herself and looking closely at the priest, as she supposed him to be.

"By a signed statement telling of your sin, and declaring his innocence," said the Breton inflexibly. "You call for parchment and ink and I will draw it up that you may sign. After that I vow to seek out this Philip of Brittany and deliver it into his hands."

"Oh, I cannot do that!" cried the queen, suddenly covering her face with her hands and shuddering. "Think of the disgrace, the humiliation, the scandal before all the kingdom! It is too much. Is there no other way. Say anything, everything, but that!"

But Philip was firm, and, after much resistance on the part of the queen, he finally prevailed upon her to order the writing materials. When they had been brought, and the servant dismissed, Philip, with care and precision, for writing was a rare accomplishment in those days, traced the words that would forever clear him of guilt in the matter of the queen, and restore him to the friendship of Charlemagne.

Notwithstanding desperate efforts to contain himself, his hands trembled, and he could scarcely repress his excitement because of the hope that surged so strongly within him. Half an hour later, for the statement was long, Philip read what he had written to the queen.

At the conclusion she nodded wearily, and, with a face as white as chalk, reached out for the quill that she might sign her name. Trembling with fear lest she should refuse at the supreme moment, Philip stood beside the bed bathed in cold perspiration.

Suddenly there was a sound outside the arras that protected the door, and the queen started with fright. A voice asked admittance. It was granted. A servant stepped into the room.

"The king is without, and asks immediate entrance," he announced.

To Philip this was like a death-blow, and to the queen a command that dared not be disobeyed. She told the servant to admit Charlemagne. Then turning to Philip she thrust the paper into his hand.

"Here! Quick! Hide it as you value your life!" she cried.

"Since you would sign the confession, why not tell the king now?" asked Philip, almost suffocated by a hope that had sprung into being on the spur of the moment.

"Oh, Heaven! I cannot," she moaned. Then, her eyes blazing fiercely, she added: "Hide that as I tell you, or you shall die here by the king's hand."

Philip snatched the parchment and thrust it under the belt beneath his cassock. Then he shoved the pen and ink under the bed just as the king entered.

"Give me your blessing and go," whispered the queen, and the Breton performed the simple ceremony. Then, with bent back and limping gait, he advanced to meet the king. But the sovereign, whose furrowed brow indicated deep thought, scarcely noticed the black-robed cleric who bowed low as he passed.

Philip, with bitterness eating at his heart, made his way from the room, and, piloted by his former guide, descended the stairs and went out upon the lonely streets.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST LINK.

How late it was Philip had no idea, but he was certain midnight must be near, if not already past. The streets were quiet and deserted, except for an occasional soldier patrolling within range of the palace, and a still rarer crowd of roisterers on their way home from the hut taverns at the end of the town.

For a while, as the Breton limped along, he gave himself up a prey to the disappointment and anger that was eating at his heart. Called quite by chance into a presence he had never expected to enter again, he had been on the point of emerging from the miseries that life had brought him.

Then the inopportune entry of the king had sapped the courage from the queen, and she was revealed in her true light, vacillating and cowardly.

As he walked westward, away from the Danube, that skirted the northeast section, a river Charlemagne was already bridging with pontoon roadways, Philip failed to notice coming toward him a band of men, all in an advanced state of drunkenness and pugnacity. There were perhaps ten or a dozen in the party, all of them military men or nobles of good degree.

Regensburg was rather small, with narrow, crooked, unlighted streets, and low, Frankish houses that leaned toward one another crazily. Near the palace an occasional taper in a wall pierced the darkness with its slender light, but the rest of the city lay black.

At night bands of roving brigands made the streets their ground of operation, and considered every human being legitimate prey. Wise people stayed indoors after dark, and those who were forced out went under the protection of an armed guard.

Finally the sounds made by the approaching body of revelers grew so insistent that they broke through Philip's unhappy musing, and anxious to avoid bringing himself into conflict with anybody, he quietly crossed the street and glued his back to a doorway in order that the others might pass without seeing him.

They did so, and Philip, breathing more easily, had started on again, when he heard the rushing of feet and sudden savage cries. Looking behind, he saw swift, dark figures rounding a corner and uniting in a vicious attack upon the more or less helpless nobles he had just escaped.

In a trice the Breton realized what had happened. A party of night-prowlers had pounced upon its prey, and murder and robbery were being done under his very nose.

In an instant priestly garb, bent back, and lame leg were forgotten. Philip, now all the warrior, heard the call in his blood for battle, and he leaped to the fray. At one and the same instant he swept aside the fold of his cassock and drew the sword that had swung helplessly beneath it for so many days. Then, with a yell, he precipitated himself upon the rear of the marauders.

But others, having heard the sounds of battle, swarmed toward the row like wolves to a killing, and Philip soon found himself in a difficult place, unable to reach those whom he was trying to defend and equally helpless to retreat the way he had come.

Realizing that his present position meant certain death, he turned his attack directly at right angles and hewed himself a passage to a doorway where he would be able to defend himself with greater ease.

The coat of mail he wore beneath his clerical garments, coupled with his wonderful skill as a swordsman, protected him until he could reach down and snatch from the hand of a dying man the shield that was of no more use to him. With this in his left hand he felt secure, and laid on his enemies with the fierce joy of battle that only the true warrior feels when he has been deprived for some time of his occupation.

"Fire of the pit!" he heard one man exclaim to his companion as, side by side, they strove to bring down this new battler. "The man's a priest! We are fighting against God!"

"Not God, but the devil in disguise!" grunted his mate. "You've heard that his favorite costume upon earth is that of a monk, and, by the rood, no one but the old sinner himself could fight like this fellow! Monk, indeed! A monk with a sword like that and a swift brain could be second only to the king!"

"I am the devil," announced Philip in a sonorous tone calculated to strike terror into the hearts of his superstitious opponents. But it had quite a contrary effect.

"Well, here's where I even up old scores!" cried one of the men. "You've beaten me enough in the past," and he redoubled the vigor of his attack. Philip now realized that he was face to face with most of the prowling band, because the noise of the other conflict was lessening, thus indicating that the unfortunate and inebriated nobles had met their fate and were being duly robbed.

Closer and closer the ruffians pressed, hampering each other in their eager attempts to slay this wonderful fighter who had laid so many of their number low. Truly, the Breton's work had not been lost, for around him gradually rose a pile of dead, while the narrow street for a hundred feet in either direction held the writhing bodies of men desperately wounded.

Without a helmet Philip was in imminent danger. More than that, he was tiring. He realized that these men, like wolves upon a cornered stag, would pull him down in the end, and that he would die a miserable and

unknown death, leaving the work he had hoped to finish unaccomplished.

The last of the nobles had been despatched, and the marauders had centered their attention upon the supposed priest. Nevertheless, their men fell.

Suddenly outside the struggling semicircle there rang a great cry, and upon the rear of the street-runners a slender, black-robed figure hurled itself, wielding a sword that rose and fell with the regularity of a wood-chopper's ax. And Philip, hearing the cry, and knowing its source, felt flow back into his veins the warmth and vigor that he had felt going from him.

With new-born fury he repulsed the now desperate attacks, and gradually cleared a space before him. This last struggle was short and sharp. Fully half the brigands had fallen already, and the others, brave as they were, began to doubt the advisability of falling victims to a fighter who announced himself as the devil and then proceeded to prove it.

"Another priest from the pit!" cried a voice, and the ranks began to waver. Then Fardulf behind and Philip before leaped into the fray with the utmost fury, and finally scattered the brigands.

"My good friend!" cried Philip gratefully to Fardulf when they had met in the center of the bloody field. "You saved my life just now, and I shall be forever in your debt."

But the priest made light of the matter and busied himself procuring a skin of wine from among the fallen nobles, that they might quench their thirst.

"But, tell me, Fardulf," persisted Philip, "how you happen to be roaming the streets at this hour when I supposed all the time that you were safely in bed at Dagobert's?"

"I came out after you," retorted the monk sternly, continuing his search for the wine-skin, "and, as I expected, I found you in an imbroglio and on the point of being killed and ruining our whole future. I had slept four hours without your returning, and then the good mother of Dagobert woke me, as I had given her instructions to do. I came out, started toward the palace, and had not gone an eighth of a league when I heard the sounds of battle. You will do me the favor to explain exactly what it means."

Philip thereupon gave an account of Fastrada's confession, and of the events that followed, making sure at the same time that the parchment was still in his belt. In the midst of his recital Fardulf suddenly uttered an exclamation and bent over the fallen foe beside whom he had been kneeling.

"A message! A message!" gasped the man, whom Philip now recognized as Lotheric, one of Charlemagne's foremost warriors. "A priest! I will tell a priest!" continued the fellow; and Fardulf, ever alive to the call of duty, offered the consolations of the church to the dying one.

"And the message?" he asked, after a few moments.

"Tell Theodoric this," gasped Lotheric: "The white bird is a night-bird and—nests—in the—cathedral."

Then he fell back into the waiting arms of the priest, dead.

Fardulf arose, and for half an hour more ministered to those that needed him. Then he took Philip by the sleeve and led him away.

When they had seated themselves in the candle-lighted little upper room in Dagobert's house Fardulf looked at Philip keenly a moment. Then:

"What do you make of that message?" he asked.

"I have been pondering, but I am not sure."

"What have we learned already?" pursued the monk, his eyes alight with the same fanatic fire that had come into them that night long before when he had cried out his prophecy of the white bird.

"I have seen Pepin and the princes of the kingdom seated beneath a white bird in the camp of the enemy," said Philip musingly, "but the white bird did not fly. Next we found upon the sleeping Pepin a strange note that said the white bird would fly on Wednesday, the 15th of November—that is, three days hence. Now, we do not know what the flight of the white bird signifies unless this message to-night can make it clear."

"And I think it can," answered the priest decisively. "I am convinced that it is cryptic and symbolical, and meant to deceive the unsuspicious, but I have a conception of its import."

"And that is?"

Fardulf repeated the words of the sentence to himself a number of times with eyes closed and his mind concentrated upon them. Then he said:

"I think the important word there is

'cathedral.' Wednesday night, as I happen to know, the king gives a state dinner to all the clergy who have come to Regensburg for the trial of Bishop Felix. That will, necessarily, empty the town of ecclesiastics and leave the cathedral empty. From that circumstance, and from the wording of the message, I am convinced that something is going to take place at that time in the cathedral."

"Yes," broke in Philip, "and it will be at night, no doubt, as the message suggests by the word 'night-bird.'"

"I think the same thing," rejoined the monk, "and have made plans already to be hidden in the cathedral that night and find out just what happens. I have a feeling, my Lord Philip, that we are on the brink of success. My intuition in regard to the white bird has come true, and I think the present one will."

"But I should like to be in the cathedral myself," said Philip firmly. "I think there is room enough for both of us." And Fardulf accepted his companion's company with eagerness.

"And now," concluded Philip, when the dawn was beginning to creep in at the windows, "the only thing left is for the white bird to fly."

(To be continued.)

The Bandits' Game

by Randolph Hayes

A BULLET cut the cactus thatch above the head of Flume McCool. There was no deviltry in this particular bullet; it was merely the visiting-card of the bandit Solis, who was then terrorizing the state of Tepic in southwestern Mexico.

Flume, aware of the etiquette of the occasion, hastily rose from his cot and peered out into the moonlight.

In the roadway, a dozen yards away, he dimly discerned the indistinct forms of half a dozen muffled figures. One was mounted; the others were standing by the heads of their horses. The man on horseback was holding a rifle at rest, the butt on his thigh. The others were carrying rifles by their barrels.

There was evidently no haste in the expedition; it was merely a quiet little looting and murdering party.

Flume, who had justly earned his name as a miner in the Rand, the Klondike, and at Goldfield, was just establishing himself as a sugar-planter in Tepic. He now devoted a small portion of a half minute to cursing his fate that he was not already ensconced in the new stone house, with walls a yard thick, which he was building a hundred yards back from the thatched hut. There he might have barricaded himself and might have withstood successfully a siege from these Mexican outlaws who spent little time in fighting where there was much resistance.

With a certain amount of satisfaction, Flume reflected that all the money he possessed was buried in a *cache* near the well. However, he knew his Mexico well enough to realize that he would probably be killed first and the treasure sought afterward. Therefore, he found little hope in the thought that his money might be spared even if he lost his life.

Another bullet cut the thatch, this time a little lower. The second bullet denoted impatience. The first had merely been a warning; this was a demand.

Flume picked up his rifle from a corner and covered the man on horseback, concluding that he was the leader, and hoping, by killing him first, to drive the others off. But there were six of them. Flume hesitated. Was there not some surer way of escaping this fate which had come suddenly upon him in the night?

The man nearest to him had by this time turned and the moonlight revealed his countenance. Flume felt the swift joy of relief surge over him as he recognized one of his Mexican neighbors, Valdez, a good-naturned, amiable fellow who had been a bandit only for a week past.

Several times, during the first few months of his life in Tepic, he had spent the night in the home of Valdez, and he reflected that to a Mexican the laws of hospitality are supreme over all other laws, either of God or man. A Mexican who would feast and bed you in his house with the intention of killing you afterward would never sully the integrity of his hospitality by committing the crime within the lintel; he would wait until you had passed down the road a piece. Nor would he kill you in your own house were he your guest.

A third bullet came. This missed Flume's head by only a foot. Without further hesitation he threw his rifle in the corner and threw open the door.

"*Amigos!*" he called pleasantly.

The five dismounted bandits advanced surlily, dragging their rifles, while the sixth still sat on his horse while he covered the door, cheek to barrel.

Flume stepped out now fearlessly and grasped the hand of the foremost in vigorous American fashion.

"Valdez," he said, and was about to speak on in the mongrel Spanish called Mexican and which he had recently learned, when he suddenly reflected that it would be well not to let his insistent visitors know that he was familiar with their tongue. Consequently he decided to stick to English and heartily regretted that he had used even the word "friend" in any tongue but his own.

Thus, to the guttural flow of greeting which Valdez poured out on him, he turned a bland and smiling face, with no answering spark of intelligence. Valdez was asking him if there was any one at the sugar mill, how to get there, and when the *peons* were paid off.

Flume chose to understand that his quondam "friend" was asking for a place to sleep for himself and his comrades. He lit an old kerosene lamp and pointed to a roll of blankets in the corner, offered his own cot, with eloquent gestures of hospitality, and took in the entire floor with one broad sweep of his arm. This offering of all he had was truly Mexican.

As he spoke, the man who had been on horseback entered the room. It was Solis. He took in the situation at a glance and spoke to his followers, telling them, in Mexican, that it would be best, perhaps, if they spent the night there. His words served as a command.

The five immediately disposed themselves about the floor, some seizing Flume's blankets, others wrapping themselves in their *serapes*. Solis, with the magnificent air of a conqueror, took Flume's cot and pulled the quilt snugly about his shoulders.

Determined to prove his apparently entire trustfulness in them, well knowing that in thus doing lay his sole hope of life, Flume lay down in the middle of the floor, surrounded by the desperadoes. Had he even sought a place in the corner where lay his rifle he knew that the chances were in favor of his getting a knife in his back before morning.

Naturally, he did not sleep, though he pretended to do so. After an hour or so he heard two of the bandits whispering. Evidently they thought him asleep, or were confident that if he did hear he did not understand the language.

"How stupid of Valdez!" exclaimed one.

"Never mind. We will wait till he goes out in the morning. Then Valdez cannot complain. It will not be in the house."

"Who will kill him?"

"I will. You had the last."

"What will you do with him?"

"Cut his heart out and take it to my old woman."

"To your old woman? What for?"

"She will cook it. The *Americano* heart is good—if well-cooked—like the heart of the young bull."

"Bah!" exclaimed the other in disgust with this hint of civilization. "Are you a *peon* that you must have your meat cooked —*eat it raw!*"

After listening to this conversation there was no danger that Flume would fall asleep.

He knew that it was not idle chatter he

had heard about the Mexicans having been cannibals not many generations ago and that now, in the height of revolt and terror, they sometimes reverted to these animal instincts.

However, Flume kept a cool head, realizing that the only chance he had lay in his ability to play upon either their ignorance or their credulity. He knew them to be bloodthirsty, utterly hardened to human suffering. He also knew that they were as little children in their ability to be diverted, fascinated, amused, hoodwinked.

Naturally his first thought was to devise some means of giving them a substitute for the excitement of taking his life. As a matter of fact, that would mean little excitement to them, especially if he made no resistance, for they had been taking human life now for several months and were passing quickly through the varying phases of civilization which brings man from savagery up to the refinements of cruelty.

They loved a bull-fight, he well knew, and he reflected sadly that he had possessed two fighting bulls only a month previously, but had sold them to the Plaza de Toros in Guanajuato. Then he thought of his fighting cock which was tied to a stake in his back yard. But there was no other with which to match it.

Dawn came with no solution to the problem of such vital moment to him.

With the first ray of light Solis stirred. Instantly his men were up. Flume rose with them and offered, partly by gesture, partly in English, to get coffee for them. The English missed them, but they understood the gestures and welcomed the coffee.

To get the coffee-pot Flume found it necessary to go into the lean-to. Rummaging around there in the darkness he stumbled against some bags in one corner. Rising, his head struck a wicker cage and immediately there proceeded from it a loud chirruping.

With a suppressed shout Flume seized the cage. By accident he had found his great idea.

With the cage in one hand and the coffee-pot in the other he reentered the hut and proceeded to boil the coffee. Meanwhile, with excessive care and with the formality of an important ceremony, he placed the cage near the fire, not too close, but near enough for the cricket which was imprisoned there to be awakened by the heat and to chirrup loudly.

The child-like Mexicans, primitive ignorance vying with squalor in their countenances, gathered quickly about the cage and peered in on this strange pet of the gringo. They chattered volubly among themselves and looked dumbly to Flume for an explanation.

Finally Valdez, who spoke a little broken English, approached the coffee-maker, who apparently was oblivious of the sensation created by the cricket. Valdez wanted to have the thing explained.

As soon as he could set the coffee before them Flume started his game. By dint of much repeating in words of one syllable, combined with copious gestures, he conveyed to Valdez the story of the fighting crickets.

They were the property of his Chinese cook who had gone the day before to Guanajuato for supplies. Did the Mexicans not understand that in China the cricket was the fighting animal, like the cock in Cuba, and the bull in Mexico?

What! Could those tiny little insects fight? Certainly. Most terribly; most excitedly!

Well, then, where was the other one?

In the lean-to, and Flume went to fetch it. While he was gone he heard the guttural voices babbling behind him. His heart was bounding now with hope, for he thought he saw his way of escape clearly before him.

Presently he returned with a second wicker cage which held another cricket. In the heat and the light the second joined his morning chirrup to that of the first.

Finally, with a beautiful gesture of generosity, Flume presented the crickets; one to Solis, and one to Valdez.

For a few moments the bandit chief and his lieutenant dwelt on their curious gifts with animated delight. Valdez was the first to speak, as oblivious of his host as if he had been in the next State.

What he asked for was very evident—that the life of Flume McCool, the courteous gringo, be spared because he had given these magnificent little mementos to his friends, the distinguished rebels.

Flume, listening intently, affected to hear nothing. Solis scowled in dissent; then a diabolic grin came over his face. He turned to Valdez, with his caged cricket in his hand.

"*Que va?*" spoke the bandit in his lightest manner. "It is not well to let

the gringo go too easily, but I tell you what we shall do. My cricket will fight your cricket. If my cricket wins, the gringo's life is mine; if yours wins, you have him to do with as you please."

Solis looked about on the barbarous faces of his followers.

"Is it agreed, *hombres?*" he asked.

"Agreed," they muttered, grinning at Flume with friendly diabolism.

II.

THE sun was now up. Solis led the way to the clearing in front of the hut. The five bandits closed in around Flume, who did not dare make any attempt to arm himself. He did not have on his person even a knife.

As they passed from the hut, Flume had taken from its place near the door the cricket bowl in which the Chinaman conducted their fights. This was a round piece of wood, about two feet in diameter and scooped out in the middle.

The bowl was placed on the ground and the six Mexicans squatted around it, while Flume explained to them, in a friendly manner, as if he were utterly oblivious of the momentous character of the occasion, how a cricket-fight is conducted.

It was necessary for the two opponents to kneel, on opposite sides of the bowl, each holding in his hand his wicker cage. Then both, simultaneously, must raise the trap-doors to the cages and let the crickets out. The crickets would do the rest.

Before the encounter began Flume plucked a string of red thread from Solis's *serape* and tied it around the thigh of his cricket. Then he took a blue thread from Valdez's *serape* and similarly marked his cricket.

Then, for the first time in his life, Flume uttered a prayer. It bore his urgent desire for the blue cricket to win.

The childish Mexicans, grasping their rifles, with their knives protruding from their belts, crowded about the bowl in eager expectation. For the moment they had forgotten everything except this novel method of mortal combat, which was a form of life-taking, combined with a game of chance, of which they had never before dreamed.

Valdez opened the trap-door to his cage and the blue cricket advanced into the bowl.

Solis opened his door and the red cricket came forth.

The combat was as instantaneous and as fatal as the quickest cockfight. With one stroke, which no man could mark, so sudden and so well aimed was it, *the red cricket killed the blue!*

With a shout of savage delight the five bandits leaped to their feet and drew their knives. Solis waved them aside with a gesture.

"Is it not agreed," said he, "that the gringo is mine?"

Surlily they sheathed their knives. Solis turned to his cricket with an ecstatic appreciation. It was the joy of a sportsman who lavishes his caresses on the animal that has won for him. Withal it was a Spanish joy.

With his brawny fist Solis grasped the red-stringed cricket and kissed it. As the cricket touched his face it kicked vigorously and he dropped it in terror. The sting, or kick, or whatever it was, did not pain him so much as the sudden impact of the unfamiliar. He was in a country of tarantulas, scorpions, and rattlesnakes, and he was suddenly filled with a superstitious fear, for, had he not seen this tiny insect only the moment before deal out death to one of its kind?

Could it not, therefore, bring death to a human being?

Swifter even than thought Flume McCool saw his opportunity. His life had been forfeited, but he would use his wits to save it.

A look of horror came over his face.

"*Amigo!*" he cried, and rattled on, this time in Spanish, at which the bandits looked at him with consternation and then with dark suspicion. "What have you done! It is fatal! The sting of the cricket will kill you! It is poisonous!"

Even under his thick tan it was apparent that Solis was turning pale.

"Hound!" he yelled, drawing his knife, and rushing on his victim, "you have planned this, but I will get you first."

"Wait!" cried Flume, and something in his manner stayed the bandit chief. "I have a way to save your life."

There was a glimmer of intelligence left under the craven fear of Solis and he reflected that he had not better despatch what was perhaps his sole means of escape from what he firmly believed would be his death.

"Speak, gringo!" he commanded. "Tell me—what is it?—before I kill you."

Flume smiled. Feeling that he now controlled the situation Flume spoke slowly, but with terrible distinctness and in the Mexican they all understood.

"You thought I did not know your language," he said, "but I have understood everything. I knew that you intended to kill me in the beginning. Then I knew that you gave me one chance for life, and that I lost that. But there is a God above. *He* has given me another chance."

He paused and looked about him. His religious reference was just enough to impress these primitive minds on whom the Indian priests had lavished their appeals. They were listening with credulous impatience for each word as it fell.

"I can save you," continued Flume. "I have a medicine that will make you well —in the twinking of an eye—even as the cricket bit you. And I will give it you on one condition—"

"What is it?" feverishly demanded Solis.

"That I live. I give you your life. You give me mine. Is it not fair?"

Flume appealed to each of the six in turn. Valdez, his only friend, looked imploringly at his chief.

Solis gave a quick toss to his head.

"Very well," he cried. "Agreed—but the medicine—quick!"

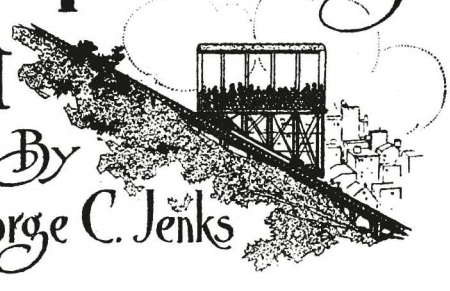
Flume hastened into the hut and returned almost immediately with a box of pills. He opened it and took one out. It was as big as the end of his thumb and a scarlet-red in color.

"This," he said, handing it to Solis, "is the Chinese sure remedy for cricket poison."

The bandit chief gulped it down and appeared to have immediate relief. Then he grasped the hand of his savior warmly. Half an hour later the six rode away.

After they had gone, Flume carefully secreted his box of pills where he kept them to administer to the credulous natives. They were made of bread crumbs, sugar-coated, and stained with cochineal.

Wresting a Pittsburgh Secret



By George C. Jenks

CHAPTER XIII *(continued).*

THE MAN FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

"WHAT did those four men do at the table?" asked Fred eagerly, as Lucille paused.

"They played cards for about two hours."

"That was a queer performance in a business place. What did they play? Poker?"

"No. Cribbage."

"What was the idea?"

"Mr. Barrington told me one day that Sim Galt loved cribbage more than anything else in life. He had a downright passion for the game. Where he lived, up in the mountains, there was no one to play with him. The nearest house to his shanty was five miles away. So, when he came to Pittsburgh every two weeks, it was arranged, for his benefit, that there should be a four-handed game of cribbage—'crib' your father generally called it. There were only two persons in the factory besides Mr. Barrington who could play cribbage. They were Willings and my stepfather."

And they played this four-handed game every two weeks?"

"Yes; always on a Wednesday."

"Did they play for money?"

"I don't think so. One Wednesday,

when Willings was away, sick, Mr. Barrington asked me to take his place. There was no money staked that time, I know."

"My father asked *you* to play?"

"Yes. I understand cribbage. My stepfather taught me."

"Have you seen Sim Galt since my father died?"

"Once—at my stepfather's house. That was two weeks ago to-day. This is Wednesday."

"Did he bring the carpet-bags?"

"I didn't see them. I was not there when he came in the afternoon. When I got home, later, he was in the dining-room with my stepfather. They had supper together, and Delia had only just cleared the table when Willings arrived. My stepfather got out the cards and cribbage-board."

"Willings is still friendly with your stepfather, then?"

"I don't know whether they care much about each other. But, you see, Willings is a good cribbage-player, and they wanted him for the game."

"What a crazy business it all seems to be!" muttered Fred.

"I had had supper in the kitchen with Delia," Lucille went on. "My stepfather asked if I was there, and then told me I must join in the game. They needed me to make up the four players. I didn't want to do it, but I knew I must obey. So we played till nearly twelve o'clock. Then Sim Galt went away and I haven't seen him since."

Fred was about to ask Lucille more about this cribbage playing, when the telephone-bell broke in and made him forget everything else. He snapped the receiver off the hook and yelled "Hello!"

He listened intently to the message that came over the wire, while Lucille watched him and wondered what it was. She surmised that it was Jim McKee, because she knew he was to telephone about this time.

"What's that?" bawled Fred into the transmitter. "Keep a sharp eye on Sim Galt, eh? Why, I was just talking about him to Miss Steiner, who is in the office. But how am I to keep an eye on a man I don't know where to find?"

"Mr. Barrington!" interrupted Lucille.

"Hold the wire!" shouted Fred into the phone. Then, to the girl: "What is it, Lucille?"

"I was going to say that when Sim Galt was leaving my stepfather in the hall of our house two weeks ago, I was in the dining-room. But I heard Sim say 'All right, Mr. Steiner. I'll be here at the regular time for another hand at crib. That was a good game to-night.' Then he went out."

"What do you make from that?" queried Fred.

"I think, when he said the 'regular time,' he meant two weeks from that day—just as if Mr. Barrington were still alive."

"I see," cried Fred, banging the table with his fist. "This is Wednesday, and he'll be at your stepfather's house to-night."

"That's what I think," assented Lucille.

Fred Barrington grabbed the telephone again and bellowed:

"Hello, Jim! I believe we can get Sim Galt to-day. Could you and Professor Shaw come over to the office? I don't like to ask him, but—eh? What? Hello!"

There was a pause while Jim McKee said something. Then Fred shouted back:

"Thanks very much, old man. The professor, too. He's a brick! All right! You'll both come straight to the factory, then? I'll wait in the office. Good-by!"

He hung up the receiver and laughed joyously as he turned to Lucille.

"They're coming over," he announced. "By Jove, Lucille! Sim Galt will have to play a good hand at something besides cribbage if we don't make him give up all he knows about that No. 1!"

CHAPTER XIV.

WHERE THE CARPET-BAGS WENT.

"I WILL stay till they come, if you'll permit me," said Lucille. "There's a heap of mail on the table. Couldn't you look it over and let me write the answering letters while we are waiting?"

"That's awfully good of you, Lucille," Fred answered with a pleased smile. "I was wondering how I'd ever get through. But don't you think you'd better go home and report to your stepfather?"

"I will do that when Mr. McKee and Professor Shaw have been here. They may want to ask me some questions about Sim Galt."

"That's true. But you would have time to go to the house, on the car, and back, before they arrive. I don't want you to have more trouble with your stepfather."

"No fear of that. He never flew at me before as he did last night. He may apolo-

gize the next time he sees me. Even though we are not friends, he does not often venture to be abusive."

"Will he know you did not sleep at home?"

"No, but Delia will, and it may worry her. I should like to call her up on the telephone."

"Good idea! Go ahead!"

Lucille got Delia on the wire and there was five minutes of animated conversation. Delia told of her anxiety over the absence of Lucille and how glad she was to hear her voice. Mr. Steiner had gone to the factory early. He had not been to bed at all, but had spent most of the night in his laboratory on the fourth floor. The door was locked now. He had also mended and closed the other door, leading to the lumber-room from the hall, which he had burst open himself.

At this point Delia said the grocery man was at the kitchen door, and she rang off forthwith.

"I guess Carl Steiner is going right on making our No. 1, Lucille," remarked Fred, when she repeated to him what Delia had told her.

"I don't know what else he could have been doing up there last night," acquiesced Lucille.

"Well, I'll look into that when I have found out where he gets our powder."

Lucille made no comment. She produced a pad of paper and pencil from the typewriter drawer and sat down demurely at Fred Barrington's right, to take his dictation.

The young man found among his morning letters several orders for No. 1 chemical glass. He replied that he would fill them all. Writing these letters, with the others in the mail, kept them busy for an hour. During that period they did not talk of anything save the business immediately in hand.

Fred had just put his decidedly dashing signature to the last of the letters, while Lucille closed the typewriter, when Jim McKee breezed into the office. He was followed by Professor Shaw. The two seemed to bring with them the fresh breath of the morning as well as a full supply of good humor. Jim McKee burst into explanation:

"We should have been over sooner, Fred, if the governor hadn't happened to see Professor Shaw in the office. That meant ten minutes' talk on mill matters. My respected father never can let the professor get by without asking him a bushel of questions about iron ores and steel in the making."

"Well, that's what he pays me for," laughed the professor. "Now, about this Sim Galt, Mr. Barrington. He will be in Pittsburgh to-day."

Fred looked at him in surprise.

"*I* knew he was likely to be here, professor. But—pardon me! How did *you* find it out?"

"Oh, I have been acquainted with Sim for years. He's a capital guide when one is hunting in the mountains. I go up there frequently for rabbits and anything else I can bring down. Sim is always with me. I shouldn't enjoy myself without him. He and I have hiked forty miles from sun-up to dark many a time."

A glance at the professor's sturdy limbs, well-developed chest, clear eyes, and ruddy cheeks would have told anybody that he was fond of outdoor life. Until four o'clock that morning he had been busy in his laboratory and had slept only four hours since. But no one would have suspected it from his appearance or demeanor. He was as full of "go" as if he had never consumed a drop of midnight oil in his life.

"Sim Galt always goes to see the professor when he's in town," volunteered Jim. "Comes to the office sometimes. That's how I know him—by sight. I never spoke to him."

"The reason he comes to me is that he never knows when I may be going for a hunt," said the professor. "At this time of year I treat myself to a day off whenever I can break away."

"Have you seen this Sim Galt to-day?" asked Fred.

"No. He'll drop in on me in the afternoon. He's been coming to Pittsburgh every alternate Wednesday for years. But there's always a chance that I might miss him, and I wouldn't do it to-day for a great deal. I believe he can tell me something about this Barrington No. 1 powder."

"I believe so, too. But that's another thing I don't know how you managed to find out."

The professor's full, round laugh echoed through the office and made the windows rattle. It was a laugh as care-free and spontaneous as that of a college youngster in his freshman year. Then he said:

"There are many ways of arriving at conclusions besides having them bawled at you through a megaphone."

Fred looked at him inquiringly, and the professor went on, still smiling with the satisfaction of a man who has at least partly overcome a difficulty:

"I've been thinking rather hard about that powder of yours. Last night, after you and Jim had left the house, and when Mrs. Shaw had finished rhapsodizing about the opera — it was 'Lohengrin,' a favorite of hers—I sat down to study out the origin of the No. 1. All at once I remembered something, and—I was glad Sim Galt would be in Pittsburgh to-day."

"Do you mind telling me what it was you remembered?"

"I would rather not at present. I never like to talk about my experiments until they are completed," answered the professor, continuing to smile, but speaking none the less positively for that. "What I should like to do would be to find him as soon as he gets into Pittsburgh to-day and see where he goes."

"Perhaps Miss Steiner can help us," suggested Fred. Then, hurriedly and with embarrassment, he added: "Oh, Professor Shaw—Miss Steiner. I'd actually forgotten you didn't know each other."

The professor and Lucille bowed, while Jim McKee insisted on taking the blame for neglecting to introduce them.

"I'm always making Rube breaks of that kind," he declared. "Wouldn't I make a splendid master of ceremonies at the White House? I bet I'd have the whole diplomatic corps in a tangle at the very first reception."

"Miss Steiner has just been telling me that Sim Galt always brings two well-filled carpet-bags when he comes to town. Did you ever see them, professor?" asked Fred.

"He never had them when he called on me," was the reply. "But he might easily leave them at a hotel or restaurant, you know. What do you suppose he brings in them—the No. 1 powder?"

"That *is* what is in them. But how did you know?"

The professor turned loose that infectious laugh of his again.

"Only guessed that time. We have just been talking about the powder, and Sim Galt was associated with it in my mind. By a natural mental process I assumed he had the stuff in his carpet-bags."

"Then all we have to do is to nab Mr. Galt and take the bags away from him, eh?" observed Jim McKee.

"Not exactly, Jim. But we can see what he does with the powder he brings in them. He doesn't leave it at the Barrington factory, as he did when Mr. Barrington's father was at the head of the company."

"He most assuredly does not," interjected Fred.

"Strong circumstantial evidence indicates that he gives it to Carl Steiner. We must prove that. Then we will find out where Sim gets the powder. The proposition is perfectly simple. We've got to find Sim before he gets rid of the powder to-day. He told me once that he always comes into Pittsburgh on an accommodation train which arrives at the Union Station about noon. He gets on at Derry, or Latrobe, or at a little place called Millwood, according to where he happens to come down from the mountains."

"It is twelve o'clock now," remarked Fred, looking at his watch.

"Then it's time we were moving," was the professor's quick rejoinder. "Sim Galt is a slippery customer when it suits his purpose to keep out of the way of people."

Lucille had been sitting at her typewriter table, idly toying with a pencil, but listening intently to the conversation. She broke in abruptly:

"Mr. McKee, my stepfather does not know you, does he?"

"Not unless he got a good look at my physog when I was with Mr. Barrington last night—in the incline car."

"No fear of that, Jim," Fred assured him. "You weren't in front of the window, and the car began to move as soon as he got to the gates, you know. He saw you afterward walking with me in Fifth Avenue, it seems. But it was too dark to make you out then."

"And he doesn't know Professor Shaw?" continued Lucille.

"Not any more than I know him," was the professor's response. "What are you going to propose? I see you have something in your mind."

"Wouldn't it be a good thing for you and Mr. McKee to go to my stepfather's factory and wait for Sim Galt?"

"What excuse could we have?"

"That you want to buy some special laboratory glass. You are a chemist, and could ask for what you want in technical language that would reassure my stepfather. You could easily keep him engaged for half an hour or more."

"Capital! I see!" ejaculated Fred. "Go on, Lucille."

"When Sim Galt comes in with his carpet-bags — as I'm positive he will — you could take whatever course you think wise. I leave that to you."

"But you must not forget that Sim Galt knows both of us," objected the professor.

"What of that? There will be nothing remarkable in your ordering some glass retorts of a particular pattern for important experiments you may be going to make. My stepfather does not know that you are interested in the Barrington Company in any way. As for Mr. McKee, everybody is aware that he is in the steel business."

"Say, professor, this looks as if it might work out all right," observed Jim. "All we want to know is whether Sim Galt is supplying the No. 1 to Carl Steiner. When we are satisfied with that it ought not to be hard to arrange with Sim to let Fred have the stuff instead of Steiner."

"There will be no 'arranging' about it," insisted Fred hotly. "The powder is mine. If Sim Galt is bringing it to Pittsburgh I'll just *make* him show me where he gets it. You can be sure he'll take no more of it to Carl Steiner."

"Let's go, professor," urged Jim, who always hammered fiercely at an idea while it was red-hot. "I want to hear what Carl Steiner will have to say."

The professor was willing enough. He picked up his hat and announced that he was ready.

"We'll come back here, Mr. Barrington," he said, "and tell you what we find out. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly. Only I wish I could do something to help, instead of piling it all on you."

"Don't worry about that," returned the professor. "Once we learn beyond peradventure that Sim Galt is handling this powder you will be busy enough, I'll promise. Jim, can you find your way to the Steiner factory?"

"Of course I can. It's only a few blocks away."

"All right! Fall in!"

The professor flung open the door. Then, with a bow of farewell to Lucille and a reassuring wave of the hand in the direction of Fred Barrington, he strode out, with Jim McKee by his side. The very click of their heels on the brick sidewalk expressed confidence in the success of their mission.

Somehow Fred could not help feeling that his pursuit of the No. 1 secret would end triumphantly very soon.

"I think I will go home now," said Lucille, when they were alone. "I cannot do anything for you before I go, can I?"

"No. I blame myself for keeping you so long as it is. I never can thank you enough."

"Nonsense!" she smiled. "I can't help feeling interested in the Barrington Company, after being here so many months. Will you telephone me at the house what Mr. McKee and Professor Shaw discover at the factory?"

"Of course I will—as soon as they come back."

"Thanks. I am anxious to hear how it all turns out. Then, if I can help at all, I want to do it. You know that, don't you?"

As she opened the door there was a wistful look in her eyes that caught a response in those of the young man. He jumped up from his chair, with the intention of grasping one or both of her hands. She divined his purpose, and, with a reproving shake of the head—which the accompanying smile belied—slipped out to the street.

It was the noon hour, and a group of the Barrington workmen were sunning themselves outside of the factory. Fred was obliged to let her go.

"I wonder whether she really didn't want me to touch her hand," he thought as he returned to his office with a slow step.

It was the kind of puzzle that girls have been offering to sighing swains since the beginning of time. So long as coquetry continues to be a word of any meaning the puzzle will be repeated. Fred Barrington was still trying to find the answer in his own mind an hour later, when the door banged open to admit Professor Shaw and Jim McKee.

"Well?" Fred shouted, forgetting everything but the No. 1 as they appeared.

"It's all right!" replied Jim. "Sim Galt came there with his two carpet-bags. They were full of the Barrington powder, and Carl Steiner got it. He has the stuff in a cupboard in his factory, under lock and key."

"The scoundrel! I'll—"

"Yes, yes!" interrupted Professor Shaw pleasantly. "You shall do what you like. But you can't do it just now. McKee and I are going to sit in a four-handed game of

cribbage with Carl Steiner and Sim Galt at Mr. Steiner's house on Mount Washington to-night. Send out and buy a pack of cards and a cribbage-board, so that we can practise in the mean time. I am awfully rusty in it, and McKee says he never played a game in his life."

CHAPTER XV.

A GAME OF CRIBBAGE.

It was after seven o'clock and quite dark when Professor Shaw and Jim McKee were ushered into Carl Steiner's dining-room by Delia O'Toole.

"Here's th' gintlemin, Misther Steiner."

With this brief announcement, Delia marched out, leaving the two newcomers, hat in hand, standing just inside the room. It was not Delia's business to find them chairs.

Carl Steiner and Sim Galt were already seated at the table. The hunter was shuffling a pack of cards, while Steiner took four ivory pegs—two white and two red—from a small box with a sliding lid attached to the underside of a cribbage-board.

Steiner got up as his visitors entered, and brought forward chairs with a saturnine courtesy that appeared to be only skin-deep.

"Give me your hats. I'll put them on the sofa over here."

Sim Galt snorted. Why didn't they keep their hats on, as he did? He was a long-limbed, gaunt man, with a leathery skin, high cheek-bones, iron-gray hair, and the piercing eyes described by Lucille to Fred Barrington.

He wore a blue woolen shirt, a colored handkerchief about his neck, and a brown hunting-coat with several large pockets, into which he could stuff rabbits and other small game. The bottoms of his trousers were much wrinkled. When in the mountains he tucked them into his high boots.

A large slouch-hat, so weather-beaten that no one could tell its original color, was pulled down over his eyes. Perhaps Sim Galt took his hat off when he went to bed—and perhaps he didn't. At all events, no one ever had seen him without it. His age appeared to be about fifty.

"Hello, purfessor!" he growled. "I begun to think yer warn't comin'."

"It's only seven o'clock," returned Professor Shaw. "That's the time we were due."

"Of course it is," put in Carl Steiner, "but Sim is so hungry for cribbage I'm afraid he'd be eating the cards—and the board, too—if you were five minutes late!"

"Come on here! Cut for partners!" was Sim's response to this. "Two highest ag'in' the two lowest."

The cut resulted in Carl Steiner and Professor Shaw becoming partners against Sim Galt and Jim McKee.

"I hope you're a good player, Mr. McKee," grunted Sim as they took their places.

Jim McKee winked knowingly. It was all he had the courage to do. He was glad it was customary for partners to sit opposite each other, so that he had the length of the table between himself and the mighty hunter.

"When he finds out what kind of cribbage sharp I am, he'll want to kill me, sure," was Jim McKee's reflection.

Sim Galt's back was toward the door leading to the kitchen. Steiner sat at his right, and Professor Shaw on his left. Jim McKee, as Sim Galt's partner, faced the kitchen. He noticed that there was a square opening in the door, and that the sliding board which fitted it had been pushed aside just a trifle. The opening was sometimes used by Delia for passing dishes through when she did not feel that she was presentable in the dining-room.

Through the half-inch slit made by the displacement of the sliding board Fred Barrington was looking and listening. He was in the little hallway communicating with the kitchen. Lucille stood by his side.

"I'm a little nervous about Mr. McKee," whispered Fred to her. "He never played cribbage until to-day, when Professor Shaw gave him a few lessons in my office. If he makes a lot of bulls your stepfather will be suspicious."

"Why should he be suspicious?"

"Well, Carl Steiner is a shrewd man, and it will occur to him that this offer on the part of Jim and the professor was only an excuse to get into the house. His mind is full of this No. 1 he is fighting for, and naturally he will connect that with their coming here under a false pretense."

"There's danger of that, of course," assented the girl, in a thoughtful tone. "My stepfather is of a very distrustful nature. Still, cribbage isn't a hard game to understand. It is all counting, and Mr. McKee is good at that, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes, he's lightning on figures. But it is in the little points of the game, which old players know by heart, where he may fall down."

"One for his nob!" shouted Jim McKee at this moment.

The cards had been dealt, and each of the players having thrown in one apiece for the "crib," Steiner had cut what remained of the deck for Jim to take off the top card. He had turned up a Jack of clubs.

"Ugh!" growled Sim Galt. "What are yer talkin' about? It ain't one fer his nob, it's two for his heels."

"Eh? Oh, yes, that's what I meant," corrected Jim McKee hastily, as he stuck a red peg in one of the holes of the board.

"Wot yer doin'? Yer peggin' up the inside, when yer ought to go on the outside. I thought yer knowed how to play cribbage."

Sim Galt's eyes shone ferociously beneath the brim of his hat. A mistake at cribbage was to him one of the deadly sins.

"There he goes," groaned Fred. "I only hope we shall get the information we're after before Mr. McKee breaks up the game."

Delia came quietly shuffling along from the kitchen.

"Whisper!" she murmured. "Av Misther Steiner makes a move to come out, all yez hov t' do is to shlip back into me kitchen an' I'll hide yez in th' cellar."

"We know, Delia," returned Lucille.

"I know yez do, *alanna,* but I'm afeared th' lad there—Misther Barrington—might be afther fergittin'. Thot's phwy I'm tellin' yez agin."

She went back to her kitchen and Lucille listened anxiously for any moving of chairs in the dining-room. Fred, at the little slit, had the only place where it was possible to see.

The game went on in comparative silence for some time. As in most card games, so much can be expressed in cribbage by raps with the knuckles, waves of the hand, nods and shakes of the head, and grunts of varying and distinctive cadence, that conversation may be dispensed with practically altogether. Even the laborious "fifteen-two, fifteen-four," *et cetera,* with the illuminating "a double run of three," "a flush of four," "one for his nob," and kindred jargon, can be cut out when all the players are skilful enough to count any kind of hand mentally at a glance.

"I wish Willings was here," grumbled Sim Galt, suddenly breaking the stillness. "He knows how to play."

Galt's unhappy partner, Jim McKee, in reply to an angry query, had just confessed that he had thrown away his most valuable card, by putting it into the "crib," losing six holes by the move.

"Well, Willings isn't here, and he won't be any more," snapped Carl Steiner.

Sim Galt was irritated by the tone. He dashed his cards angrily upon the table—not forgetting to place them face downward, however—and roared:

"Look here, Carl Steiner, the reason I'm letting yer have that there No. 1 powder from the Barrington quarry ain't on account o' the money you pay. No, siree! It's—"

"Shut up!" ordered Steiner with a threatening movement.

"No, I won't shet up, an' you want to keep in yer chair when I'm a talkin'. Mind that! I'm sellin' that powder to you because I wants my reg'lar game o' cribbage. I've *got* to have cribbage, same as I must have my ham an' aigs whenever I come to Pittsburgh. Last time you had Willings here, and your girl. Both of 'em played well, an' the game was interestin'. Therefore I went back to Lookout Mountain satisfied."

"Lookout Mountain, eh?" muttered Fred. "Seems to me I've heard my father say something about that place."

"Listen!" whispered Lucille.

The row was still going on in the dining-room, with Professor Shaw and Jim McKee evidently enjoying it. They, like Fred Barrington, were in hopes that the friction would strike off a few sparks of information useful to them.

"Will you keep quiet, Sim Galt?" snarled Steiner, looking over his cards with pretended calmness, although he could not control the shaking of his hands.

"No, I won't keep quiet!" was the violent reply. "You ain't givin' me a square deal. Mr. McKee is all right in his own business of makin' steel. I ain't sayin' nothin' about that. But he ain't there when it comes to cribbage, an' I'm havin' my whole evenin' sp'iled. I only gits a game once in two weeks. When I do play crib I wants it ter bite. Understand? You could have had Willings here if you'd wanted ter. Your fight with young Barrington ain't got nothin' to do with it. We had him last time."

"Yes, and he won't come again. He says he doesn't mean to play outside of the Barrington office any more."

"Is that there the only reason he gives?"

"That's the only one."

"All right, then," rejoined Sim, with a triumphant grin. "I'll play my next game there. And the No. 1—"

"Stop!" shouted Carl Steiner, and there was terror as well as anger in his voice. "I'll have Willings here next time."

"Two weeks from to-night?"

"Two weeks from to-night," replied Steiner.

"All right! That goes!"

Sim Galt picked up his cards and scanned them for several seconds. Steiner watched him furtively, with a gaze that was hardly short of murderous. At last Sim said, in a quiet tone, as if he had never been angry:

"Mr. McKee, it's your play."

The game was resumed as if nothing had occurred to disturb the general harmony. Jim McKee had not spoken during the short and sharp passage at arms. Now that he was told to play, he did so with a curious veiled grin at the corners of his mouth. He felt as if he and the professor were not wasting their time altogether.

Fred Barrington, outside, had with difficulty restrained himself from pushing the sliding-door entirely back. He wanted a full view of the battle-ground. He was sorry the dispute had not gone a little further. He might have learned exactly under what terms Sim Galt was supplying Carl Steiner with the No. 1 powder.

One important thing he had found out, anyhow. That was that Steiner was getting the No. 1 only so long as he satisfied Sim Galt's strange passion for cribbage.

"Did you hear what your stepfather promised about Willings?" whispered Fred to Lucille when things had simmered down.

"Yes, but I don't know how he's going to keep his word. Williams is a hard man to manage. If he's made up his mind not to come, I don't believe he will."

"Then how will your stepfather satisfy Galt?"

"He'll have to find somebody else who can play as well as Willings. There must be plenty of good cribbage-players in a big city like Pittsburgh."

"Yes, I suppose there are. But—"

Another violent explosion from Sim Galt brought Fred sharply to his convenient crevice in the door. The hunter had risen from the table, his cards in one hand—and Fred estimated his height at about six feet two inches—as he pointed a long, lean finger at Jim McKee.

"It ain't no manner o' use, Mr. Steiner. I ain't a goin' ter sit here an' have my game queered by a gent as don't know how to play it, even if he *is* a millionaire's son. I ain't got a thing ag'in' Mr. McKee 'cept the way he sp'ils crib. But I want another pardner, an' I want him now. If I don't git a chancet ter play a decent game fer the rest o' the evenin', I'll see Mr. Barrington in the mornin' about the No. 1. Now, what are yer goin' ter do?"

It was pretty clear, from the expression of Carl Steiner's face, that what he would have liked to do would be to knock out Sim Galt's brains with the first weapon he could get hold of that would be heavy enough for that purpose. But he swallowed hard and replied, almost with meekness:

"I'm very sorry, Sim, but where am I to get a cribbage-player to-night? My daughter Lucille plays a good game—"

"Sure!" interrupted Sim. "She'll do."

"Yes, but she isn't at home. At least I don't think so."

Fred Barrington and Lucille had only just time to dart into the kitchen before Carl Steiner threw open the door where they had been standing. As he came toward the kitchen Lucille sauntered out to meet him. She *had* to keep him out, for Fred had not yet reached the cellar.

"Hello, Lucille! You're home, then!" blurted out Steiner. "Come here. I want you to take a hand at cribbage."

He had not seen his stepdaughter since he chased her to the incline the night before, but it suited his purpose to seem as if he had forgotten all about that lively episode. As they went along the hall together, on their way to the dining-room, Fred was planning to follow at a safe distance. He wanted to peep through his slit in the door.

But Delia O'Toole had other views. She interposed her buxom form as he was about to leave the kitchen, and, as he couldn't get by her, he stopped perforce.

"No, Misther Barrington! Yez ain't goin' to git into any more throuble in this house. Leave it to Miss Lucille to find out all yez wants t' know. Wid her an' thim two gintlemin poompin' the big man wid the hat on, he'll be afther tellin' everyt'ing —especially whin he has sech a good partner as Miss Lucille in his card-playin'."

"But, my good Delia, Lucille got me into the house to-night just so that I should hear all that was said over the cards."

"Faith, I knows that, an' be the same token I know she didn't want t' do it. Now, did she?"

"Well, no, she didn't. She insisted it wasn't necessary," admitted Fred.

"An' it wuzn't necessary ayther. On'y you young men in this counthry do be allers wantin' yer own way, 'specially whin it's the wrong wan. D'yez mind that, now?"

"But, Delia—"

"Never mind tryin' t' blather me wid yer 'Delia.' You git out th' back way, an' I'll give th' tip to yer two fr'inds to go t' yer office an' tell yez all about it afther th' card-playin' is done. Things is goin' all right, an' yez'll hav yer noomber wan powther all t' yeself av yez don't git too bothersome. Now, git out. Good night!"

Fred Barrington found himself gently pushed into the yard, with the door closed against him, before he could make any further remonstrance. He went straight to his office. Delia had promised she would send the others there when the playing was over. Even if she hadn't, it was the place they would come to naturally.

"It's ten o'clock," he muttered, when he had thrown himself into his swivel-chair to cogitate. "They will play cribbage till twelve, anyhow—perhaps one. I'll wrap myself in my big overcoat and lie on the sofa. I had very little sleep last night. So, if I drop off now it won't do me any harm. The bell is right over my head. The first tinkle will wake me."

With his warm storm-coat drawn comfortably about him, Fred stretched himself out and in two minutes was fast asleep. He lay undisturbed till the day-shift of workmen came to the factory at eight o'clock and woke him with their loud talking.

No one had rung the bell. Neither Professor Shaw nor Jim McKee had come to the office.

"Surely they can't be still playing cribbage," thought Fred, as he rolled off the sofa and pulled up the window-shades.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN.

FOR at least ten minutes Fred stood gazing through the window. The view was not inspiring. Across the narrow street towered a dingy brick wall, the back of another glass-house. To right and left, on his own side, extended the Barrington factory, with its large yard, which meant more dingy brick wall.

"Good Heaven! There's Jim McKee now!" suddenly exclaimed Fred. "But no professor."

He flung open the door, and Jim came in with a grin. He usually wore one, whether matters were going right or not. But there was a note of triumph in his voice now as he chirped:

"Morning, Fred. What are you doing over here so early?"

"Slept here," replied Fred sententiously.

"I supposed so. I called up your house and found you'd not been home. Your sister answered the telephone. When she said they had all been anxious about you, I took a chance and assured them you were all right. I said you were at your office."

"Your divination was marvelous. If you'd lived in Rome in Nero's day they'd have made you an augur. Did you tell her what time I went to bed, when I got up, and what I dreamed about?"

"Well, we had quite a pleasant little talk."

"Yes? Talking about me?" asked Fred with a quizzical smile.

"About you? Um!—er—not *all* the time," was the rather sheepish reply. "As soon as I left the telephone I rushed over here."

"Why didn't you telephone me?"

"Why, I'll tell you," returned Jim, becoming serious. "I didn't think it wise to use the phone. I wasn't absolutely sure you were here, and somebody else might have answered. While I would not say anything important over the wire, anyhow, the very fact of my calling you up after being at Steiner's house the night before might have caused remark. We don't know what spies Steiner may have in your factory."

"I thought you and the professor would come last night. That's why I stayed here."

"We couldn't. Steiner went with us to the incline. Sim Galt, too. He slept at a hotel on the other side of the river, down by the Union Station, and stuck close by the professor and me. We didn't get away from him till past two."

"I see. Did you get anything out of him?"

"Not yet. He hardly spoke all the time they were playing cribbage. I sat back and watched them. Miss Steiner seemed to satisfy him with her playing, for he never growled. That's how I knew she was all right."

"*She* didn't send me a message of any kind, I suppose?"

"No; she had no opportunity. Carl Steiner told her to go to bed as soon as the last game was over, and she went out of the room with only a general 'Good night' to everybody. What I came over to tell you principally is that Professor Shaw has made an arrangement for you and him to go on a rabbit-hunt with Sim Galt in the mountains. You are to meet them at the Union Station at half past twelve."

"But Sim Galt will be suspicious, surely, that I am going with him for something besides rabbits?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. Your name is Fred Barr. That's the name you took when you went to work for Steiner, you know, so it will be easy for you to remember that.

"The professor told Galt you were a friend of his, a traveling man, and crazy to get a shot at the rabbits. When you are up in the mountain it will be your own fault if you don't find out where he gets the No. 1."

"Well, I *am* a traveling man—or have been, so that was true enough. But, say, Jim, Professor Shaw is one of the best-natured fellows I ever came across. You say yourself he's so busy it is difficult to get him to look at anything outside of his regular work for the McKee-Jordan Company. Yet here he is giving all this time to me, examining the No. 1, playing cribbage, and now going on a rabbit hunt, all for my benefit."

"Ye-es," answered Jim McKee slowly. "But he loves tramping through the woods and over the mountains with a gun. That might not be enough to induce him to leave his laboratory just now, however. He has another incentive that forces him to go. He simply can't resist it."

"What is it?"

"Just this: Professor Shaw has made up his mind to find that No. 1 at any cost."

"I don't see why he should be so extraordinarily anxious to help me—practically a stranger to him."

"'Dinna ye fash yesel,' as Andrew Carnegie might say. Professor Shaw is not the man to act without a reason. My belief is he has a motive of his own that he is keeping to himself for the present. Let's be thankful he's on our side. So long as we get the No. 1, we needn't care what personal reason he has for finding it for us. Your gun and huntings togs are at home, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Then let us hustle right over. You'll just have time to get them and make it at the station by twelve-thirty."

Fred Barrington asked no further questions. He recognized the value of the expedition. Once up in the mountains, with nothing on their minds, ostensibly, but rabbits, it should be easy for him and the professor to trace the quarry whence Sim Galt procured the precious No. 1.

It was ten minutes before train-time when Fred entered the great, lofty waiting-room of the Union Station. He was in a hunting-suit, including cap, of corduroy, with leather leggings, and a silk handkerchief about his neck. There was little in his appearance to suggest the usually carefully dressed manager of the Barrington Glass Company. He was a woodsman now, pure and simple. He carried his breech-loader, in its leather case, in one hand and a suit-case, containing cartridges and toilet necessaries, in the other.

Sim Galt and the professor were waiting for him near the door. The former nodded grimly, without a word, and the professor slyly winked as he said "Good morning, Mr. Barr." Then they marched to the train.

Jim McKee left them at the gate. He had been invited to go, but had pleaded that he could not get away from business. The fact was that he meant to keep watch over Carl Steiner in Fred's absence, making his headquarters at the Barrington factory. He and Fred agreed that Steiner might try to play some dirty trick at any moment, especially if he learned that Fred was away.

Once on the platform, Sim Galt made straight for the smoking-car of the train that was to bear them to the nearest station to Lookout Mountain. This was Millwood, about forty-five miles from Pittsburgh. Professor Shaw and Fred were satisfied with the smoker, and they were hardly out of the gloomy, echoing train-shed before their cigars and Sim Galt's corncob pipe were contributing their share toward the blue haze that filled the car and nearly

choked the conductor when he came through for the tickets.

Millwood is a diminutive station. Its chief reason for being is that an amusement park is there, where picnics, camp-meetings, and other jollifications are frequently held in summer. Almost above it rises one of the mighty hills of the Alleghanies known as Lookout Mountain.

There are thick woods around Millwood, and they extend to the very summit of Lookout, softening its jagged ridge as woods will. The trees grow thicker as one climbs toward the clouds. People have been. lost in this mountain forest, sometimes for many hours, and even days. Hunters strange to the neighborhood do not care to venture far without a guide. Pines, oaks, elms, chestnuts, and hickories stand so close together, overreaching and mingling their branches, that the sun is shut out at noonday.

Rattlesnakes are plentiful, with a score of species of less harmful reptiles. Rabbits can always be tracked and shot in the short "open season" from October 15 to the first of December. An occasional black bear finds his way to Lookout along the blind trails from the Blue Ridge, and deer may be brought down by a quick shot once in a while. All in all, Lookout Mountain is as close to primeval nature as one could well expect within fifty miles of a roaring city of nearly a million population.

Sim Galt strode along with the air of a man who knew his way. The professor and Fred Barrington kept close on his heels. When they turned away from the narrow path by the side of the railroad and plunged into the wood, Galt uttered a low grunt of satisfaction.

He was pleased to note that his companions breasted the mountain climb as manfully as himself. This, too, despite the fact that they had their guns and suitcases. He was burdened only with his two empty carpet-bags, which he carried, rolled up, under his arm.

"Ther' won't be no shootin' ter-day," he remarked. "By the time we git ter my shack, nigh the top o' Lookout, an' have some supper, it'll be too late. But we kin go out early in the mornin'."

"That will suit us," returned the professor cheerfully. "Do you do anything else besides hunt, Mr. Galt?"

The tone of this query was innocent enough. But it seemed to stir Sim Galt's bile. He stopped short and gave Professor Shaw a scowl that was none the less evil because shadowed by the trees.

"What should I do?" he growled.

"I thought perhaps you sold something in Pittsburgh," answered the professor, with his blandest smile.

"I'm a hunter and fisherman. That's my business. When I have game to sell I take it to Latrobe or Greensburg, or Derry. 'Tain't often I kill any more than I kin eat. I save the pelts, but I don't often bother ter market the meat."

It seemed as if Sim Galt wanted this thoroughly understood, for he continued to grumble, as he looked sharply from one to the other.

"As if I had time to go sellin' rabbits in Pittsburgh! Why, it wouldn't pay my railroad fare, nor nowhere nigh it. I sh'd think you might ha' knowed that. Anyhow, it's my own business what I do. Why sh'd you think I sell anything?"

"Those bags under your arm," hinted the professor.

Sim Galt flung the carpet-bags violently to the ground.

"Say, friend, if you're goin' ter hunt with me, you'll have ter 'tend ter that an' nothin' else. I don't calc'late ter 'low no one ter pry into wot I do or don't do."

"I beg your pardon," said Professor Shaw. "I didn't mean to offend."

"You don't offend me none. I'm on'y tellin' yer. If you an' yer pardner, Mr. Barr, wants ter shoot rabbits, all right. Me an' my dog will lead yer to 'em, an' you may git as many as you kin hit. That's wot I'm here fer. But—that's all. Git that?"

"Certainly! Rabbits are what we're after," Fred assured him.

"Very well! That settles it! Come on!"

Not another word was spoken for two hours. They saved their breath for the laborious tramping. At the end of that period they were so far into the forest that the professor and Fred understood now, if never before, how useful an institution a guide was on old Lookout.

"We're nigh my place now," volunteered Sim Galt with a jerk.

"Glad to hear it," replied the professor.

They found themselves in semidarkness, walking along the rim of a dangerous-appearing hollow which, without knowing it, they had skirted on their way up through the wood. Sim Galt led them around a clump of pines and under the low-hanging

branches of an oak that had been partly leveled by an almost forgotten hurricane.

The broken limbs almost stopped a path which was well defined when they looked closely. At the end of the path was a small clearing. At the back of the open space stood a well-made log shanty.

"Say, professor," whispered Fred, "where's *Leatherstocking*, with *Killdeer*, and old *Chingachgook*, and *Uncas*, and the others? This clearing and shanty might have been stolen from Fenimore Cooper."

"Wot's that?" demanded Sim Galt, turning sharply. "Wot's stole?"

"I didn't say anything was. I only remarked that your place reminded me of a story I've read," replied Fred, with increased respect for Sim Galt's keenness of hearing.

"Humph! There ain't nothin' stole around here, I want yer ter understand. Here, Sport! Bruce, come on!"

He opened the door of the log-house as he called out these names in a pleasanter tone than he often used to human beings. The dogs came jumping out, delighted to see their master. They had no suspicion of him—not they! And they would have been ready to tear to pieces anybody who had.

Bruce was a large Scotch collie, and Sport a hound, with an unerring scent for a rabbit wherever it might hide. You wouldn't have thought Sport deserved his name from the look of him. He had sad, soulful eyes and a subdued demeanor. The long, drooping ears peculiar to his species hung floppingly down on either side of his face like thick braids of hair.

He bore so grotesque a resemblance to an old woman that Fred privately baptized him "Mrs. McGinnis" on the spot. Bruce was just a big, blundering, lovable dog, with a shrill bark. Sport considered barking a frivolous amusement, and seldom indulged therein.

"The dogs will be all right with you," said Sim Galt in a casual way. "Holy mackerel, but I'm hungry! Will you fellers help me ter build a fire? Then I'll get the frying-pan, an' when I have the meat on I'll make some coffee."

The professor and Fred had roughed it in the woods many a time before. Both possessed the true spirit of hunters. So they turned to with a will, bringing in brushwood, a pail of water from the spring, and doing whatever else there was to be done, like old-time woodsmen.

Soon there was a good fire in the cook-stove in the larger of the two rooms of the house, and Sim Galt, with his shirt-sleeves rolled up, cooked supper scientifically. Fried rabbit, bacon, eggs, coffee, and bread three or four days old made a meal that was exactly right after their long climb. When they had finished there was nothing much on the table except the thick crockery and a crust or two.

They cleared up between them, and then sat down for a smoke and to rest. There was very little conversation. Sim Galt was not a talkative man, and the other two had nothing much to say just then.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GRAY PIT.

SIM began to stir around at five o'clock in the morning. Fred knew that was the hour, because he looked at his watch. He had been awakened by the light from a coal-oil lamp which fell upon his face from the other room through the open doorway. Sim Galt was busy preparing breakfast by that time. Then the two dogs began to bark, and there seemed to be a general bustle all around.

Men who love hunting generally get at it early in the day. By six o'clock Sim Galt, Professor Shaw, and Fred Barrington had washed, put away a good breakfast, and, gun in hand, were tramping under the trees, eager for a shot at something. Sport was with them—being by long odds the best rabbit-hunter in the party—but Bruce, the collie, remained behind to guard the house.

"I allers let him do it," remarked Sim. "But there ain't likely ter be no one snoopin' around. If there was, they wouldn't touch nothin'. It ain't customary. That's one o' the good p'ints about livin' on top of a mountain in the woods."

The tall hunter's hard face cracked into a dry smile. Seeing that he meant to be jocose, Fred and the professor grinned in sympathy.

Sport trotted in front, regardless of everything but the business in hand. With the alert nature of his kind, he had at once entered into the spirit of the chase, and was only anxious to turn up something for his master to shoot at. His flapping ears rose now and then, and his nose pointed well forward. He felt sure he would scent a rabbit before long.

But there seemed not to be much game in the immediate vicinity of the log shanty. They had forced their way through the almost impenetrable forest at least two miles before Sport gave the signal. Then, without warning, he slipped away at full speed, his body close to the ground, his nose pointed straight to his quarry.

The three hunters brought their guns into position. There were three deafening reports, and Sim Galt gave vent to a satisfied "Got 'em all, by ginger!"

Each man picked up his own rabbit and placed it in a capacious pocket of his hunting-coat. Then Sport went after some more. In the course of a few hours they bagged three or four rabbits apiece, which is a pretty good average, as rabbit-shooting goes.

Suddenly the dog darted away, so full of strained excitement that both the professor and Fred felt sure there must be something better than rabbits to claim his attention. Perhaps Sim Galt thought so, too. At all events, he followed Sport at a swift pace without a word to his companions. In a few moments he and the hound were both out of sight.

With the fever of the chase in his blood, Sim Galt seemed to have forgotten everything else but keeping as near to his dog as he could. When he had been gone for an hour the professor and Fred decided that they must look out for themselves.

"It's a queer proceeding," remarked Professor Shaw. "He isn't shooting anything, either, or we should hear his gun. We'll follow him. And bear in mind that there are other things of value on Lookout Mountain besides rabbits," he aded significantly.

"I'm not likely to forget that," replied Fred. "Don't you think his going away like this may have some bearing on No. 1?"

"Shouldn't wonder," was the professor's sententious response.

Both of these young men had had experience in woodcraft, which made it easy for them to pick up Sim's trail. Broken twigs, footprints in mud, wet moss pressed down here and there, and an occasional felled limb of a tree kicked away from the spot where it had left its imprint in the boggy ground told them where their man had passed.

They tramped along valiantly, but they had not gone very far when they lost the trail at the edge of a rocky ravine. The indications were that Sim Galt had gone down into this hollow, but his pursuers were never able to find that he came out again.

There was no reason to suppose that he was trying to shake them off. But he had done it, purposely or otherwise. When they had finished their examination of this hollow, a proceeding which took considerable time, the professor shrugged his shoulders and remarked quietly:

"Well, he's gone; and, so far as I am concerned, we are lost."

"Same here," declared Fred. "I don't know where we are. Let's have some lunch."

They had brought crackers and cheese in their pockets from the shanty, and they found a spring handy. So they sat down and enjoyed their meal, with a smoke afterward. The sun was sinking over Pittsburgh way when they got up, stretched themselves, and walked in a westerly direction. Fred opined that that course would be more likely than any other to bring them to the shanty.

"Look out, professor," he whispered suddenly as he pulled his companion behind the great trunk of a century-old oak.

"I see," was the soft response.

It was the abrupt appearance of Sim Galt that had startled them. He was picking his way among the trees a few hundred yards off. In his hand was one of the gay-colored, old-fashioned carpet-bags he had taken to Pittsburgh full and brought back empty.

"That bag means he's going after No. 1, professor."

"I hope so."

"By Jove! What do you think of that?"

Fred pointed excitedly to a small opening in the woods from which Sim had just emerged. The professor looked and grinned as he replied:

"Why, that's the log shanty. There's that slanting oak-tree and the bushes where the dog lay and howled. We have doubled on our tracks and come back without knowing it. But let's see what Galt is after."

Even as he spoke, the tall hunter appeared to sink into the earth almost as if he had gone down a stage-trap.

"Good Heavens! Has he tumbled into the ravine?" exclaimed Fred.

Without replying, the professor stole silently forward, taking advantage of each tree in his path to cover his approach. Fred Barrington kept level with him. Like the professor, he moved among the trees with the caution and noiselessness of an Indian on the war-path.

They drew close to the edge of the hollow which lay not far from the hut, and, pushing aside the bushes, looked down. Sim had taken a roundabout course, and, having worked his way half-way down the great rocky bowl, was standing still. He glanced about, as if to make sure he was unobserved. Then he darted into a rift in the wall and vanished.

It was half an hour before he came out. The carpet-bag he had carried in with him was bulging full. Throwing the bag upon his shoulder, he climbed swiftly along the sloping path, zigzagging this way and that, until he was lost in the confusion of shrubbery at the top of the hollow.

"Lie low, professor!" warned Fred.

"All right."

The two crouched beneath the underbrush. Hardly were they concealed when Sim, carrying his carpet-bag, passed close by them and entered the shanty. As he closed the door they heard the dogs barking a noisy welcome.

"If they hadn't been shut up I guess they'd have given us away," observed Professor Shaw.

"Let's go down," suggested Fred briefly.

"I'm with you," was the equally laconic response.

Cautiously they worked their way out of the shrubbery, and found the well-beaten path down into the ravine. Sim Galt did not come out. They were ready to dodge out of sight in case he did appear.

"Here's the place, professor. He went through the side just about here. And, by George, here's the hole in the wall."

The professor nodded, and in another moment was swallowed up in the same cleft through which Sim Galt had gone with his bag. It was very dark. He looked over his shoulder and asked:

"Are you there, Barrington?"

"I certainly am. Where the dickens are we going?"

"We'll find out if we walk on, I guess," replied the professor.

"Wait while I strike a match."

The light revealed that they were in a cavern of what seemed to be ordinary sandstone. There was nothing in sight even distantly suggestive of No. 1.

"He doesn't get that powder here, that's certain," remarked the professor. "We shall have to go farther."

"Right you are, professor!" returned Fred cheerily. "Drive on!"

The match went out, and Fred did not trouble to light another. In fifteen minutes or more they struck daylight again, but not much of it. They were a long way below the general surface of the mountain. The place in which they stood was a pit, not more than a dozen feet in diameter, and some fifty feet deep.

The professor looked around him with a sweeping glance, and then gave uttterance to an ejaculation of satisfaction.

"I believe we've got it, Barrington!" he said, as he stooped and picked up a handful of powder from the ground.

The walls and bottom of the pit were all of gray clay in some places, and dust of the same hue in others. Wherever Fred and the professor looked they saw a seemingly inexhaustible supply of either clay or powder, *and every atom of it was the precious No. 1—the secret ingredient that made the Barrington chemical glass the finest in the world!*

"Well, professor, it's here," chuckled Fred Barrington. "The next thing will be to talk to Sim Galt. This is our quarry, and I'll make him explain why he has been selling the No. 1 powder to Carl Steiner. If he's insolent, I may clap him in jail."

"Have you any proof that your father owned this quarry?" asked the professor dryly.

"Why—er—I presume so. I've never looked it up, but it has always been understood that No. 1 was the exclusive property of the Barrington Company. It couldn't be that if we didn't own this pit, could it?"

"Well, you see—"

Professor Shaw had got so far, when he stopped and stared hard at something over Fred Barrington's shoulder. Instinctively Fred swung around to see what it was.

Little wonder that he uttered an incoherent interjection of astonishment and clenched his fist. For he found himself looking into the scowling face of a man he had supposed to be fifty miles away—Carl Steiner!

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUT OF THE SMOKE OF BATTLE.

"WHY, where did you come from?"

The query burst from Barrington's lips almost without volition. It was a natural ebullition of surprise that he could not have controlled if he would.

"I've come from Pittsburgh. I'm here to protect my rights."

Carl Steiner's grating voice was even harsher than usual, if that were possible.

"You have no rights here that I know anything about," rejoined Fred. "This property belongs to me — the Barrington Company."

A sinister chuckle that was meant for a laugh of derision was followed by a black frown as Steiner said:

"I'm sorry you've made such a bad mistake. The trouble with you is that you don't know what you're talking about. I was your father's superintendent for twenty-five years, and I can tell you that this is not his quarry at all. It belongs to an other man."

"Who?"

"That's my affair. Perhaps *I'm* that other man. Anyhow the powder found here is all mine, and I'm using it in my own factory. You know that. You broke into my house and stole some, as I learned afterward."

"Oh, you learned that, did you?"

"Yes, and it's one of the things you'll have to answer to me for yet. I'm only sorry I didn't thrash you as you deserved when you came to me pretending you were a glass-blower."

"I *am* a glass-blower," Fred flashed back. "You couldn't find any fault with my work, could you? I was there to find out how you were making our No. 1."

There was a look on Carl Steiner's face which was not pleasant to see, as he retorted:

"I was making my own glass, with my own material. If you can find another deposit of this gray clay anywhere in America I advise you to dry and pulverize it for your factory. Until you do find it, you'd better keep away from this place. I know you will hate to do that, for I never heard of any other quarry of what you call No. 1 powder in this country."

"There isn't any other," declared Professor Shaw, in parenthesis.

"When you say this is your quarry you talk nonsense," affirmed Fred. "Sim Galt has been supplying you with the powder. I happen to know that."

"*How* do you know?"

"Never mind how. If I catch you using any more of the Barrington No. 1 powder I'll let the law attend to your case."

"Why, you—"

Carl Steiner actually choked with rage. His fury was none the less when he recognized Professor Shaw and realized that the cribbage game at his house had in some way led to Barrington finding his way to the secret of No. 1. He advanced a step, as if to attack Fred, who was quite ready for hostilities.

But the advent of another personage prevented a collision. Sim Galt stalked into the gray pit through the crack in the wall and glared at each of the three men in turn.

Steiner was the only one who showed embarrassment. Fred and Professor Shaw seemed rather amused than disturbed. There was silence for some seconds. Then, in a tone of sarcasm, Galt said:

"Well, I'd like ter know wot all this here means. Mr. Steiner, when did *you* come to Lookout?"

"Oh, hello, Sim!" exclaimed Steiner, with affected heartiness. "Is that you? I was looking for you. I've just got another big order for chemical glass. It came in this morning's mail. I've got to have fifty pounds more powder right away, so I jumped on a train and came after it."

He was trying to carry it off in a breezy, careless way, but his faltering tones and trembling lip betrayed his agitation. He felt that he had been caught between two fires.

"Why didn't yer come to my house, then?" demanded Sim.

"I—I—didn't know where it was."

"You lie!" thundered the gigantic woodsman. "You did come around the house. I saw you. Then you followed me to the hollow. You didn't think I saw you, but I did, and I knowed wot you was after. I give yer the slip, but you found yer way to the quarry anyhow."

"He followed us," said the professor calmly. "I guess that's the explanation. Eh, Barrington?"

"Well, Steiner, you've found the place, but it isn't goin' to help yer," went on Sim Galt, disregarding the professor. "I wouldn't let you have another ounce of this powder to save yer whole carcass. It all goes to the Barrington Company, an' I'm blamed sorry I ever let you git me away even for a day. *Git out!*"

As he roared these last two words he raised his great fist menacingly. But Carl Steiner did not move. He was so enraged as he saw his hopes of a fortune slipping from him that he lost sight of the great

physical odds in Sim Galt's favor. He would have fought two such giants as the big hunter just then.

It has been remarked already that whatever Carl Steiner's failings, cowardice was not one of them. So he replied stoutly:

"I won't get out till I know who owns this quarry."

"Oh, yer won't?"

With a bellow Sim hurled himself upon the defiant Steiner. His obvious purpose was to force him through the opening in the wall, but the smaller man had braced himself so firmly that, instead of his being propelled toward the exit, he was only slightly shaken by the onslaught.

"Oh, I guess not!" he sneered.

Then he grappled desperately and sank his chin into Sim Galt's chest. His two large hands, sinewy and hard from long labor in the glass-house, closed around the hunter's arms just above the elbows, rendering Sim's immense strength temporarily of no avail.

At the first note of combat Fred Barrington and Professor Shaw rushed forward together. They were obeying the instinct of savagery inherited from prehistoric ancestors, which impels most men who witness a fight to try to get into it forthwith. But the impulse was only momentary. As quickly as they had advanced they drew back to let the contestants fight it out in their own way.

"It's just man to man," observed Fred, with a shrug.

"I wouldn't know which side to take, anyhow," declared the professor, smiling.

Carl Steiner's sturdy attitude caused the duel to be a draw for a few seconds. Then Sim Galt slowly forced the other's head backward with his chest, until it seemed as if the neck would crack.

"Well Steiner, have you had enough?" he demanded.

The reply was a howl of vindictiveness, as the old man wriggled away with a rapid twist and jumped on the hunter's back. Like lightning one steel-sinewed arm slipped around Galt's neck, the forearm pressed viciously against his throat. It was that most effective mode of attack which the French call "*La garrotte.*" Continued for a very short time, it will reduce to helplessness any man, no matter how strong and full of fight he may be at the beginning.

But it was not permitted to last in this instance. Muscular and active as Steiner had shown himself to be, he was no match for the tall, wiry hunter. By main strength the man of the mountain pulled his antagonist around to the front of him. This relieved the pressure on his throat immediately. Then, with a mighty effort, he hurled Steiner flat upon his back at the other side of the pit.

Stunned by the heavy fall, Steiner lay still while one might count ten. As he came to himself he turned his bloodshot eyes in the direction of the hunter, and snarled like a wild beast. He was insane, inarticulate, and blind with fury. He could see only red!

He rose to his feet slowly, muttering to himself. Then, with hands extended and fingers hooked like talons, he lurched toward Sim Galt. It looked as if he meant literally to *tear* the life out of his foe.

"Come on, you—you *rat!*" invited Galt, a scornful grin seaming his leathery face. "Come on an' I'll crumple yer up in my fingers."

The eyes of the maddened glass-maker rolled in their sockets, seeking a weapon. Instinct, rather than reason, told him he could not hope to vanquish with his bare hands the big man before him. He must have something else—some murderous implement which, with his strength behind it, would kill!

Several short cudgels, like odd bits of iron gaspipe, lay on the ground at one side. With a yell of ferocious satisfaction, such as might come from a hungry bulldog, he pounced upon one of them, and returned, foaming, to the attack. As he flourished his strange weapon, like a fencer seeking an opening, Sim Galt shouted in terror:

"Put that down, ye crazy fool! *It's a stick of dynamite!*"

"Just what I thought it was," ejaculated Propessor Shaw. "Come on, Barrington!"

The professor was a big man, but his agility would have done credit to any lightweight athlete in the world as he bolted into the rift in the wall. Fred Barrington was not far behind. He knew that an explosion of dynamite in the narrow confines of the pit would loosen about everything in the neighborhood.

Sim Galt would have run, too, only that Steiner was between him and the only exit. The glass-maker seemed not to have heard Sim's warning. Full of the lust for killing, he heeded nothing that might stand in his way.

He was familiar with the appearance of dynamite. Indeed, he knew that it was used in the quarry to loosen the rock beneath which in some places the clay was imprisoned, and should have known what it was before he touched it.

If Carl Steiner had been in his normal senses, he would no more have picked up a stick of dynamite and handled it in this careless fashion than would Sim Galt himself. As it was, perhaps he did not recognize it. He was blind to all else except his desperate eagerness for vengeance, so why not to this? Certainly he did not care what it was at that moment.

It did not take Sim Galt long to see that the wild-eyed, snarling man, waving this bolt of death in his face, was not mentally responsible. There was only one thing to be done. That was to make the attack himself, instead of waiting for Steiner to let fly with his deadly stick.

With a shout, in the hope of diverting the attention of his foe for an instant, Sim leaped forward and seized the dynamite. With one wrench he had it away. Then, exerting all his enormous strength, he lifted the maniac into the air with his other hand, and, for the second time, flung him to the ground like a bundle of old rags.

Steiner was still struggling to get up as Sim Galt, holding the dynamite carefully in one hand, rushed through the dark passage from the pit to safety, along with Professor Shaw and Fred Barrington.

They had just reached the outer opening of the dark corridor, when, amid a crashing roar, as if a thunder storm were forcing its way up from the bowels of the earth, all three were hurled flat upon their faces. Noise, confusion and flying stones were all about them. The very mountain seemed to rock. Great fissures that had not been there before, appeared in the massive walls of the ravine. Then—silence!

"He must have found some more dynamite!" observed Sim Galt coolly. "Neither of you fellows hurt?"

"I'm not," announced the professor.

"Never touched me," added Fred.

"Well, I'm glad this here stick didn't go off in my hand," grunted Sim, as he carefully laid his length of dynamite on the ground, close against the wall. "That would have cooked *our* goose all right. Let's go an' see what's happened, anyhow. I guess the passage is clear. The explosion didn't p'int this way."

With the hunter in the lead, the three made their way back to the gray pit. The first change they noted was an enormous hole in the wall on the opposite side. The dynamite had aimed that way.

"Where's Carl Steiner?" breathed Fred Barrington, in awe-stricken accents.

Sim Galt shrugged his shoulders. It was Professor Shaw who replied:

"You might perhaps find traces of him somewhere on the mountain. But they must be so widely scattered, and in such small fragments, that it is extremely doubtful. When a high explosive lets go in a confined space its force is almost incalculable."

"Steiner should have known better than to throw down a stick of dynamite at any time, it seems to me," said Fred. "But particularly in a place like this, where he couldn't possibly get away. I wonder why he did it?"

But that was never known. The general theory was that he hastily picked up another stick of the explosive from the little pile and hurled it in the direction taken by Sim Galt without realizing what he was doing, but merely to satisfy his insane fury. There was no other reasonable explanation that could be made, so this one was accepted by everybody.

"Well, you git the No. 1, Mr. Barrington," remarked Sim, as he picked up a little of the powder from the ground and looked at it. "This here quarry does belong to you. I have a working interest in it that your father gave me. That's how I came to let Carl Steiner have some of the powder. He offered me fifteen dollars for each bag of it I took down to Pittsburgh. Your father used to pay me ten. Not that I would have done it for Steiner if he hadn't made me believe I didn't owe nothin' to the Barrington Company after the old man died. He'd make a man believe anything."

"I can well understand that," remarked the professor. "There's one thing I want to say, Barrington. I have always known that a certain rare mineral would be found wherever there was a deposit of what you call No. 1 powder. When we came into this pit a while ago I saw traces of it. It was the hope of finding this mineral that made me more anxious to help you find the quarry than I might otherwise have been. We are all selfish. We shouldn't be human otherwise."

"You're not selfish, professor. I'm only

too glad if you've found anything valuable to you in this quarry."

"It will be valuable to you, too, Barrington. It's stuff that will command an enormous price per ounce. There's only a little of it here or anywhere, and it will cost something to extract it. We'll talk about it later. It is going to add considerably to your annual income, I can promise you that. Don't talk anything more about it just now. You are upset and so am I."

"Poor Steiner!" murmured Fred, as he turned away with his companions.

He could not forget that Carl Steiner had been a trusted member of his father's working staff for many years. Even his treachery at the last could not alter the fact that he and the original head of the Barrington Company had been friends, as well as employer and employed, throughout the period of a long generation.

Fred found afterward that the deed establishing his father's right to the No. 1 quarry was on file at the Westmoreland County Courthouse in Greensburg. It merely referred to fifty acres of ground on Lookout Mountain and vicinity, containing nothing that would give a clue to the valuable deposit of No. 1.

Barrington Senior had stumbled over it accidentally one day when hunting. With his usual astuteness, he had said nothing, but had purchased it at a small price from a man who was only too willing to sell, knowing nothing of the importance of the gray clay in the flint-glass industry. Then Barrington had engaged Sim Galt to attend to it, and proceeded to make a fortune. Unfortunate speculations outside of his legitimate business had brought his family to comparative poverty when he died.

"I suppose that formula my father had sealed up would have told me something about the quarry," thought Fred, as he turned over the musty records in the county clerk's office in Greensburg. "I wonder whether I ever *shall* find it."

The Barrington Company are making No. 1 glass and have a larger trade than ever. Lucille Steiner inherited a goodly sum of money and considerable property through the death of her stepfather. But she is employed as confidential bookkeeper at the Barrington glass-house, notwithstanding her wealth. It is said that she will continue to be connected with the Barrington concern indefinitely under a contract that will be ratified in Trinity Church, with a clergyman, white ribbon, and at least two wedding marches.

Jim McKee is trying to persuade Gertrude Barrington to make a double ceremony of it, but the young lady has not consented yet. Fred Barrington says she will, and brothers *sometimes* know what their sisters will do in such matters.

A week after the explosion in the pit on Lookout Mountain there was a quiet cribbage party in the private office of the Barrington Company. The players were Fred, Sim Galt, Lucille Steiner, and Willings. It was at the request of Sim Galt that they were playing. He said he had always been used to it in the time of the elder Barrington every time he came to Pittsburgh, and he hoped the son would allow the game to continue. Fred had yielded good-naturedly, although he felt, as he always had, that the thing was decidedly unbusinesslike.

"By the way, Willings," remarked Fred, as the silent foreman was dealing in his usual ghostly fashion. "I don't suppose you know anything about that sealed formula of No. 1, that my father always used to keep in a safe place, do you?"

Willings looked closely at the five cards he had just dealt Lucille.

"I didn't give you six, by mistake, did I, Miss Steiner?" he asked.

"No. I have only five."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I thought an extra one slipped out of my hand," said Willings. Then, turning toward Fred, he added: "Yes, Mr. Barrington, I have that formula. It's in my desk at home."

Fred Barrington jumped up, overturning his chair in his hurry and agitation.

"Do you mean to say you have had that paper all the while—the thing I have turned this office upside down trying to find?"

"Yes, Mr. Barrington, I have it. I've always had it since your father told me to take care of it, because he said no one would think of it being in my house."

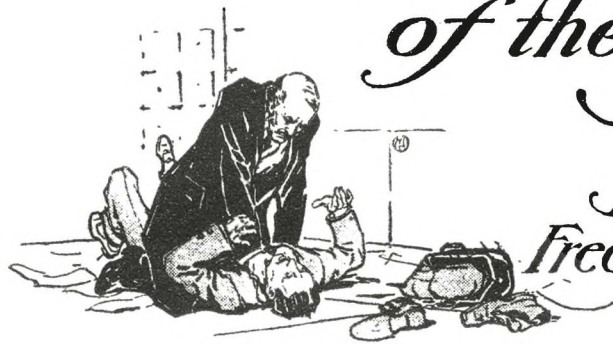
Fred leaned on the table and gasped, as he stared wild-eyed at his self-possessed foreman. At last he managed to stammer:

"Then, why the deuce didn't you tell me?"

"You never asked me," replied Willings, composedly, as he scanned his cards and threw one into the crib.

THE END.

From Both Sides of the Bars



By Fred V. Greene Jr.

BURROWS'S brow knitted into furrows particularly deep, and again he checked over the entries carefully, only to arrive at the same conclusion—something was radically wrong, and it was his duty to report the discrepancy to one of the bank's officials. So he entered the cashier's private office with the confidence which marked all his actions.

He had been in the employ of the First National Bank of Greendale for only three months, but in that brief period, through his desire to learn all he could in the shortest possible time, he had aroused the animosity of his superiors by what they termed his "inquisitiveness." With only the title of junior clerk, he was assistant to all who called upon him, and already he had helped out in every branch of the institution. And when there was nothing specific to which he could devote his attention, he occupied his time by delving into the methods and inside workings of the bank itself.

It seemed strange to him that his eagerness to learn did not bring forth the approval of those over him. But the fact that he had been called to task on more than one occasion did not enter his mind as he now stood beside the cashier's desk, awaiting that rather crusty individual's attention.

"Well?" Clayton queried gruffly, and he glanced up with a gesture of impatience.

But Burrows's self-possession never failed him—he looked the other squarely in the eyes as he began.

"Mr. Clayton, I have just found out that there appears to be some irregular entries in one of the books, and feeling it my duty—"

"Confound it!" the cashier interrupted hotly, "why do you come to me with such a fool statement? Why—"

"Because Mr. Reynolds is out at lunch."

Reynolds was the head bookkeeper, and it was to him that Burrows was supposed to report.

Clayton swung about in his chair angrily, then a look of contempt swept over his features.

"Look here! Don't you know that a statement like that might do the bank irreparable harm, particularly as it is groundless? Haven't you any sense at all? And besides, what right have you to be nosing around again, after I told you so plainly that you are to do only what work is given you?"

"But the securities on hand don't check up—"

"Don't say a thing like that!" Clayton cried, and his face turned a deep purple. "Have you taken them out of the vault?"

"Yes, Mr. Clayton, and—"

"Put them back instantly!" the cashier ordered in no mild tone. "I ought to discharge you!"

Then his voice softened a trifle as he added, "but I'll give you another chance, providing you never mention to a soul what you've just told me. Don't you realize that a statement like that reflects on Mr. Stanton and myself?"

This put a new light on the matter, and

Burrows had no more desire to accuse the president of the bank than he had the cashier.

"And don't you know," Clayton continued before the other could speak, "that if you were to hint of this to an outsider, and he should spread the report, it might precipitate a run?"

"Yes, I realize that, Mr. Clayton," Burrows admitted, "and I certainly would not mention it outside of the bank."

"Nor in it, either," the cashier insisted. "If there is—well, crooked work going on, and the one who is doing it learns that his discrepancies have been discovered, he might decamp before we could get the proper evidence. So you can readily see the advisability of keeping the matter just between ourselves."

"I understand all that, but—"

"And in the mean time I'll personally go over the books." Then Clayton's tone suddenly became severe again, and he added: "But let me warn you, Burrows, that hereafter you are to keep entirely within your own province."

The subordinate bowed his acknowledgment of the order and withdrew. But after he had returned to his desk he began to revolve the entire matter in his mind. That something was radically wrong he was fully convinced, and he wondered who the guilty party could be. Then he straightened up suddenly, and his lips set themselves in grim determination.

It must be Clayton!

The more Burrows reasoned the matter the more fully convinced he became that he had arrived at the correct assumption. This fact explained to him why the cashier had been so angry at his discovery, and also why his rage had so suddenly disappeared, leaving in its stead an almost patronizing air.

But how should he proceed? Burrows asked himself.

In the first place, he could not swear that his discovery was absolutely conclusive. According to the books, as checked against the securities on hand, a wide discrepancy existed, but this might be explained by some other records of which he did not know. Suppose he were to bring the matter before the directors' meeting that afternoon, and it should turn out he was in error? The step would cost him his position.

As Burrows was revolving these thoughts in his mind the sound of a buzzer summoned him to Clayton's office. He responded to the call with alacrity.

"Er—you've said nothing about what you told me, have you?" the cashier queried, and Burrows was certain that beneath the off-hand manner which, obviously forced, there was real anxiety.

He eyed the cashier keenly, and was now certain that crooked work was going on in the institution. This knowledge gave him a feeling of superiority—he felt that he was master of the situation.

"No, I haven't," he replied slowly, "but I feel that I'll not be doing my duty if I don't."

Clayton sprang from his chair in a rage.

"What do you mean by speaking that way?" he demanded.

"Just what I say," Burrows maintained coolly. "I've told you of what I'm certain is afoot, and if you do not see fit to go into the matter I'll be forced to go over you. I shall see Mr. Stanton, and—"

The cashier's anger faded as suddenly as it had appeared, and he laid a hand gently upon the other's shoulder.

"Burrows, don't make a fool of yourself, if you value your position here. I realize the feeling you have regarding the matter, but take the advice of one much older and more experienced than yourself. Don't do anything rash or hasty, because—"

At this juncture Mr. Stanton, the president, hurried into the office, and, as usual, his right hand gripped the little black satchel he always carried.

"Clayton, aren't you coming into the meeting?" he queried.

The cashier glanced toward the clock.

"Why, I had no idea it was one-thirty," he replied. "I'll be there right away."

The president hastily left the room, and Clayton turned to Burrows again.

"I'll see you after the meeting," he said, and the young man, whose head had already swelled with the knowledge that he had obtained the cashier's secret, bowed slightly and returned to his own desk.

Already he saw a bright future before him. What he had unearthed ought to prove of great value to the bank, and its officers should reward him accordingly, the more so because it had slipped the attention of every other employee.

For some moments Burrows allowed himself to be carried away with these day dreams, then he suddenly brought himself up with a jerk, and unable to curb his curi-

osity longer, again went to the vault, deciding to go over once more the entries of the securities on hand.

But as he reached the threshold of the large steel room he stopped abruptly, then leaned forward eagerly, his eyes riveted to a spot in the center of the floor.

There it was, plainly revealed by the narrow shaft of sunlight which came through the little barred window, high up in the wall. At first it had seemed only a broken arc of a circle, but as his eyes grew accustomed to the semidarkness, he plainly made out the entire ring, in a few parts of which the minutest holes appeared.

Burrows was not slow or dull of comprehension. As a matter of fact, he was exactly the opposite, and he immediately saw, or thought he did, the meaning of the whole thing.

"It's a tunnel!" he exclaimed aloud. "Some one has dug his way to a spot beneath this vault, and that circle is where they've drilled for an opening into it. And just how soon—"

He staggered back a step, as he realized that Clayton must be the one who had dug the subterranean passage, in order to steal what securities there were in the vault, and in this way cover up his theft of those already taken.

When Burrows reached this conclusion he fell upon his knees to make a closer examination. Then, satisfied, he hurried to the room where the directors were in earnest discussion. And as he entered they all turned questioningly toward him.

"Gentlemen," he began, and his voice rang clear and confident, "I trust you will pardon my intrusion, but I have come here to give you the particulars of a matter—"

"Burrows, you shouldn't come in here," Clayton interrupted.

"Pardon me, Mr. Clayton, but I have good reasons for coming, and I think these gentlemen will all agree with me when I tell them the vault of this bank is very apt to be found cleaned out any night. In fact—"

"What's this you're saying?" the president broke in excitedly.

The directors stared at Burrows with varying expressions on their faces—some leaned forward keenly, as if to better catch every word he uttered, while others lolled back in their chairs, their attitude showing that they considered his statement as one emanating from a mind slightly disordered.

But Clayton's expression seemed to be one of mute appeal.

"What does he mean, Clayton?" Mr. Stanton queried, and the president turned to the cashier. "Do you know?"

"No, he doesn't," Burrows stated before Clayton could reply. "No one knows of it except myself, and I just learned of it a moment ago. The floor of the vault has been pierced from underneath, and from what I can make out, a hole large enough to admit a man has been drilled in the floor."

"What are you talking about?" one of the directors queried scornfully. "If they've drilled a hole that size—"

"You don't understand me," Burrows went on. "They've drilled in a circle large enough to admit a man, I should have said. In two or three places their drilling has just come through, leaving the tiniest holes. But as the sun struck the spot at a certain angle, I could plainly see where the entire circle has been bored from beneath. If you doubt my word, I can quickly prove it to you."

A brief but hurried consultation took place, and this in turn was followed by the president, the cashier and Bradshaw, one of the directors, going to the vault, leaving Burrows in the board-room to await their return.

During this interval, many questions were put to him, and although some of them were asked in a tone of suspicion, he apparently gave no heed to this, and feeling that he had placed the bank under great obligation to him by his discovery, made every effort to enlarge upon the importance of it.

Presently, the three men reentered the room, all very visibly excited. They closed and locked the door after them.

"He's right!" Bradshaw burst out. "It's there, just as he says! We all saw it!"

His words, and the manner of Clayton and Stanton, now fully aroused the other directors, and the cashier went on to explain all that they had seen.

All the time he was speaking, Burrows watched him keenly, and felt that the man was avoiding his eyes, while he marveled at his coolness.

"But where can the tunnel start?" one of the men asked.

"That's a question to which none of us can reply at present," the cashier contended. "And for that matter, it may prove to be a very difficult one to answer."

In the discussion which followed, Burrows was quite forgotten. But he had no objection to this—it gave him every second to watch Clayton closely, and he never removed his eyes from him, as the debate on how to trap the tunnel-digger progressed.

The cashier, apparently, was as anxious as any one to apprehend the criminal, and his suggestion that guards be placed in the vault every night, in the hope that the man would drill his way through soon, met with instant favor.

Then he turned to Burrows.

"Burrows," he said, no one but the people in this room and the man who is trying to break into the vault, know of what has taken place. And no one else *will* know if none of us mention it. We all realize the gravity of any news which might tend to alarm our depositors, so for that reason alone not a word of this whole affair must leak out. But another reason is that we want to catch the crook. Of course, if a hint should reach him that his work has been discovered, he'll race off like a frightened jack-rabbit. Do you understand me thoroughly?"

"Yes," was Burrows's rather curt reply.

"Very well, but if one word of this whole matter gets to the outside, we'll know that some one here has blabbed. And in order that we won't have to take any one else into our confidence, I'll suggest that two of us each night do the watching. From the way the thief has drilled the floor, it looks to me as if everything were in readiness for immediate action—possibly to-night."

"I think that a good plan," the president spoke up. "I'll start the thing by going on duty to-night with any one who'll help me out."

"I will," Burrows spoke up quickly.

But this did not meet with the approval of Clayton, who put up some argument, contending that a more mature man should be deputized.

Burrows permitted him to finish, then turned to him.

"Mr. Clayton," he said, "is there any special reason why you should desire that I do not guard the vault?"

The words were spoken in such a significant tone that the others in the room glanced from the speaker to the cashier.

"Certainly not!" replied Clayton. "And as far as I am concerned, you may watch every night till the man is caught. So if the rest agree—"

"If he wants to stand guard, why not let him?" one of the men interrupted.

Thus it was arranged without further comment that Burrows was to keep the president company that night.

"And to guard against any possible chance of being detected—you may rest assured the tunnel-digger has his eyes upon every move we make—I don't think it would be advisable for those who watch to go out for any supper. They might be seen coming back—"

"But I've got to eat," the president interrupted.

"Along about four o'clock every afternoon we'll send Burrows out for a supply of sandwiches and coffee. He can bring them back, and every one will leave the bank at their usual time, and all lights put out. But before the watchman comes on duty, the two men must be safe in the vault for the night."

This plan met with the instant favor of the men, although Burrows noted that Mr. Stanton did not apparently relish the idea of his self-imposed imprisonment, or the sandwich supper on which he was to subsist.

The meeting broke up with the understanding that the directors would gather again the next morning at nine o'clock, and Burrows returned to his desk. Here he was plied with questions, and his vague replies only tended to arouse the more the curiosity of his fellow workers.

But he kept his own counsel, and went about his work thoughtfully. He had much on his mind—more of a problem filled it than it had ever held before—and he felt that he should take some definite action in the matter. Before he could decide on what, he was summoned to the cashier's office.

"Burrows," Mr. Clayton began, "you made a statement here a short while ago, that, if true, involves most seriously some one in the bank. And as you will be in the vault all night, I wish you'd go over the books and securities in an effort to verify your suspicions. But be careful not to arouse Mr. Stanton's distrust, and let me know in the morning what you find out."

Burrows stared at him in blank amazement. The very fact that this man, whom he had already convinced himself was a crook, was willing to have his defalcations unearthed, seemed incomprehensible.

"Will you do this?" Clayton queried.

"Will you be here at nine?" Burrows asked suspiciously.

A new thought had entered his mind—that the cashier was only suggesting this to throw him off the scent, and that in the space of time which would intervene before they met the next morning, he would skip the town.

"Of course I will," was the reply. "Why wouldn't I?"

Burrows had to do some thinking, and do it quickly. Of course, there was a vague fear that he might be wrong with regard to the cashier, and if he reported the matter now, and his suspicions were proved to be without foundation, he would lose much of the prestige he had gained by the discovery of the pierced floor. And in addition to this, the fact that Mr. Stanton would be there with him and could explain exactly how to check up the entries, would either verify or refute his conjectures.

Then again, even if Clayton did disappear in the night, he had only one chance in a hundred to get away for any length of time. His ultimate capture would be almost certain, and with only a twelve hours' start, it gave him slight advantage.

"Oh, no reason whatever," Burrows said slowly, "and I see the logic of your advice. I'll not let Mr. Stanton know what I'm up to, but I'll make certain of my statements before morning. Then I'll see you."

"Yes, do that," the cashier told him, and some time later Burrows went out to obtain the supply of sandwiches. Then, when the closing hour arrived, one by one the employees left the building. To the last one Burrows explained that as Mr. Stanton had not gone, he would have to stay till he did. Then he reported at the president's office.

The little black satchel which the old gentleman had carried constantly for some time stood upon his desk, and Mr. Stanton gave a start as Burrows entered the room.

"Oh—you—you frightened me," he stammered. "This whole thing has me terribly worked up."

"There's nothing to fear," Burrows assured him. "We'll have the drop on the fellow. We're ready for him."

"Yes—of course," Mr. Stanton agreed, and sank back in his chair with a sigh of relief. "You can go into the vault now; I'll be there in a few moments."

Burrows did as directed, but hardly dared to take out the books he wished to investigate. As he had planned, he would wait till after the president had wearied of his watch—he didn't think that would take very long—and then he would suggest that he take a nap, making him as comfortable as he could. The elderly gentleman he knew to be one who retired early, and although his impromptu bed would not be nearly as comfortable as the one he occupied every night, natural fatigue would cause him to sleep.

Then Burrows determined to start in upon his investigation.

Presently Mr. Stanton entered the room, and the other noted with satisfaction that he had brought with him his satchel. As Burrows reasoned it, this would be just the thing to answer as a pillow when he had persuaded the old man to endeavor to snatch some sleep.

The youth pulled the door shut, and, as the sun had already set, the interior of the vault was quite dark—the daylight which entered through the little window only went a short way toward dispelling the gloom—and the president directed that the electric lights be switched on.

Burrows did so, and the two started to munch the sandwiches, after which Mr. Stanton piled some books in such a way that they would form a comfortable reclining-place, and the clerk centered his attentions upon a magazine he had purchased.

"I may doze off," the president said carelessly. "If I do—"

"I'll awaken you at the first sound of anything wrong," Burrows interrupted. "But here, Mr. Stanton, use your satchel as a pillow—it'll be more comfortable."

He reached for the bag, but the president was too quick for him—he sprang toward it, and seizing it, as the clerk thought, almost desperately, he again sank down, this time with the valise under his head.

Burrows had the revolver which Mr. Stanton had given him, and, becoming interested in a story, he temporarily forgot where he was. But the heavy breathing of the elderly man soon brought him back to the present.

Stealthily he took down the books he was so eager to inspect, and began his work, the securities on hand being checked against the entries. And all his attention centered upon it—he was completely lost in his surroundings as he found discrepancy after discrepancy and made a separate memorandum of each one.

He gave little heed to the flight of time, so keenly was he interested in what he was unearthing.

But, much as he was absorbed, he pres-

ently caught a slight noise behind him, and he turned quickly—to find the president leaning over his shoulder. He had been discovered.

His first thoughts was to keep on with the search, and in this way all the credit for it would rightfully be his. But he now concluded to explain all to Mr. Stanton, and together they would work out some sort of a definite statement to present to the directors the next morning.

But before he could face the old man again he felt himself gripped by the shoulders with a desperate grasp.

"What are you doing with those?" Mr. Stanton questioned in a hoarse tone.

Burrows struggled to free himself, and, in doing so, caught a glimpse of the old man's countenance, now distorted with a combination of rage and terror.

"Why—what's wrong?" the clerk managed to gasp as he endeavored to shake himself free of the other's hold.

But Stanton did not speak, and a new fear crept into Burrows's brain—and another glance convinced him that he was in the grasp of a madman.

So he started to fight for his life, and together the two, distinctly differing in height, weight, and age, struggled within the narrow confines of the four steel walls.

Neither spoke, and their heavy breathing showed the intensity of the contest, as they pushed and fought from one side of the room to another.

It was a peculiar battle, with not a word escaping the lips of either, and not an attempt made to strike a blow. Burrows exerted all his strength, certain that his life depended upon his success in the combat. But the old man's seasoned sinews and muscular frame already showed their superiority over the other's desperate struggles, and, as he held both of Burrows's arms to his side in a viselike grip, the younger man prepared for an extraordinary effort. He locked his feet between the other's legs, pushed with all his remaining strength, and the two rolled over on the floor in a heap. In the fall Stanton's arms loosened, and before he could rise to his feet Burrows was on him, and, jerking his revolver from his pocket, he pointed it directly at the president.

"If you move a step, I'll shoot!" he cried.

The other shrank back, and, as he did so, stumbled over his satchel; the lock snapped open, and its contents rolled out on the floor.

As Burrows's eyes riveted themselves upon these they threatened to start from their sockets. The hand that held the revolver dropped to his side, while the pistol rattled to the floor.

"So—it's you!" the clerk gasped without removing his eyes from the dirt-stained shoes, shabby trousers, and shirt which lay before him.

Mr. Stanton stared at him coldly, desperately, for a second, without speaking.

"Yes—it's I," he replied finally. "I'm the one who dug that tunnel, and I'm the one who took the securities."

Then he advanced a step as he added bitterly:

"But for you, I'd have won out. Tonight I was going to get into this very room, and, by taking what securities are left, I'd have covered up my own—" He stopped abruptly, then added in a much lower tone, "mistakes. I've worked on that tunnel for three months! Worked in those clothes there, and never let that satchel get out of my sight.

"And during all these three months I've suffered the tortures of the damned. I expected to be discovered at any minute, and late last night, when I sneaked out of the vacant house over on the other street which I own—it's in the cellar there that the tunnel starts—I thanked God that within twenty-four hours I would be safe from detection. And then you—you—discover it all!"

"And I—I thought all the time it was Mr. Clayton!" Burrows gasped.

"Don't lie about it!" Stanton cried in a frenzy. "You knew all the time it was me! You knew that every word you said about the whole thing was going through me like a knife! And then, when you thought I had gone to sleep, you decided to find out just how much I had taken. But I wasn't asleep. Do you think I could sleep when I knew conviction stared me in the face? Do you think I could sleep when I knew that all my work—all my hopes—all future—were blasted, and by you?"

Burrows wanted to speak—to say something to this man whose words and manner proved his desperation—but he could not find any suitable. In his heart he pitied him.

"Why don't you speak?" Stanton shouted. "Why do you stand there staring at

me? You're to blame for my overthrow. You know it, and that's why you won't speak! You've ruined an old man's life—"

"No, Mr. Stanton, you did that yourself."

"Don't say that!" the other cried. "You—you're the one to blame, and I'll avenge the wrong you've done me!"

Burrows was certain he saw the dull, glassy stare of the maniac in Stanton's eyes, but before he could make a move the president sprang upon him and bore him heavily to the floor, while his long, muscular fingers closed around his throat.

The younger man struggled and fought, but was forced to realize that he could not cope with the strength of insanity. His eyes were growing watery, and his strength rapidly waned. But his senses had not entirely left him when he heard the door of the vault thrown open and felt the weight lifted from his chest.

"Why—what does this mean, Mr. Stanton?" he heard the voice of the night-watchman inquire.

"What's it look like, Mike?" the president said, after a second's pause.

"Some one called up on the telephone and said they could see a light through the vault window, and—"

Burrows sprang to his feet, now himself again, and raised his eyes almost reverently toward the barred window—the window which, on two occasions during the past twenty-four hours, had figured in the development of his suspicions.

"But I—I don't understand—"

Mr. Stanton broke in upon the man's confusion.

"You don't have to, Mike. Just call a policeman," he directed, and before the astonished watchman could question further he turned to Burrows.

"Boy," he said, and there was a deep sob in his voice, while two tears coursed down his age-lined features, "I speculated. Don't you ever do it."

Then he extended a trembling hand.

"Can—can you forgive me for nearly killing you?" he asked. "You don't know, and I hope you never will, what I've suffered. And when I knew that you were responsible for my detection I went mad. My one idea was to kill you, and then flee. Thank God, I didn't! Thank God for that much, anyway!"

Burrows stared into the old man's face, reading there the mental agony he was suffering, and as he saw how he had aged twenty years since the meeting of the morning, a suspicious dampness crept into his own eyes.

Then, as Stanton's head sank upon his chest despairingly, Burrows reached out and grasped the hand which was still held toward him.

THE SONG OF THE CITY

Oh, he whom I once have held in my thrall,
In my crowded street,
I hold him for ay; I weave me a snare
For his hastening feet.

He travels east and he travels west,
But he finds the track—
With joy or with grief he finds the way
That leads him back.

He may think—the fool!—that he hates my noise,
My clatter and din,
And the pulse and throb of life in my veins,
And the moods I am in.

But he reckons wrong; for wherever he goes,
Like a magnet I draw,
Till he finds himself back in my grasp again,
And my will is his law!

A. Eastman Elwin.

In Quest of a Queen

by Garret Smith

(A NOVELETTE.)

CHAPTER I.

A LIGHTNING CHANGE.

CREIGHTON AVERY stretched his patrician limbs. Instinctively he reached for the silver push-button at the head of his bed, then he sat upright in bewilderment.

Instead of touching silver, the daintily manicured thumb was rasped by an unmanicured pine plank.

"Gad!" yawned Mr. Avery, remembering where he was.

A rose tint over the hemlock-clad mountain across the lake sent a faint glow through the faded calico curtaining of the tiny window. It displayed a narrow, old-fashioned bed, an ancient bureau and washstand, a rough floor, bare save for a bit of rag carpeting, wall and ceiling of unplastered, unplaned boards.

Not a normal bedchamber for a millionaire's son!

The young man was obliged to reach for his cigarettes himself, and strike his own light. Wretched form! Then, as he drew his customary, eye-opening puffs, he meditatively rubbed the stubble on his chin.

Ordinarily, James shaved him twice a day. Arriving late last evening with no James, the mowing process had gone over for the first time in years. Creighton was not an immaculate-looking person this morning.

"Lovely joint, this!" he sighed. "Have to shave myself, I suppose. As for a bath, it's a plunge in the lake, if I get one. And to all these luxuries is added the soul-soothing thought that if I am found here by any one who knows me, I stand a good chance of losing fifty millions."

And all for the *Gipsy Queen*. He hummed a snatch of music and sentiment from a comic opera that had delighted Broadway that season.

That was the key to the situation. The coming of "The Gipsy Queen" had turned the screw on the courage of the giddy but erstwhile extremely cautious Creighton, till it reached a notch where he was almost willing to risk the extreme displeasure of his tyrannical father, who had put an absolute veto on the "chorus girl rabies."

The piquant, dark beauty of little Hortense Duré had stricken many easy-going hearts. One of the chorus the year before, this year the leading woman in a popular hit—that was all of her history any one knew.

Creighton Avery was bent on knowing more. In the charmingly aloof young woman he had fancied he saw signs of superior refinement. If he knew something of the girl's family, he might be able to show his father that she was not after all unworthy to marry into the Avery line.

Accordingly, when he learned that she was about to spend her vacation with her

own people at Malvin Lake, he formed a plot.

First he had invited the Merton boys to go fishing with him for a month in the Muskokos. They were barely settled there when he announced the arrival of a telegram demanding his immediate presence in New York on business. Taking only a single grip, and leaving James to look after the welfare of his guests, he left by the next train, promising to be gone only a week.

So, late at night, some thirty-six hours afterward, he arrived at Malvin Lake under the assumed name of Reuben Brown, an alibi established, and all clues to his identity and his whereabouts cut off. The bus-driver at the station had taken him to this little farmhouse, run by one Martin Wise. One glance at his quarters in the morning light had made it clear to Creighton why this house had remained as the very last choice.

"If Hortense lives in a joint like this, it's all off," he announced with finality, as he gingerly placed one foot on the rag-carpet. "There must be a first-class hotel around somewhere, though. That's where the little lady will be all right."

"Meanwhile, Willie must make himself fit for company. I hate to disturb the peace of that cool, little lake by bathing in it before breakfast, but it must be done. I won't call on the girl till afternoon, and I'll save the shave till then."

His first impulse was to throw on his bathrobe and trot directly down to the shore. Then he remembered that he had no bathing-suit.

He must hunt a spot where he could perform his ablutions in all the simplicity of the good old days, before bathing-suits were put on the market.

In order to make his passage to the lake as little embarrassing as possible, he completely dressed himself, and stuffing a towel under his coat, stole out, unobserved by the still slumbering household.

It took a search of nearly half an hour along the shore before he found a spot so quiet and hidden that he was willing to venture on that much-dreaded but much-desired bath.

Now, Creighton was a good swimmer of the gymnasium-trained sort. His experience, however, had been largely confined to the very temperate waters of natatorium tanks, and the mild ocean surf of mid August.

Head first, he dived into the shivery flood, and the instant his top hair struck that icy, mountain-lake water, he had enough of cleanliness for the nonce. His soul thrilled instantly with one consuming desire ot set foot on dry, warm soil.

Had he carried out that purpose, his subsequent history would hardly be worth the telling.

But as Creighton turned to make a mad rush for raiment, his ears were smitten by a peal of wild, idiotic laughter. With a gasp of horror, he sank back to his chin in concealing water.

But search the shore as he might, he could see nothing of the frivolous being who had thus disturbed his poise. Moments passed, and the embracing water seemed by geometrical progression to grow more chill. His aristocratic teeth were in imminent danger of smiting loose some expensive dentistry.

He dared not make that rush for his clothes till he was sure the invisible spectator had passed on. It was swim or freeze.

So he struck out, keeping close to the shore, and watching meanwhile for the laughing fool to show himself, or herself. It might be some mountain hussy with little delicacy, and a distorted sense of humor.

Then came the laugh again. This time, to the swimmer's surprise, it seemed to arise from the open lake.

Creighton looked and then he, too, laughed. The mirthful shriek came from the flat bill of a little water-fowl, floating on the wavelets a dozen yards away. It dived abruptly.

It was a loon. Creighton had seen them before, when on more conventional excursions. Now he cursed himself for being so easily deceived.

But by this time the swimmer was accustomed to the water. His skin was aglow with exercise. He turned about and struck out leisurely for the sheltered nook where he had undressed.

But, alas! The laughter of the loon had been prophetic. Scarce a dozen strokes and he heard the sharp report of a gun some distance back of the bushes that lined the shore. It was followed by another. Then came a wild yell.

Frightened motionless, the young man stood to his shoulders in water, staring in the direction of the sound.

The next instant there burst through to

the shore a disheveled, foreign-looking fellow, dark, unshaven, yet wearing his rude garments with a certain picturesqueness that reminded the swimmer of a stage tramp.

Plainly the man was a fugitive. He paused for a moment and looked back fearfully. He swept the horizon with his eye, as though mistrusting that he might be cut off in front.

With that he saw at his feet the neatly folded, tailor-made suit and the custom-wrought, silk under clothing. A look of extreme surprise was followed at once by one of great joy.

Never on vaudeville stage had Creighton Avery beheld so expeditious a "lightning change act." Before he realized the intent of the newcomer, the tramp had shed his clothes to the skin. Then he pounced on the garments of the man who, ironically enough, was just now playing the part of "the submerged tenth."

At that Creighton found speech.

"Here. Drop those clothes, my man!" he shouted, clambering for the shore.

"My man" looked up with a flitting expression of fear. He had not before noticed the owner of the garments he was appropriating.

But fear changed at once to a threat, as he beheld the unimpressive looking object in the water. He seized a handy bit of rock, and waved it threateningly toward Creighton's head.

"Back! Back!" he shouted.

Mr. Avery obeyed like a puppy being cuffed from the dining-table. Mournfully he watched without further protest, while the tramp completed his borrowed toilet.

It was over in an instant, and the wonderfully rehabilitated wanderer, with a mocking wave of the hand at Creighton, disappeared swiftly in a direction opposite to the one whence he came.

Instantly Creighton bounded out of the water, and stood over the pile of tattered raiment left him in exchange, trembling with mingled chill and rage.

Then he heard voices in the distance.

A moment only he hesitated. He must cover his person with something. There was no alternative.

So, swallowing his loathing, almost as quickly as the tramp had shed them, he draped in the soiled, worn goods his own fastidious limbs.

As he completed the distasteful job, his eye caught a reflection of the result mirrored in the water of a little cove at his feet. His nearest friend would not have recognized in that shabby figure the aristocratic Creighton Avery. Even the face, with its twenty-four-hour growth of black stubble, topped by tousled hair, had undergone a metamorphosis. If he had only shaved!

A lightning change, indeed!

CHAPTER II.

A FUGITIVE FROM THE UNKNOWN.

"THIS way!"

"Mebbe he tuk to the water."

"Did you see him?"

"Jest got a glimpse of the beggar. Had a black suit an' a red shirt. Ol' soft gray hat on."

"Let him have another shot ef ye ketch sight of him."

These words, shouted as between men some distance apart, came through the shrubbery to Avery, accompanied by the sound of rushing feet in the underbrush. Evidently the chap with whom he had changed garments was much wanted.

The young man thought of the shots he had just heard. The fellow must be some desperate criminal.

He turned to meet the oncomers, bent on helping them in the chase, in which he himself was so vitally interested. Then a burning though flashed through his brain.

Here he was in the criminal's clothes! The man's pursuers had caught only a fleeting glimpse of that outfit, and had evidently not seen the man's face clearly. They were going to shoot him on sight.

The conclusion was obvious. Creighton Avery, the blameless, was for the instant, at least, translated into the person of a fleeing criminal. But what was the crime? The shots suggested murder! He would take no chances. Flight looked good to him.

Just then a crackling in the brush close at hand dispelled any further hesitancy. With a speed he had not equaled since he resigned from the Yale track team five years before, Avery dashed up the beach.

Simultaneously, a determined-looking farmer, armed with a double-barreled shotgun, broke from the underbrush. There was another report, and the runner heard something sing past his ears.

He ducked for cover. Across the fringe of shore-growth he sped, through a little brook and swale in mud and water to his knees, over the corner of a plowed field, and into a thick woodland beyond.

If he could only overtake the man who wore his clothes!

But, came the second thought, what if he did? The fellow was probably more than his match. He would doubtless get a drubbing for his pains, and before he could prove the mistake to his captors, the real criminal would escape.

Even that, however, would be better than being shot on sight by an enraged farmer. If only he might stay the wrath of his pursuers long enough to make it clear that he would surrender peacefully, it would be a simple matter afterward to prove who he was.

But the man-hunters were gaining on him. There was no time for thoughtful planning.

On he plunged through the thicket. Briers scratched his face and hands, and ripped up his clothes still more completely. Every branch as he passed seemed to reach out and smite him with gleeful malice. He could fairly hear the scrub-oaks chuckle as they curled up their roots just in time to catch and trip his flying toes.

Time after time he thus measured off five feet ten inches on the forest floor. Each time he fell the trample and crash of his pursuers grew nearer.

He seemed to feel the twin muzzles of that shotgun burrowing between his shoulders.

Now, as he glanced back, he got glimpses of the foremost countryman, flashing out here and there among the trees.

"Hey, you!" roared the fellow, catching sight of Creighton at that moment. "Stop! I got a bead on ye!"

"Shoot him!" yelled the other pursuer, coming in sight from behind.

The fugitive dodged back of a big tree-trunk, just as the double-barreled gun barked again.

There was a rattle of shot, and a shower of leaves and twigs fell around him.

For a moment the life went out of Mr. Avery's trembling knees. The pair were evidently bent on executing lynch-law. Nevertheless, surrender seemed the only course. He prayed that the dealers out of vengeance would stay execution till he could give an account of himself.

But the pair had for the moment lost the scent. They were beating about aimlessly scarce three rods away.

In that brief respite, a little of his self-possession returned, and the city man was able to plan again.

He thought of climbing the tree behind which he hid. A glance up the big stretch of branchless trunk put that out of the question.

Perhaps he could crawl under the huckleberry bushes at his feet, and hide there. But the least stir would be heard by his stalkers. Just then the crash of pursuit was drowned by a wild, prolonged shriek. Every muscle in the hunted one's body went taut with terror, then relaxed into flabby helplessness.

As the echoes died away, they were followed by a low rumble. Then the ground trembled beneath him.

So many new sensations had been sprung on the young city man in the last two hours, that he was rapidly approaching a state of complete apathy. His bodily sensations refused any longer to respond to the spur of terror. He leaned limply against the tree, and listened with resignation, by no means pious, to this new manifestation of the evil one.

In a moment he straightened up alert. In the midst of the growing rumble and roar came a rhythmic snort and hiss of distinctly earthly origin.

It was a railroad train!

A plan of escape instantly flashed upon Creighton. Dire need was making him suddenly resourceful.

The roar of the passing train would hide the sound of his escape through the bushes. The railroad must be near by. This was a slow-moving train, probably a freight. If he could reach the track in time to catch a ride before he was seen, he could drop off near the station and find his boarding-place. If only he might sneak into his room unseen, all would be easy. There was another outfit of clothing spread out ready for the afternoon's call. Fortunately, too, he had left his money behind.

His blood surging with new hope, Creighton dropped on all fours, and lunged through the bushes. So eager was he that he hardly noticed the pain of barked knees and shins.

A moment later he emerged close to a high railroad bank. The freight was almost upon him.

But, alas, as he glanced at the train, he

saw on the ground beside it, waving his arms frantically, one of his pursuers, fortunately an unarmed one.

Apparently they had anticipated this move on his part, and one of them was standing guard at the track. He was trying to yell, in competition with the train, a warning to his comrade, the man with the gun, who was presumably still beating the bushes.

Instinctively the hunted one dashed up the bank and across the track, just ahead of the oncoming engine.

The next instant the train rumbled by, and for the moment placed a wall of flying cars between him and the others.

Creighton hadn't jumped a moving train since his freshman days, and not many of them then, but there was no time to pause and recall forgotten lore. He whirled about, and grabbed for the step of the next car to pass him.

He caught the handle all right, but something was wrong with his technique. Instead of springing up lightly and placing one foot firmly on the narrow iron step, according to rules, he was suddenly snapped through the air as though he were the tip end of a whip-lash.

Then next instant, with the tender palms of his two hands, and the dainty features of his one and only countenance, he was plowing three neat furrows down the cruel cinders of the railroad bank.

But some nice, soft mud at the bottom furnished a cushion that prevented serious injury, and at the same time provided a cool poultice for his lacerations, incidentally adding still further to the completeness of his disguise.

He arose in a moment, one all-embracing smart. He had as soon be peppered full of gunshot holes as to try to catch that train again.

Then it dawned on him that if his pursuers were expert at train-jumping, the freight would be no barrier to pursuit. They would simply climb aboard, and drop down on the other side. At any rate, such barrier as it was, it would be past in another moment.

A hasty glance through the woods showed a forbidding barrier of swamp. The only chance for a run lay along the narrow cinder-path at the top of the bank beside the moving train, a footing so close to the whirling wheels that it inspired fear of being drawn under them.

As he dashed down this path, in the same direction as that taken by the freight, a brilliant inspiration flashed over Avery. By running along with the train he would increase the length of time it could take to pass him, and thus, in case his pursuers did not cross over, he would lengthen the duration of his shelter. Simultaneously he would be enlarging his lead on the countrymen.

Fearfully he glanced back as he ran. Nobody appeared on his side of the train. Then came a sickening afterthought. They would get aboard and ride along till they overtook him, then pounce out. Or they might, perhaps, playfully shoot him from a car as they went by.

While he was still harassed by these fears, the end of the freight approached. Providentially, at the same time he came to a little culvert or stone bridge under which the water of the swamp flowed to the lake. With the blind instinct of the hunted, Avery dived under this, just as the caboose of the freight rumbled over it.

Now it was evident that the seekers of vengeance had not caught the train. Had Creighton understood the limitations of the rural dweller, he would have had little fear of such possibility. The average backwoodsman stands in great awe of the railroad, and would as soon think of trying to catch the tail of a comet as to board a moving car.

But the thing that did happen was the one thing most obvious, and the one on which the hunted man had not figured. The hunters, finding their quarry cut off by the train, had stooped and peered under it. Of course, they had at once noted the flying heels of Creighton, and equally, as a matter of course, had kept pace with him on the other side of the train.

Therefore the three reached the culvert at the same instant.

As the caboose of the freight swept over the little bridge the two farmers swung out onto it and the bedraggled and breathless Mr. Avery dived under.

CHAPTER III.

MORE TRAMPS.

It was twilight in the little culvert. Creighton Avery floundered in amid a mass of lily-pads and reeds, up to his waist in

mud and water, before he had time to consider what he was getting into. He was simply filled with a panic-stricken purpose to burrow under the ground like a hunted animal in a corner.

At any instant he expected the deadly shotgun would pour its contents through the culvert. Half-way to the other opening he floundered, then flattened himself between two projecting boulders in the side of the rude stone arch.

It flashed over him that this might give him an opportunity to explain to his pursuers that they had made a mistake, before they got a chance to fill him with shot.

Just then he heard voices at the entrance and was about to put his purpose into effect when their words stopped him.

"I tell ye he caught one of the cars," declared one.

"I tell ye he didn't," returned the other heatedly. "I was watchin' clost and would 'a' seen him do it. He just dropped over into this crick an' into the culvert."

"He couldn't swim in them reeds."

"He could wade. 'Tain't over three feet deep."

"Three feet! Thunder! They's ten feet o' quicksand over the rock here. Remember how they had to sink them walls down before they finished the arch? If he tried wadin' in there he's a goner."

The fugitive shuddered with a new horror at the word "quicksand." Of that peril he knew nothing outside of terrible tales he had read. Absorbed in the pursuit, he had not thought of the foundation under his feet. Now he realized that to his knees he was in the clutches of a soft, clinging ooze.

Frantically he drove his fingers into the crevices in the wall, and forgetting completely the peril of the shotgun, yelled incoherently for help.

Then he pressed himself the more tightly against the rocks, half expecting the answer to come from the mouth of the gun.

Instead he heard a sudden confusion of shouts, for an instant close to the opening, then becoming muffled as though the shouters had suddenly withdrawn.

At once Avery realized that newcomers had entered upon the scene, and that for the moment at least the farmers had ceased to pay attention to him. Anon a sound of a struggle reached his ears. Twice the shotgun spoke. Then there was silence.

Again his thoughts returned to his footing and he realized that he had sunk several inches in that brief space. Once more he raised his voice till the tunnel reechoed with it.

"Hello, bo! Where are ye?"

This in a voice that belonged to neither of the pursuing countrymen came from the mouth of the culvert.

There was a new face framed in the opening. Nor was it by any means a reassuring one. "Tough" was the descriptive word. No mistaking the undershot jaw, the hard, blue eye, and the dissolute lines of that countenance.

But the man in the mud had no time for wonder or caution.

"Help!" he gasped. "I'm in quicksand! Sinking!"

"Keep yer shirt on a second, pal," was the reply. "We'll git ye."

The sluggish current was tickling Avery's neck when the face reappeared. With it was another countenance equally evil.

But to the eyes of the man in need they were as two cherubs peering over the ramparts of heaven. For between them they bore the charred branch of a tree. This they forced along the narrow channel till the end was opposite Avery.

Desperately he clutched it. There he clung choking and sputtering while they of the evil visages tugged at the other end of the limb, swearing meanwhile oaths the like of which the city man had never heard.

The rescuers had exhausted their complete list of sample expletives, used up every possible combination thereof, and were beginning over again when, inch by inch, the demon of the ditch began to release its grip on the legs of its would-be victim. At length, breath gone completely, he was hauled forth like a half-drowned rat and dropped limp on the bank.

Standing over him his saviors eyed him curiously. He noted that their clothes were scarcely more presentable than those he himself wore at the present moment, and were of a character quite in keeping with their faces. They were evidently tramps.

"Come, pard," presently said he of the chilled-steel eyes. "We gotta git outa here. Them country ginks'll be back again 'fore long an' have a mob with 'em."

"We sure did make 'em hit the pike," chuckled the other hobo as they started up the track supporting between them their salvage, who was still too exhausted for coherent speech.

The tramps seemed to understand this very natural incapacity, and for some moments they trudged along the ties in silence. Avery had noted at once that his late pursuers were nowhere in sight. Now to his still greater wonderment, he saw that one of his rescuers carried a double-barreled shotgun that appeared to be a duplicate of the one that had that morning caused him so much annoyance.

Again the second tramp chuckled. Creighton decided at once that he was the lesser of the two accompanying evils. He had eyes of a mild brown, and there was something human about that laugh which belied the hardness of the features.

"Got ye guessin', haven't we, pal?" he said. "Well, pard, here is Bill the Canuck and I'm Ottawa Mike. We're blowed-in-the-glass stiffs, we are, no gay cats in ours. There's bulls along the line that do say we are some handy in the yegg line. We're good boes when we're prosperous, but we been in a horstile country for two weeks and got to lookin' like handout bums now."

He paused with another chuckle. To Creighton's mind his meaning was about as clear as though his words were Sanskrit.

"Ye see," went on the spokesman, "me an' the Canuck were holdin' down that freight when we seen you hikin' down the pike with them jay bulls on yer trail. Figgerin' that if we joined in, it would be a case of three to two an' some fun, we hopped off jest as you made fer cover under that bridge. When the mutt with the gun stuck his face under to pipe you off, the Canuck landed on him and took away his smoke-wagon. Then I put a crimp in the other guy and we started 'em fer home with a couple o' shots in the air to throw a good scare. We'd 'a' tied 'em up to a tree an' left 'em, only you needed us bad an' there warn't no time fer extras."

Meanwhile the other hobo was eying Avery coldly. The latter, deeply puzzled, was too busy trying to make meaning out of what he had heard to do any talking.

"Come, bo," demanded the Canuck at last, a little impatiently, "spring yer yarn. What's yer moniker and how'd ye git them jay bulls so fightin' peevish?"

An accredited moniker, or tramp nickname, is the passport to all tramp society. Naturally Mr. Avery possessed none such. He had never heard of such a thing. But it occurred to him that he had not as yet thanked his rescuers for their services.

"Really, now, my good fellows," he began, "I hardly know how to thank you enough for saving my life. By Jove, I do appreciate it, though, and as soon as I can get back to my room, where I have my money, I will reward you well. Meanwhile, though, I don't quite understand what you have said. I'll try to explain how I came in this deuce of a fix. You see—"

But his listeners had watched him for a moment in sheer astonishment. Then Ottawa Mike dropped on the cinders and howled with mirth. The Canuck, more contained, nevertheless grinned appreciatively, then said:

"What's yer lay, bo? That ghost story listens good, but ye don't need to spring any more of it on us now. Give us the dope."

"You men have me guessing, I'm afraid," admitted the sadly embarrassed greenhorn. "I don't get your meaning at all. Would you mind putting that in plain English?"

He was puzzled. His new friends noticed it. Mike at once became serious. In the cold eyes of the Canuck gleamed a sinister light.

"Do ye git that?" exclaimed Mike. "He don't savvy our lingo."

Instead of answering, the other sidestepped suddenly and the startled Creighton found himself looking into the unwavering muzzle of the shotgun, along the sights of which gleamed the steady blue eyes of the Canuck.

CHAPTER IV.

A SHARP-HORNED DILEMMA.

"THROW up your hands!" growled the hobo.

For the moment Avery was too bewildered to obey. This sudden shifting of rôles from rescuers to captors on the part of his new acquaintances was a climax to the surprises of the morning.

Creighton was beginning to believe that he was still asleep in the shabby little bedroom, and that this was all a part of a most distressing nightmare.

Then he felt the muzzle of the gun shoved against his face and the command was repeated. He obeyed.

"Go through his clothes, Mike. He's got a gun somewhere," directed the Canuck.

Mike did so.

"No smoke-wagon on him," was the report after investigation.

"That beats me," said the other. "No badge or papers either?"

"Nope."

"Well, we gotta git under cover somewheres quick, anyhow. This don't look good to me. We'll hang on to this chap. Come along now, you, and if they's a sign of monkey-business you'll git both barrels at once."

The two grabbed Avery on either side and started up the track, dragging him along at a brisk half-trot. For some minutes not a word was spoken. The tramps looked back constantly in evident fear of pursuit.

In a few minutes they came to the end of the swamp-land and struck into the woods. For a mile or more they fought their way through the tangle of thicket. Finally, beside a fallen log in a shroud of perpetual twilight, they came to a halt.

"Guess they'll hunt some to find us here," announced the Canuck.

The pair released their hold on their prisoner, but the Canuck kept one hand significantly near the shotgun. Squatting on the log, they stared at him inquiringly. They had the appearance of men absorbed in a problem.

Avery, despite his physical exhaustion, was becoming hardened to mental jolts. He was beginning to find the situation amusing.

"Would you gentlemen mind if I sat in your presence?" he asked sweetly.

"We'll tend to you soon, little Clarence," warned the Canuck. "Don't git gay unless ye have to. We're next to your game, if it is a new one. You're too raw about it. You go to givin' any high signs or makin' any sort of noise or loud talkin' and you git this," touching the gun-stock.

"I'm goin' to grub up if they jump us next minute," announced Mike, digging a couple of battered sandwiches from a bottomless pocket.

The Canuck followed suit. A tiny stream trickled near by. Into this the disreputable pair in time buried their faces and drank like a pair of horses.

Yesterday this sight would have sickened Mr. Avery. Now it reminded him that he had eaten no breakfast and was faint with hunger. It must be at least noon. Then the cool water made him think of his smutty, blood-smeared face and hands that were smarting from contact with cinders.

"If not trespassing on the rules of the house, I will also use some of that water," he remarked.

Mike chuckled and the Canuck grunted.

Without waiting for further consent, Avery washed his face and hands as thoroughly as possible, then waiting for the polluted water to flow by, emulated the tramps' example and drank deeply.

As he arose he noted with comical joy that a bush heavily laden with tiny blue-black berries hung over the stream. He recognized them at once as the huckleberries of the market and began stripping them off and eating them ravenously. He was soon in a measure refreshed.

The tramps made no objection; in fact, joined him at the bush after finishing their sandwiches.

Just then Avery once more caught a glimpse of his reflection in the water at the edge of the sluggish stream. The sight provoked a lively chain of thought. The usually white skin of his forehead and nose was burned to bright crimson by the hot morning sun. Added to this were the black stubble and a set of scars as variegated as those of a German student fresh from a duel.

Were he to succeed in getting back to his boarding place unmolested, and could tell any plausible story to account for his disappearance and his rags, it would be impossible to convince the two or three persons who had seen him the night before that he was the same immaculate person as then.

No, the farmers who had pursued him that morning would positively identify him as the man who had committed the mysterious crime. He would be arrested and could not possibly free himself from suspicion without telling his real name and his reason for being there under an assumed one. He would have to appeal to his family and friends to prove his identity.

In view of the mysterious way in which he had disappeared from Muskoko in his secret quest of the gipsy queen, that would be most embarrassing.

But even then he might not be freed without an extensive trial and much more notoriety. Think of the ridicule of his friends and the anger of his father, to say nothing of the danger of conviction for a serious crime in case the real offender should make good his escape! Somehow he must manage to get back undiscovered into that other suit of clothes at his boarding-house.

At present, however, his greatest danger was from this lusty pair of miscreants, who, after rescuing him, seemed bent for some mysterious reason on a kidnaping.

Could it be possible they had discovered his true identity as the son of the millionaire, and were going to hold him for a ransom? That did not seem likely when in his present plight his own mother would hardly see in him any resemblance to her son. Besides, in that case, why had they referred to his "game," and what had the search for pistol or badge meant?

Then a probability dawned on him. There had been a crime committed that morning, presumably by one of a gang of which these fellows were members. When he had shown he was no tramp these two had taken him for a disguised detective. His pursuit by the farmers and the ease with which he had given himself away as no real tramp had puzzled the hobos.

But suppose he tell them the truth? It would at once occur to them that he was an important witness against the gang. If allowed to get back to the authorities he could identify the principal criminal and two of his pals, and would have good personal reason for assisting in their capture.

While the tramps were finishing their dessert of huckleberries, Avery was busy planning a tale which he knew would soon be demanded. He was a little disconcerted by the thought that these fellows had perhaps seen their criminal pal since his sudden change of clothes, and knowing what had happened would recognize Creighton's present attire as belonging to the other tramp.

His captors at length smeared dirty hands across berry-stained mouths and looked at each other questioningly, then at their prisoner.

"What'll we do with this guy?" demanded Mike, who evidently acknowledged the leadership of the Canuck.

Now was the time for Creighton to spring his hastily constructed tale, before his inquisitors had time for any more thinking. He had already seen the wisdom of dropping, on the one hand, the tone of lofty condescension with which he had begun the day, and, on the other, the playful banter he had more recently adopted.

He was in no humor for much further dallying, however. He wanted to get back to his room in time to dress and hunt up the gipsy queen that evening.

"Now see here, you two," he said. "You're making a beastly mess of this thing. As I told you, I am much indebted to you for digging me out of that quicksand and pulling off those fool farmers before they shot me full of holes. I'll pay you well for it if you'll give me the chance. I don't know yet just what you chaps think I am, but whatever it is, I'm not it. I'm not a tramp as you thought when you took my part. You see that now. I'm not an officer, of course. Else why should these farmers be after me? You found no gun or badge. Well, those chaps were chasing the wrong man, and all I ask is for a chance to go back and explain.

"You see, it's this way. I'm from New York City, just an ordinary clerk. My nerves gave out and the doctors said I must get into the woods. So I scraped together enough money for a month's vacation, got some old clothes and hit this place last night and got a room. Well, I went out for a walk before breakfast in this rig. I got mixed up in the mud and bushes and got my clothes pretty well dragged out.

"Then I heard somebody tear by. I couldn't see him and didn't know what was up till those two fool farmers came along, saw me and began firing. They evidently thought I was the fellow they were after. They were bent on shooting without giving me a chance to explain, so I struck for cover under that bridge where you found me. Now I'll just skip back and put on some other clothes, get some money and leave it out somewhere so you can get it this evening. Is that a bargain?"

To Avery as he went on, his fictitious story sounded most convincing. He was quite chagrined, therefore, to find his listeners not altogether impressed.

"That all may be straight goods," admitted the Canuck grudgingly, "but they's something queer about you. We ain't takin' any chances. If you was to go back to the village now you might jest happen to mention casual-like that you called on us and let on where we wuz. Them mutts we slammed around and frisked this cannon off of, might want to see us immediate. They're mighty horstile on tramps round here. Guess you better stay with us a few days till things quiet down and we kin light out."

Avery's spirits sank within him. He would miss the queen, get himself in a beastly physical condition from exposure,

and be so long away from his friends that explanations would be difficult. But necessity was making him cunning. A plan of action at once presented itself.

"Say, you don't mean it!" he shouted with as much heartiness as he was able to force to the surface. "You'll let me be a pal of yours? Why that's fine! You see I came up here to be a sort of half tramp, but I've always longed to try the real thing. Now, if I won't be in the way, I'd be delighted to join you for a while and learn your tricks."

"You'll learn 'em all right," sneered Canuck. "Mike'n me's A1 teachers, an' we got some cunning little ways."

"Oh, we'll 'nitiate ye O. K.," grinned Mike. "What's yer moniker, pal?"

"My—my—what?" hesitated the puzzled Creighton.

"Yer moniker. Don't ye know what a moniker is? The name ye travel by. Oh, you gotta have a moniker. Now, don't go to givin' us any guff about yer real name. Ye'd lie most likely. S'pose ye'd say it wuz John Smith. What moniker'll we give him, Canuck?"

"That's easy," snapped the other, a little humorous gleam appearing in the back of the steely eyes. "Didn't we drag him out of a sandhole? He's Sand-Hog Percy. That's who he is."

Thus was Mr. Creighton Avery rechristened.

CHAPTER V.

FLIGHT IN THE NIGHT.

THAT afternoon the Canuck went out on a foraging expedition while Mike and Creighton Avery, alias Sand-Hog Percy, lay hidden beside the little stream in the heart of the woodland.

Despite his physical and mental discomfort, Creighton found himself entertained by the tales of this knight of the open. He pretended even greater interest than he felt and asked numberless questions about tramp ways and lingo.

Several times he expressed joy at finding such pleasant companions in his new life on the road. Each time Mike grinned enigmatically and left Avery wondering if the man with the brown eyes and rough, shrewd face could read his inner misery, and knew that in reality he was almost ready to faint for lack of proper food.

In the edge of the evening the Canuck returned in a villainous temper. He had "battered for grub," at all the isolated farmhouses within reach, and from all but one had been turned away empty-handed. Everywhere the male residents were about with shotguns, while savage bulldogs were unhealthily abundant and ready for use.

The one seeming exception was a prosperous-looking place where he had been promptly invited into the kitchen to an elaborate "set-down." This excessive cordiality at once aroused the suspicions of the wily Canuck. No sooner had he started to devour the "set-down" than his suspicions were confirmed.

He saw one of the boys of the household ride away on horseback at a furious gallop. The Canuck needed no further hint. He had crammed into his pockets as much of the food as possible and retreated hastily.

"This county's dead set against us boes, and tryin' its cussedest to round up every one in sight," he complained to Mike after relating his adventure. "That kid was hikin' away to gather the bulls and get me nabbed. Thought they'd keep me eatin' till they got there. Some yegg's been gettin' too raw with his work here lately and queered us all."

He looked at Creighton malevolently.

Yet, as the melancholy evening advanced, Avery found himself treated with a semblance of open-hearted camaraderie. What was more important, they freely shared with him their evening meal. In addition to the collection of cold meat and bread that the Canuck had crowded into the pockets of his dirty coat, he had dug up a quantity of new potatoes from a field near the edge of the forest. These they boiled in an old can one of them carried. Creighton surprised himself by the avidity with which he helped devour this mess.

The meal finished, the hoboes, without further attention to their guest, stretched themselves on the moss and were soon snoring. The Canuck, however, had one arm carefully hooked over the gun. The little fire died out and they were in pitch blackness. But for the double snore at his very elbow, Creighton could have imagined himself alone in the universe.

Sleep was the last thing he thought of. It would have been out of the question even if his body were not one great ache from the exertions of the day.

Evidently, he thought, the tramps had

been taken in by his play of cordiality. Now was the time to act before anything happened to change the impression.

For half an hour the snoring continued. Then Avery, convinced at last that his captors slept soundly, raised himself slowly to his knees and crept toward the stream whose murmuring directed him through the blackness.

A twig snapped under him. It sounded like the report of a pistol. With suspended breath he listened, but there came from the hoboes no sound save the reduplicated snores.

Creighton knew practically nothing about wood-lore. but in thinking over the situation he had reasoned that the streamlet must flow into the lake at no very great distance, and that its mouth could not be far from the little hamlet and consequently would lead him back through the darkness to his boarding-place.

In a moment he had reached the brook and was stealing cautiously along beside it. He was completely turned around. But as usual with those new to the forest, he was unaware of it. He had fixed in his mind a very definite idea as to the direction in which the village lay.

So for some distance he stumbled along. Just as he was beginning to think he must be near a break in the forest, he bumped against a steep bank, and soon found he was in a ravine. This would have been sufficient to show a woodsman that he was facing the source and not the mouth of the stream, provided he had not already tested the direction of the current with his finger-tips.

But it meant nothing to Creighton. For some distance further he stumbled on. At length the ravine became so narrow that he was forced to splash along in the water. He tried to climb the bank, but it was too steep.

Now the ripple of the brook rose to a tiny roar, and in a moment he found himself pushing into the edge of a miniature waterfall.

At that there dawned on him the disagreeable truth that he had been wasting all this time going in the wrong direction. He must retrace his steps past the tramp bivouac and run a second chance of rousing that precious pair.

Of course, in the blackness it was impossible to judge at just what point the tramps lay. Hence Creighton dared no more than creep by inches as he retraced his ill-advised steps. At any instant he expected to be pounced upon.

He had scarcely reached again the mouth of the ravine when somewhere in the bushes he fancied he heard a stealthy tread. For moments he listened motionless. He moved on again for a distance. A twig snapped a little way behind him.

Again he paused. Silence once more. But now he felt that indescribable sense of a living being near by.

If this were one or both of his deserted companions, he thought, why did they not advance boldly and seize him? They knew he was unarmed.

So by degrees, wondering and fearing, he moved on. No matter how quietly he stepped, with each advance of his own he heard following footsteps that died instantly whenever he stopped.

But suddenly his ear caught a low, rhythmical sound that made his pulse dance for joy. It was the unmistakable nasal melody of the sleepers almost at his feet. He was again passing the spot where Mike and the Canuck still slumbered peacefully.

His fancy had played him a trick, he thought, and with that he struck out boldly down the stream.

But he soon realized that the sounds behind him were increasing in volume and becoming too decided to be attributed longer to fancy. He stopped in alarm. The probable solution of the mystery had dawned on him.

He was being followed by a stealthy forest animal!

With that Avery was seized with uncontrollable panic, and throwing all caution to the wind, he broke into a wild run. On he rushed, now splashing into the water, now slipping down on all fours on the slippery bank, stumbling over roots, and bumping into trees.

Now the forest was thinning out, and with it the blackness was melting a little. Moonbeams were straggling through the trees.

Just then the fugitive wallowed into mud half way to his knees. He gave a spring forward. More mud. Backward and sideways he tried it. Everywhere mud.

He remembered his morning experience with the quicksand, and panic redoubled within him. He lunged forward frantically, now utterly regardless of direction. At moments he was in water to his waist. Then he would feel solid ground under his feet,

only to be disappointed the next minute by another plunge into mud.

But just as he began to realize that he was rapidly becoming exhausted, he saw dimly ahead of him in the moonlight across a treeless opening a low bank that gave promise of being an isle of safety.

Toward this he struggled slowly and more slowly as his strength ebbed away. At length, with one last spurt, he drew himself to the edge of the bank, which proved to be blissfully solid.

There he dropped exhausted. For a time he lay panting like a hunted deer. He could no longer hear any sound of pursuing animal in the forest beyond the marsh, but if he had, it would not have mattered, for he had not enough energy left to move hand or foot.

Gradually his breathing grew easier, and a comfortable languor embraced the limbs that were at last too utterly worn with fatigue even to feel an ache. The moonlight-painted shadows of the forest gradually faded away. Finally the brain that was striving so hard to comprehend it all ceased to act.

Creighton Avery slept.

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER CRIME.

THERE is no knowing how long the newly christened sand-hog would have slumbered had not the Montreal express thundered by. The bank on which Avery had slept proved to be the support of the railroad. His scheme for finding his way back to Malvin Lake station had worked out better than he had planned, for the little stream had led him to the railroad, and at a point which he believed could not be far from the village.

And at that instant the train gave him his needed clue to direction by a prolonged whistle that indicated its approach to a stopping-place.

Somewhat refreshed by this brief slumber, Creighton arose and started down the track after the retreating tail-lights. In half an hour's time he hoped to be established in the little narrow bed in the tiny attic room.

In a few minutes he reached the station. Two or three hangers-on were still about the door, talking to the agent. Avery was stealing by unobserved in the shadow of a row of freight-cars, when a word from one of the men caught his ear and caused him to pause.

"Have they caught them fellers yet?" the listener heard.

"Not a word heard from 'em," was the reply. "I reckon they won't, either, but it'll be mighty unpleasant fer tramps in this county fer one spell."

"Funny thing about that boarder at Horton's."

"What was that?" asked another voice.

"Didn't you hear?" replied the first. "They was tellin' me down to the store this evenin'. Seems a feller came on this late train last night and went to board to Horton's. He said his name was Brown, but didn't seem to want to talk; mighty quiet cuss. Well, he went to his room right off and seemed to go to bed. This mornin' he was gone when they called for breakfast. His clothes were all there jest as though he had left 'em where he undressed. He ain't been heard from since. They say there was initials on some of his underclothes that wan't nothin' like Brown. They think he was one of the gang. Probably had another outfit in his grip, and sneaked out to join the others. They'll be something more doin' round here yet."

The party broke up after a few more inconsequential remarks, and left Creighton Avery to his thoughts.

So there was no further doubt about the commission of a crime in the neighborhood, and the young millionaire was suspected of connection with it, not only in his present guise, but in the other false one in which he had entered town. Plainly he could not safely show himself in that region again without going into disagreeable explanations.

For a few moments he leaned against the freight-car and thought it over. Then he hit on a desperate plan.

As soon as things were quiet, he might burglarize his boarding-house, steal his own clothes and grip, and walk the track to the next town. There he could clean up, recuperate, and plan a search for the gipsy queen under more favorable auspices.

But suppose he should be caught? Well, he would go to jail, of course, and be obliged to explain the whole muddle, and perhaps call on his name and resources to free him. But he would then be no worse off than if he went out boldly and knocked at the door for admittance. For he was already suspected of a connection with a crime, and

would have to take his chances at trial and exposure just the same.

He hesitated no longer. Creighton Avery, alias Sand-Hog Percy, was taking the degrees of trampdom rapidly. At dawn that day he had involuntarily entered the guild as a gay-cat. A little later he had been advanced to the full-fledged hobo grade. Now at midnight he was about to enter the ranks of the yeggs.

It was with some difficulty that he found the road from the station he had traversed in the village but the night before. But after following two or three false leads, he hit upon the right one, in a short time stood before the Horton house.

Stealing noiselessly around the yard in the dim moonlight, he reached the low porch which he had seen under his window when he arose that morning. But, alas! Above the little sloping roof were two windows. His room had only one. Which was his?

Thus again was the simplest of circumstances seriously complicated.

Trelliswork, overgrown with wistaria, ran up the side of the little porch from floor to roof. To climb this would be a simple matter. But once up there, which window should he enter? It would make quite a difference whether he climbed into the wrong or the right room.

He thought of the possibility of entering the house by one of the doors. But that was out of the question. He would have to force a lock, and even were he able to accomplish this noiselessly, it would be impossible to find his own room in that dark, unfamiliar dwelling.

Squatting in the shadow of a little evergreen, he waited for some half hour or more, puzzling over the dilemma. Then came an unexpected answer to the problem.

A light appeared in the window to the right, and through the uncurtained opening he saw a woman enter with a candle. Setting down the light, she came over and leaned across the window-sill. There for some moments she remained, apparently enjoying the moonlight and night air.

The other room, then, must be the unoccupied one in which were his much-needed belongings.

At that instant Creighton heard, or fancied he heard, a stir in the bushes at his right. Then, as if it were an echo, came another movement over at the left.

The watcher sank back further into the shadow, and waited motionless, his back to the tree, prepared to defend himself. Had he walked deliberately into a trap?

But there was no further sound. In a moment the face at the window disappeared, and the shade was drawn down. Still Creighton made no movement.

The light went out. Presumably the woman had retired. Still he waited. There was no further stir around him, and at last he concluded that he had suffered from overwrought imagination. At any rate, he was not going to turn back.

He crept across the lawn, and into the shadow of the vine at the left-hand side of the porch. Slowly, inch by inch, he climbed the trellis, and reached the roof of the porch in safety. Up under the sill of the left-hand window he hitched himself, and there for a time lay and listened for any possible stir within.

At length, convinced that all was safe, he rose to his knees and investigated the window. To his surprise and delight, it was wide open. No breaking would be necessary.

The next moment, without having made so much sound as the beating of an insect's wing, he stood, ostensibly a burglar, in the room whose possession was legally his, by virtue of his having paid the rental a week in advance.

In the faint moonlight that came through the tiny window, he could just make out the dim outline of the bed. How seductive it looked to that deplorably dirty and utterly weary amateur tramp! What a temptation to alter his program, and simply undress and creep under the sheets! Why not trust to telling some plausible story in the morning that would allay suspicion?

He took a cautious step, feeling his way along the wall, then fate took a hand again.

As he made that careful move his foot touched something soft. The something immediately sprang into life, with a yowl and hiss that, to an impassioned listener, would instantly have convicted it of being one of the common or garden variety of domestic cat. But to the overwrought ears of the housebreaker it suggested the possibilities of nothing less than a panther.

The animal instinctively made a dash for the window, but instead landed in the face of the man who had disturbed its slumbers. He dodged and fell over the chair with a crash that seemed to shake the house to its foundations.

In wild alarm, Creighton jumped to his

feet. He stood for a moment rooted to the floor with horror. There was a sound of hurrying bare feet.

Then the door of his room burst open, and a flood of light shone in his face.

Framed in the doorway, candle in one hand, and a heavy revolver in the other, stood a night-shirted man. He was a veritable object lesson in how not to hunt a burglar, the finest kind of a mark for the shot of the professional.

But Creighton Avery was not a professional. Without stopping to criticize the fellow's form, he turned and dived through the window, in faithful imitation of the startled pussy that had just preceded him. A bullet followed him closely, but by good fortune sang just over his head.

Creighton clutched wildly at the fringe of vine that edged the porch-roof, and slid over its side. The next instant he was on the ground, badly tangled in the pile of wistaria, whose wrenching tendrils had broken his fall.

As he scrambled to his feet, and tore himself loose, there were more shots overhead, and a wild whoop of "Stop thief!"

He heard a stir all over the house. Somewhere up the road the door of another dwelling slammed. There were hurrying feet across the lawn.

Creighton bent low and fled.

Over a fence and across an orchard he raced. Shouts of "There he is!" followed, then more shouts and the drumming of many feet.

His pursuers were gaining steadily. Avery's tired knees were ready to crumple under him. Looking back over his shoulder, he saw two dark forms draw away from the rest of the pack. They were almost upon him.

In that instant he stumbled over a stone, and in the next he was grabbed by his pursuers.

CHAPTER VII.

BY RAIL AND TIE.

CAPTURED at last!

With two pairs of hands clenched upon his person, Creighton clambered to his feet. He experienced a feeling almost of relief. He was, indeed, about to face a trying ordeal, but he had, at any rate, escaped being shot in the back by over-enthusiastic man-hunters.

If they'd only give him the chance to try it, perhaps a liberal application of hush-money would induce rural justice to keep the facts of his escapade safely locked in its bosom.

But the next moves of his captors were both a surprise and a puzzle. As he rose to his feet, one of them clapped a hand on the back of his neck, and forced him to a stooping position.

"Keep down," rasped a rough whisper in his ear. "Don't make a sound."

Then, in this crouching position, which his guards imitated, he was hustled along in the shadow of a rail-fence to a jutting corner of woodland a few yards away. Just as they reached the shelter of the trees, the stragglers in hue and cry swept past.

Swiftly and silently Creighton and the two sped along the margin of the woods. In a wide detour they avoided the scattered houses of the village outskirts. In the distance the sounds from the other misled pursuers grew fainter.

What could be the game of this pair? Again and again the captive tried to study their faces, but the moon had dropped behind the woodland, and it was now almost pitch dark.

Soon they reached the railroad track, that pivot about which the adventures of the day had centered. A freight-train was clanking along toward them, under its own momentum, while its engine raced on ahead to the water-tank the other side of the village.

Alongside the track Creighton was led toward the approaching string of cars that were dimly discernible in the light of a brakeman's lantern. A moment later they passed a switch-light, and for the first time the prisoner got a clear view of his companions' faces. He nearly dropped in his tracks from sheer surprise.

The pair were none other than his old friends Bill the Canuck and Ottawa Mike!

Then this precious duo had not been so sound asleep in the woods when he stole away from them! Why had they let him go and then followed him? What was their present purpose? But there was no chance for questions. The pair evidently meant to board that freight.

The first of the cars had rumbled slowly past them. The Canuck began feeling along the side of each as it came by.

"Hadn't we better hit the rods?" asked Mike.

"Goin' to take a chance on a side door first," the other replied.

Just then a "shack," as tramps call a brakeman, ran along the top of the cars, bearing a lantern, and with a curse Canuck dragged his companions back into the shadow.

"Made me miss four cars!" he growled, when the fellow had safely passed, and they resumed the examination.

Soon a different note in the rattle of a certain car caught the expert ears of the Canuck, and he turned and followed it. The train was moving now at little more than the rate of a man's walk.

But just as the tramp discovered the object of his search, there came to their ears above the dying rumble a confused shouting far down the track. Creighton concluded that the other pursuers were making a search of the railroad.

"Them yaps'll frisk the train fer us!" growled Mike.

"Here is an empty all right!" shouted the Canuck. "Quick. Help me pitch him in. He'll only fumble it alone."

Before Creighton realized what had happened, he was grabbed, lifted, and thrown at the black bulk of the car. But instead of striking the perpendicular side and falling back, as he instinctively expected, he shot through a black opening, and landed on a moving floor. The Canuck had succeeded in getting the door open.

The hoboes tumbled in after him, and closed the door. It was none too soon. By now the train had come to a dead stop. There was a confusion of voices outside. Several times feet raced over the roof.

The searchers were overhauling the train, as Mike had predicted. It was a natural inference on their part that a fugitive tramp would make a run for a freight passing so opportunely.

Once a lantern flashed under the door, and they heard a hand fumbling at the lock. The Canuck braced himself tight against the portal.

"Be ready to fight if they open it!" he whispered.

But finally all suspicious sounds ceased. The engine recoupled, and they were soon jolting over the rails at twenty-five miles an hour.

"Now," demanded Avery, "explain yourself, you two. How did you happen to be on the spot? Why did you let me get away from you and then snatch me back? You're a prize pair of mysteries. Much obliged, though, just the same. I'm glad you got me before those other fellows did."

"Why, Percy dear"—it was Mike who explained this time—"we didn't swallow that ghost story of yours a little bit. We knew you were no hobo, nor any kind of imitation of one, and you wa'n't playin' hobo fer any love of the game. That bum health story didn't listen good to us.

"If you was a bull disguised, we figured you was either doin' it it mighty raw or had a game too slick fer us to see through. So we jest pretended to be asleep, and give you some rope to see what ye would do. We follered ye right around, and was ready to drop in an' divvy the swag with ye if ye made away with any. Yer raw at second-story work, though, ain't ye?"

"We won't ask ye any disagreeable questions now, till yer ready to put us next," spoke up the Canuck, and his tone was distinctly more respectful than it had been before. "Yer a city man, and new to the crook game, all right, but you been pullin' off something big all right, somewhere. Jest what yer trying to frisk that little boardin' house fer, beats me, but ye had good reasons. Now we can see yer green at the getaway business, and we're old hands. We'll jest stay by ye fer a spell, and help ye out. We done ye a couple of favors already, and maybe by and by ye can do us some."

The fellow's meaning slowly dawned on Avery. The tramp had him sized up as an absconding cashier, or something of that sort, and had hopes that he and Mike would come in for a share of the plunder. He decided not to attempt to undeceive them at present.

"You fellows are a clever pair," was his noncommittal comment. "I'll see to it that you are well paid for helping me out."

The thunder of the train was not conducive to conversation, and little more was said. Soon all three stretched out on the swaying car floor and slept, not the sleep of the just, but one practically as good. Anyhow, there was no sham about it this time.

It must have been the stopping of motion and the attendant quiet that finally awoke them. They opened the door a cautious crack, and daylight streamed in. There was no sound without.

They ventured to make the opening a little wider and reconnoiter. The car had

been dropped on a siding at a quiet little mountain station. The train had gone on, and there was apparently no one in sight.

As a matter of caution, the Canuck thought they had better desert the railroad during the daytime. They dropped out of the car and slunk away across fields without adventure. That morning Creighton had a lesson in begging his meals, a novel experience, indeed, for the man who could have bought out the entire countryside with a year's spending money.

In this they were quite fortunate, and retiring to a woodlet, they breakfasted well and then fell to for more sleep.

When Creighton awoke it was near noon, and his companions were still sleeping or pretending to sleep. He would not dare presume that the slumber was the real thing this time.

The embryo tramp was surprised to find how refreshed he was. Life in the open bade fair to agree with him. He was stiff and sore from exertion, to be sure, but he had a surprisingly clear head and a roaring appetite.

But what to do next was the question that worried him. Had he better try to shake his companions, return to Malvin Lake, and make another attempt to get his clothes? It would not be easy to elude these wily citizens, to begin with. And it would be decidedly risky to attempt to invade Malvin again just now. This time he was guilty of a real offense—two of them, house-breaking and stealing rides on the railroad.

There was only one thing to do—beat his way to New York, go by night to his father's stately Fifth Avenue home, and, bribing the caretaker into silence, reequip himself in gentlemanly raiment.

He would stick by Mike and the Canuck for the present. They would be very useful in helping him over the underground line.

When his companions awoke, Creighton announced that he must get to New York as quickly as possible, as he needed to meet some people there. The tramps did not demur in the least, but readily agreed to accompany him.

The rest of the day they spent in the woods, the old-timers taking advantage of the opportunity to give their pupil instruction in all the various methods of "holding down" the trains.

Starting out early that evening, they walked the ties for several miles till they struck the next water-tank. There they waited for the Montreal express. When that train stopped for water, they remained hidden a little ahead of the engine till after it had started, then caught the "blind baggage," as the front platform of a baggage-car from which no door leads is called. Creighton nearly had an arm wrenched from its socket by the process, but with the aid of his companions, finally landed safely.

The ride that followed Mr. Avery will probably never forget. Sitting with his back against the car on that swaying platform, from which he expected momentarily to be thrown, it seemed to him as though every particle of cinders that left the engine and every molecule of dust on the road-bed rose up and smote his face. It felt like the bombardment of an ice-storm. He choked and gasped for breath.

To cap the climax of misery, just as they were slowing down for the next station, the fireman discovered them and turned on the hose. Not content with drenching them, he next pelted them with chunks of coal.

"We'll have to jump!" bawled the Canuck. "Soon's she slows a little more we'll drop off, and hop back on the next platform. Then we'll deck her before she stops, and they'll think we beat it."

A moment later the leader gave the signal by jumping himself. Creighton followed, but did it a little awkwardly and spun around like a top when he hit the ground. But the Canuck, with unerring precision, had made the next platform, and reaching out, caught the arm of the staggering young man and snatched him aboard. Then Mike followed.

Without stopping to explain what he meant by "decking," the Canuck clambered onto the platform rail, his head between the ends of car-roofs, and placing one hand on each, gave a spring and drew himself up till he was able to clamber to the roof, or "deck" of the forward car.

Then he lay on his stomach and reached down both hands.

"Boost him up, Mike," he shouted.

Creighton at once found himself beside the Canuck. The other tramp followed. It was a job-hanging to that swaying, sloping roof even at reduced speed, but the Canuck soon fixed that.

By the time the train stopped, Creighton was lying on one side of the sloping roof bound round the waist by a stout clothesline which the provident Canuck had produced from somewhere in his clothes. The

other end of the line was bound similarly around Mike, who lay on the opposite slope.

Thus the two lay suspended over the back of the coach as the old-fashioned farmer carried his grain to market hung in two sacks over the back of his horse. Canuck, the manipulator, was somewhere ahead clinging to a ventilator.

Thus they rode into Utica. It is doubtful if Creighton ever in his life heaved a more heartfelt sigh of relief than when he was allowed to slide down from that slippery, rolling, cinder-swept perch.

In the Utica train-yards they found a through freight starting for Albany. Thereupon the novitiate received a practical demonstration of the art of "riding the rods" and one which cost the party dear before they got through with it.

As the train started Creighton was assisted on to those narrow crosspieces a few inches below the body of the car just over the track. He lay there with his arms wound about the rod, his companions stretched out on the other side of him. It was cramped and uncomfortable, but on the whole preferable to the giddy, swaying peril of the express "deck."

It was near daylight when they slowed down for water a few miles west of Albany. In a moment a "shack" came along, peering here and there under the cars. Although the trio could have sworn he must have seen them, he passed on unheeding.

"Didn't dare tackle us alone," whispered Mike. "He'll be back with another in a minute. Hadn't we better beat it? A bum in Utica told me the shacks killed a tramp on this line last week."

The hoboes untwisted their legs preparatory to running, but at that moment the train started on, and they decided it had been a false alarm.

But Creighton noticed that the Canuck was watching the forward truck anxiously. In a moment he saw the cause of the hobo's apprehension. A heavy iron coupling-pin hung to the end of a rope, appeared dangling below the brake-beam The rope was quickly lengthened out by some person hidden behind the end of the car till the heavy metal slug struck the ties.

Instantly Creighton saw the purpose of this diabolical device of shacks to dislodge tramps from the rods. Each time the coupling-pin hit a tie as the train sped along it bounded up and struck the bottom of the car with the force of a sledge-hammer.

All the brakeman on the bumper at the end of the car had to do was to lengthen out the rope till the coupling-pin reached its mark. Then the tramp had a perilous choice between jumping and being hammered to pieces.

Creighton watched, fascinated, as the thing approached. But the Canuck evidently had a plan of action. He crept forward on his rod as far as possible, shielding his face with one arm. Fortunately for him the pin struck him only a couple of glancing blows.

Then as it passed he reached for the rope. Several times he made the attempt before he succeeded in capturing it.

Then, just as the Canuck was about to draw it out of harm's way, the serpentlike object made one last vicious strike and caught Mike in the ribs. The hobo gave a yell that could be heard above the roar of the wheels. He lost his grip on the rod, and had not Creighton reached out and steadied him, he must surely have fallen under the wheels. Then his limbs relaxed and he hung limp on his perilous support.

CHAPTER VIII.

TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.

THE accident to Mike proved to be one more link in the chain of circumstances that bound the wandering millionaire in the thrall of hoboland.

He had confidently counted on being in New York in another day. His family were away for the summer. No one but the caretaker would know of his plight, and that person's mouth he had planned to stop effectually by an artful tale backed up by a good cash payment.

But the injured hobo, though not so severely hurt as they had feared at first, was badly bruised and would not be able to move for some days to come.

Indeed at the time the other two had little hope that he would ever move again. Creighton had clung to the limp figure as the train rattled on, uncertain whether he was supporting a corpse or a living man.

The Canuck did not dare leave his position forward for fear there would be a second attempt on the part of the shack. Meanwhile, with the coupling-pin safely in hand, the hobo kept jerking the rope in a realistic style to keep the enemy from discovering his move.

Finally a whistle for down brakes resolved the situation, and as soon as the train slowed up sufficiently, Creighton and the Canuck clambered off the rods and dragged the unconscious man with them.

So it came about that they established themselves in a little lumberman's shanty they found in the woods. Mike, when brought to his senses, could discover no broken bones, but complained of severe internal pains. It seemed likely that in this little nook, about half-way between Utica and Albany, as they estimated, they would have to linger for some time.

It soon became apparent to Avery, in fact, that he must await the pleasure of his self-appointed guardians; that he was to all practical intents and purposes a prisoner.

The realization of this condition came gradually. That first day in the new quarters he had been too travel-weary to regret a little enforced idleness. He had readily acquiesced when the Canuck announced that he was going out "battering for grub," and that Creighton could act as nurse for Mike. It had not occurred to him to resent the tone of implied authority.

Curled up on a bed of pine-boughs he slept that night like a dead man. He awoke feeling like a young giant, and filled with a sense of new self-confidence. The first soreness of his muscles had disappeared. These days of vigorous outdoor exercise, plain food and complete abstinence from cigarettes had shown immediate results in the constitution that had not lost its initial vigor.

"Well, me fer the pike agin," announced the Canuck after they finished a breakfast of boiled eggs, green corn, and coffee prepared over the camp-fire. "Take good care of Mike, Percy, me boy. Don't let him have too rich food while I'm away. Doctor's orders, ye know," he wound up with unusual facetiousness.

"I think I'll be leaving you to-day," announced Creighton with easy confidence. "Mike is a lot better this morning. Thanks to your instructions I can beat my way alone pretty well, and I've got to get into New York by to-morrow."

The face of the Canuck clouded at once. Mike grinned.

"So ye want to give us the slip, do ye?" growled the former.

"Oh, no, indeed!" hastily rejoined Avery. "I haven't forgotten my promise to pay you well for helping me. You give me an address where I can send it, and I'll mail you a good bundle of coin in any form you want it."

"I don't see any security fer that line of hot air," muttered the hobo.

"Aw, say, Percy, boy," Mike put in amiably, "stay around another day. I need ye."

Creighton saw signs of a gathering storm in the faces of his companions and decided it would be better to bide his time a little. It would be easy enough to give Mike the slip after the Canuck departed.

"Just as you fellows say," he agreed, after a moment's thought. "I can arrange it all right, I guess."

The Canuck started off as though the subject were dismissed. Then after a few steps, he turned back suddenly as if impelled by an afterthought.

"Guess we better clean them guns before I go out," he announced.

To the surprise of Creighton, the hoboes each drew from his pocket a bulldog revolver of large caliber. The Canuck deliberately cleaned each of them, the other meantime lying loaded at Mike's side.

Creighton had supposed hitherto that his companions were unarmed. The shotgun taken from the countrymen had been abandoned as too clumsy for their style of railroad travel.

While the cleaning process was going on, the pair paid not the slightest attention to their guest. He saw at once, however, that this was in the nature of military maneuvers meant as a demonstration of power to overawe a possible insurrection.

The Canuck had been gone an hour or so, when it occurred to Creighton to test his patient a little.

"I think I'll just step over the brow of that hill a minute and see what's beyond," he said easily, taking a step in that direction. "I'll be right back."

"Don't go," rejoined the other with something more than pleading in his voice. "I want ye near me. My side pains me. Let me show ye this gun. It's a beauty."

Creighton turned. Mike had spoken softly as usual, but with a little undertone of firmness. He was smiling, but there was an unwonted sternness in the brown eyes. He was holding the pistol out toward Creighton as if for his inspection, but the muzzle was pointed directly at the young man's head.

The two eyed each other for a moment. Then Avery stepped forward, hand outstretched as if to take the weapon.

"Don't touch it," breathed Mike softly, but with that same undertone of firmness. "It goes off very easily."

The two still eyed each other for a moment. Now there was a silent understanding. Mike saw it. He placed the weapon on the ground beside him.

"Better stay where ye can watch me," he whispered. "I might have a relapse."

Then they changed the subject.

That evening the Canuck passed over to Mike a paper which he read with frequent exclamations of surprise and pleasure. The Canuck took it and read it himself. Then he folded it up carefully and returned it to his pocket. There was no offer to let Avery share in this literary pleasure.

To this he pretended to pay no attention, but all that evening he had the uncomfortable feeling that he was being closely studied by two pairs of eyes, and that his companions were exchanging numerous significant winks and glances. He thought of making his escape while they slept, but remembered his former experience, and decided to run no risk of another false move.

What could be the significance of that paper?

Creighton pretended to sleep early. For an hour or more thereafter his companions discussed some important subject, but in tones so low that, try as he might, Avery could get no hint of it.

The next day the Canuck started away unusually early, announcing briefly that he might not be back that evening. Mike was feeling much better, and helped to pass the time with numerous picturesque accounts of his adventures. Creighton, planning an escape meanwhile, made no more overt breaks, but rather let it appear that he had abandoned any idea of moving till the others were ready to do so.

Evening came and no Canuck. Avery followed his usual policy of retiring early and feigning sleep. Mike did likewise. Creighton feared the hobo's sleep was unreal, so made no move to escape, but bided his time.

At first the young man's busy thoughts kept him awake. Then followed a long battle against drowsiness. Finally he succumbed, only to awaken with a start. A moment he listened, then he heard a low whistle.

Mike started, then Creighton heard him creep over toward the corner where he himself was lying. He kept perfectly still, breathing evenly, as though in deep slumber, but ready to spring if attacked.

But apparently the hobo was merely satisfying himself that their guest slumbered, for after bending over him silently for a moment or two, he crept to the open front of the shack and answered the whistle in kind.

Creighton heard stealthy steps, and two more dim silhouettes appeared beside Mike in the opening. There was a tiny gleam of light, and the watcher, rising on an elbow, saw that the trio had squatted around a little lantern at the entrance. They were studying a paper in the hands of the Canuck, and discussing it in low tones.

Curiosity got the better of Creighton's discretion. Stealthily he rolled off his pile of boughs, and crept up behind the council of three.

The first words he heard gave him the surprise of his life.

"But how am I to know that this is really young Creighton Avery?" It was the voice of a stranger, the third party to the conference.

"You gotta take our word fer it till ye sign this paper," replied the Canuck. "What d'ye expect? Think we'll let yet see the man an' then go an' get some deputies an' take him away from us? Then we'd have a fat chance o' gettin' any reward."

"But," returned the other, "suppose this fellow ain't Avery at all, and I sign a paper agreein' to give each o' you a third o' this ten thousand dollars reward? Then a little later I might land the boy myself, and you could step in and claim part of the money just the same."

The pair were getting heated, and were unconsciously talking louder and louder.

"You two better get a little furder away," interposed Mike. "That gink in there'll wake up. Just as well not to have him hearin' things."

The pair were getting heated, and were some distance into the shrubbery. Mike remained on guard. Creighton hastily slipped back to his boughs, and none too soon, for Mike immediately satisfied himself by another inspection that the prisoner had not been aroused. Then the hobo crept back to the opening where he stood

listening intently for any further sounds of disagreement.

In Creighton's startled brain a conclusion and a purpose were rapidly whirling themselves into place. There was, he gathered from what he had overheard, a reward of ten thousand dollars offered for his capture. Evidently, then, in some mysterious way, his real identity had been discovered at Malvin Lake, and he had been accused of some crime, which, judging from the size of the reward, must, indeed, be a serious one. The mysterious paper of the day before had been his description sent out by the police.

At present every bit of incriminating evidence was likely to be against him. Now his pretended pals were trying to sell him to the sheriff, to be punished for a crime of which he was innocent and they were guilty!

He must not let himself be arrested yet. He must have his freedom to go back to the scene of his misfortunes, and gather some evidence to offset this diabolical chain of lying misadventure. Perhaps he could find the real culprit, or least remain in hiding till the fellow should be captured.

He hesitated no longer. Swiftly and silently he arose from the boughs, and crept up behind the unconscious Mike. Then, with a spring he had his man, one hand over his mouth, and the other on his revolver pocket. The next instant he had the muzzle of that weapon pressed against the hobo's head.

"One sound or move and you get this through the head," whispered Creighton.

With some rope he found in the hobo's own pocket, he bound and gagged him. Rolling him on to his own bed of boughs, he left him.

Avery's first and natural impulse was to slink away as quickly and quietly as possible, and leave the wranglers to find their prize had slipped out of their fingers. But a step or two into the bushes and he heard the low but earnest voices of the pair, and simultaneously came to him a desperately brilliant impulse.

Stealing through the bushes he found the Canuck and the officer still arguing over the paper, squatting on the ground before the little lantern.

Creighton pulled his hat over his face, and stepping up suddenly, thrust Mike's revolver into the lighted circle over the lantern.

"Hands up," he growled.

Both obeyed instinctively, and the Canuck in his surprise lost his balance, and sprawled back on the ground. Before he recovered himself, Creighton had his revolver away from him and was covering both men.

"Excuse me, sir," he said to the officer. "I don't intend to include you in this hold-up any longer than is necessary to explain myself. I feared you might shoot in a moment of excitement. I am a private detective on the trail of a gang of which these two are prominent members. You have fallen into a trap. The man you are after is not here. Just slip your handcuffs on this fellow. You'll find another crook bound and gagged over in the cabin. Hold both these fellows in jail till you hear from me. There's another fellow I must nab, so I'll leave you right here."

Without waiting for any one to recover himself, or ask any questions, Avery turned on his heel and disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE TRAMPS' CONVENTION.

It was early evening of the second day since the much-wanted Creighton Avery had turned his would-be betrayers over to the law and at the same time escaped its clutches himself. Up from the New York Central tracks two shabby figures made their way.

At the top of the embankment the pair paused and surveyed a scene of activity no less picturesque than squalid. It was a camp, and a big one; but so hopelessly disordered, so nondescript in character, and so strewn with rubbish and filth that it would have made an army officer faint to see it.

The hoboes were in convention, one of those characteristic gatherings of a semi-formal nature in which the underworld delights.

The newcomers picked their way past numerous improvised shelters, manufactured of waste lumber, old rails, broken barrels, and other bits of inland flotsam and jetsam. Here and there small camp-fires gleamed. More or less ill-favored men of all ages strolled about.

But the strangers made their way past all this to a huge pyre that blazed near the center of the encampment. Around it appeared to be gathered the majority of the

convention. Everywhere was the sound of song and laughter.

Skirting around this group, the pair proceeded, eying the shouting, singing hoboes closely as they went. Suddenly one of the two stopped with a shout of recognition.

"Why, it's Limber Slim!" came a voice from the crowd, and then a general chorus of "Hello, Slim!" "Who's yer pal?" "Tell us yer ghost-story!"

"Boes," returned he addressed as Slim, "shake hands with Sand-Hog Percy."

And, in fact, this disreputable-looking young person thus newly introduced to assembled hobodom was none other than our young multimillionaire friend, Creighton Avery.

Immediately after completing his grand coup with the two hoboes and the officer of the law that night he had taken a rapid and devious course away from the scene of his latest adventure. There was a chance that his bluff would work for only a moment, and that there would be an immediate pursuit. He avoided the railroad-track that night as being the place where he would most probably be sought.

His hope was that the tramps would be held on suspicion for a while at least, and their story as to his own identity be so discredited that for the time being suspicion would be diverted from his present guise as Sand-Hog Percy.

If the county officials he had just hoodwinked would only hold the tramps, he had a scheme whereby he believed he could trace out the chief criminal and convict the gang.

Added to the desire to free himself from unjust suspicion was a growing zest in his new occupation of amateur detective. The discovery that he was actually wanted by the law, and wanted badly, and that there was a considerable sum of money at stake, made it a gamble that he was beginning to enjoy keenly.

His plan of action was this:

Mike and the Canuck at their first acquaintance had told him incidentally that they were on their way to a tramp convention near Syracuse, and that all the bums in the Eastern section of the country would be there. Creighton inferred, therefore, that the yegg who had pulled off the Malvin job and stolen his clothes and identity while escaping would go on and join the crowd at Syracuse.

Creighton would make his way hither at once and search for a clue. If he got any evidence he could then return to Malvin Lake boldly, tell his family an ingenious story of a kidnaping, and all would be well, though evidently he would have to defer his visit to the gipsy queen.

The following day he slept in a haystack, and at night caught a freight to Utica without considerable incident. He was fast becoming an experienced tramp. In the Utica yards he met the hobo Slim, and together they held down the blind of an express into Syracuse the following evening.

So here he was ready for his work as a detective.

After Slim's general introduction Creighton went about scraping acquaintances and comparing each new face with the memory of that leering countenance he had seen for a moment that morning while he shivered in the lake and watched its owner make way with his garments. He had small fear that if he did find the man he sought he would recognize his victim now.

The new hobo found himself a curiosity among this motley crowd.

"Get next to his lingo," Slim had said on introducing him. "He's worked a lot of games among the Fifth Avenue swells, and got so used to their talk that he hands it out habitual."

That was the explanation he had allowed Slim to gather when he had met him in Utica. By this means he was relieved of the necessity of betraying his ignorance of hobo slang.

But now the songs, reciting, and story-telling were beginning, and the novitiate found himself interested for the next hour. First, as on all such occasions, came the ballad of the great convention in Montreal in the early nineties. Then came that touching song, "The Dying Hobo," which tells the tale of the tramp's life from beginning to end. There were many tales by different individuals, told with a vigor and eloquence that would have done credit to a professional story-teller. The amateur hobo and detective was rapidly acquiring a valuable insight into the ways and point of view of the tramp. And all the time he was listening keenly for some hint of the incident at Malvin Lake.

At length came his opportunity to score. It was during the recital of the famous catalogue of the bums, in which a tramp con-

vention delights. Some fellow near the fire began with the two stock stanzas:

We were two weeks out from Frisco, eastbound for Chicago
When the head shack ditched us at a town the other side of Fargo.
Said he, "And if you are a bum and not a cat or chronicker,
Just step up to that water-tank and there put up your moniker."

I went up to the water-tank. 'Twas all marked up with chalk;
And there were bums from every town from Frisco to New York.
There was Cincie Dan and Billy Moran and Little Joe the Hook.
And One-Eyed Ike, the Injun Breed and Bible Billy Cook.

There the leader dropped it, and each man around the circle took a turn at improvising a verse made up of the names of bums he knew. Here was Creighton's chance. Perhaps some bum would name Ottawa Mike or Bill the Canuck. That would immediately give him a clue to work on.

But no such luck was his. Instead it soon came his own turn, and he heard cries near him of "Give it in the millionaire lingo, kid."

For a moment he hesitated. He knew he could not manufacture monikers out of whole cloth and get away with it in this crowd. The only ones he knew were the two he hoped to hear from some one else.

But the delay was making the crowd restless, and he was attracting to himself a good deal of unpleasant attention. So, pulling his thoughts together, he gave out this effort:

And there was Mike from Ottawa and Bill the bold Canuck,
They came across the border in rather sorry luck;
But they struck a graft at Malvin with a pal to do the trick,
And the way they slipped it to the bulls was something pretty slick.

The instant he ceased speaking there was a murmur all around him.

"He knows Ottawa Mike and Bill the Canuck!" "What them boys been up to now?" "Thought they was jugged in Montreal!"

"Tell us what you know about those two boes," said a commanding young tramp, stepping forward. "We bums are all pretty interested in those two. They did up some horstile shacks fer us on the Grand Trunk, ye know, and have been doin' time fer it."

Again the impostor did some quick thinking. He had got to tell these men something. He must be guarded in what he told, for they evidently knew more about his former pals than he did.

So in his best Fifth Avenue language he recounted the story of his adventure at Malvin Lake, only not appearing in it personally, but relating the tale as having been told to him by the victim whom he said he had met recently.

At first his manner of telling the tale won great applause, then he noticed as he proceeded a low murmuring of disapproval.

As he finished the narrative he was confronted by another tough-looking individual.

"Looka here," the latter demanded, "what day was it you reckon that pal o' yours had his uniform lifted?"

Creighton scented trouble, but decided that frankness was the safest policy.

"That was on the ninth of the month," he replied after a moment's thought.

"See here," returned the other with an ominous look, "I was in the jug doin' time with Mike an' the Canuck, and we was let out on the eighth. On the mornin' of the ninth we come down through the mountains where you say this trick was pulled off. I saw 'em when they jumped to help that bo the jays was chasin'. They didn't have a thing to do with that trick, whatever it was. I'll go to court for 'em if they're caught. That boy that lifted the clothes wa'n't no hobo either. No bo ever dressed or acted like that. A bo would've cut fer that railroad an' not fer the lake. Say, who are you, anyhow? You're no hobo. You're a spy, a rotten-hearted bull!"

Creighton had made a decided mess of it. He had unwittingly said uncomplimentary things about two popular idols, and with one fell swoop all his theories had been smashed.

Of course, this fellow must be telling the truth when he said he was riding a freight with the other two tramps when the crime was committed, for the time of their release from jail in Montreal and the time of departure of that freight could be too easily proven. He also realized, now that he had seen tramps in mass, of all kinds and description, that the outfit left by the fellow who took his clothes had not originally been those of an ordinary tramp. Creighton's run

through the woods and mud after donning them, and had soon made them too nondescript to be distinct from those of other bums in hard luck.

But there was little time for moralizing or speculating. All about him were cries of "Smash him!" "Kill the bull!"

Creighton drew the two revolvers he still carried and stood with his back to the fire, ready for action. At first the movement had been all toward him. Now he detected a counter-movement.

In the center of this was Slim, the pal he had picked up in Utica, who was remonstrating wildly and striking at everybody in sight.

"He's all right, I tell you!" Slim was shouting.

With his awe-inspiring pistols in hand, Creighton worked over toward his defender. By the time he got there he found there were several others of Slim's way of thinking. Soon it was apparent that the camp was pretty well divided on the subject.

In fact there had been a number on the outskirts somewhat the worse for a supply of cheap whisky, and they were in a condition to fight at anything without much regard to what it was.

In almost no time the convention had broken up into a howling mob of fighters. Creighton, avoided for the moment on account of his pistols, now found himself swept to one side and ignored.

A moment later Slim, fighting like a windmill, worked to the edge of the crowd. He located Avery and, watching his chance, dodged over to him.

"Quick, follow me!" he shouted.

Creighton obeyed. The next instant they were speeding toward the railroad. Some of the fighters noted this, and a few started in pursuit.

A freight was just pulling out.

"I heard her whistle and knew it was our chance," Slim shouted in his companion's ear. "There's some empty refrigerator-cars. I saw 'em when we came. They're goin' to Canada. You better hide in an ice-box and stay there till ye git to Canada. I'd stay there this summer. The boes'll have it in fer ye, even after they sober up. I knew you ain't any bull from our talk on the way in. You're jest green. You'll learn. I took a likin' to ye."

They reached the train a little ahead of their pursuers. Creighton and Slim had just scrambled to the top of a car when a brakeman, wielding a coupling-pin, appeared on the roof of the next car and started for them. At that the hoboes who were following them fell back.

Creighton handed Slim one of his revolvers.

"Don't shoot unless you have to!" he shouted.

The shack hesitated as Slim, with the gun, turned toward him. Then Creighton started along the roof of the car, intending to find one of the empty ice-boxes and hide in it while Slim held the shack.

Thus it was only by chance that he saw looming up suddenly ahead of him in the darkness the gloomy outline of a bridge. With a yell of warning to Slim, he dropped on his face. But the tramp had been too absorbed in watching the brakeman. Creighton looked back just in time to see him struck by the bridge and swept off the end of the car.

How badly he was hurt, or what became of him, Avery never knew. For the present it meant that he was suddenly robbed of a valuable ally. The shack had ducked in time and escaped.

For only a second Creighton was overcome with horror at the accident to Slim. Then he remembered his own peril. He didn't want to be held for shooting a brakeman. Nor did he want his head split open by a coupling-pin.

Within a few feet was the ice-box he sought. He dashed over to it and looked back at the shack. The fellow was just rising to his feet. His face was turned away for the moment. Anyhow, Creighton's move was partly hidden by the dimness.

Without wasting a movement he raised the cover of the ice-box, dropped in, and closed it again.

CHAPTER X.

BOXED IN.

It was an affair very much like an upright coffin in which Creighton suddenly found himself, a tight box, only high enough to stand in and a little over two feet square. Fortunately, the top was loose, so he was not immediately smothered; but he had not been there long before he began to realize that the air was getting foul.

The train was running at high speed, and

it was only by bracing his knees against the side of the box that he kept himself from rattling about like a pair of dice. Such a position proved decidedly cramping.

At length the air became stifling past all endurance. Avery attempted to raise the cover. It refused to budge. He braced himself more firmly and tried again. Still no results. Then he hammered with his fists, all to no avail.

Then the truth dawned upon him. He was locked in this nearly air-tight box and being slowly smothered to death.

Probably, he thought, the door was fitted with a spring-lock. In his haste to hide from the shack he had not thought of such a possibility. What could he do about it? Shouting or pounding in that bedlam of racket was of course futile. He thought of firing his revolver. But that, too, would make no more impression than the snapping of a rope in a gale at sea.

But the thought of his pistol did give him an idea. He felt of the chambers of the weapon and found all six were loaded. By shooting the contents of his weapon through the door and side of the car he would provide six air-holes for himself.

He put this into effect immediately, placing three of the shots through the trap-door and three through the side of the box to give in-take and out-take places.

For a few moments it seemed as though he had only made matters worse. Smoke from the pistol filled the tiny space and left him choking and gasping. He was able to breathe only by working himself up close to the roof by hitching knees and elbows alternately against the sides of the box. Then, with nostrils close to the newly made holes, he got a little air.

After a time, however, the motion of the car started a draft of air, and the smoke gradually cleared away. By the time he was able to let himself down to the floor again he was numb and exhausted from the cramped and straining position.

On they thundered, tossing, rocking, and jarring, every motion of the car striking torture through his frame. Once they stopped, probably for water. The prisoner roared for help at the top of his voice, but no one came.

Finally they stopped again, this time longer than before. He heard the sound of switching around him. Again he shouted. After a time he heard a voice directly over his head.

"Hear the son of a gun!" it said. "He don't like his extra accommodations. What do you think o' that? He's been shooting through the roof."

There was another voice in lower key, whose words Creighton could not get; then the first man again:

"Not much! I'm going to take the cuss across the line into Canada where they hand it to hoboes right. This fellow'll get his. I'm sick of turning bums over to the county officers in the States only to have 'em get off free, or ten days' board in jail at the most. By-by, birdie!"

With this parting taunt the voices faded away, and Avery was left to his by no means pleasant thoughts.

So, after all this effort, his fine detective work had simply made him the more sure of arrest. His only hope was that he would not be recognized as Creighton Avery, the man for whom a ten-thousand-dollar reward was offered, and would simply suffer the penalty of stealing a ride on a train and threatening a brakeman with a gun.

After much shifting and switching the train started on its way again. Now the road was rougher, and Creighton's discomfort correspondingly greater. His body was reduced first to an acute ache, then to numbness.

Added to the physical torture was the thought that kept haunting him — what if the train were wrecked! He constantly saw nightmare visions of himself crushed in that little box or buried alive in a heap of débris where rescuers would never dream of looking, or perhaps imprisoned there while flames slowly licked their way toward him.

Then came intervals when exhausted nature forced delirious sleep. In dreams he lived out the imaginings of his waking moments. Longer and longer became the intervals of slumber, till he realized only vaguely that his car had come to rest. Then, with the cessation of jar and roar, he achieved complete forgetfulness, a mixture of asphyxiation and absolute exhaustion, more a stupor than a sleep.

He was roused suddenly by a volume of rustic profanity just outside the car. Daylight streamed through the bullet-holes. He tried to move, but his numb limbs refused.

"Isn't that the biggest fool blunder ye ever see a railroad make?" was the wind-up of the above-mentioned stream of profanity. "Here I been waitin' two days already fer that car-load o' beef, an' they up an' get the

labels mixed an' leave me an empty refrigerator-car!"

More profanity.

Now Creighton's awakening senses grasped the meaning of these remarks and his pulse quickened with hope. His vindictive brakeman had lost him after all, by this lucky little mix-up in the tags. And at the same moment he thought of a lovely ghost-story for the misinformation of this irate butcher.

Thereat he lifted up his voice, which fortunately was one thing about him that had not lost its use through numbness. As a result, a few moments later he was hauled out of his ice-box by the coat-collar and deposited in a helpless heap on the platform of a little station.

"Don't blame the railroad company, my friend," Creighton vouchsafed soothingly to the amazed meat-market man. "This isn't their fault, and I'm just as mad as you are.

"You see, I'm joining a college fraternity at Syracuse that spreads its initiation out through the whole summer. They stuck me in this ice-box and locked me in. Then they changed the tag on the car so that the fellow who got me would be mad about having his car missent and take it out by beating me up. I expect a delegation of them will be in here on the next passenger-train to see the fun, if they're not here already."

After another season of cursing out the butcher, who seemed on the whole to be a good sort, wound up with, "So they thought they'd have me help 'em with their hazing business, did they? Well, they struck the wrong man. You look all beat out, young fellow. Come home with me and rest up a little. If those pals of yours show up in town we'll take a turn at hazing."

So the ghost-story worked like a charm. Creighton rested at the home of the meat-man that day, and fed and slept to his heart's content, meantime regaling his host and hostess with weird stories of college-life.

This was a little mountain town of northern New York, not far from the Canadian line. Creighton learned to his joy that it was only an hour's ride by rail to Malvin Lake. His host had insisted on his shedding his much mutilated and filthy tramp clothes and accepting an old suit of his. When Creighton finished dressing the next morning and surveyed himself in the glass, he decided, therefore, to continue his rôle of a hazed student and go on to Malvin Lake and study the situation.

He was now in a totally different outfit than any he had been seen in there. His beard had grown so as to considerably disguise his face. He was much leaner and browner and bore with him a new air of self-confidence. He decided that it would be safe to reappear in Malvin if he didn't get too intimate with suspicious persons who had seen him on the last visit.

Accordingly, he bade good-by to his benefactors, with a promise to write to them the story of his subsequent adventures, mentally resolving that when the present entanglement was cleared up, he would send the good people a full and accurate confession.

He struck a farmer who was driving to the next town and thus rode with him half the distance to Malvin. The rest of the way he tramped it.

This proved to be more of a task than he had thought. The last ten miles dragged wearily, and he was decidedly foot-sore and hungry when at last on the edge of the evening he saw Malvin Lake gleaming in the sunset.

At the same moment he caught a delicious odor of cooking supper from among the trees by the roadside, and, needing no other invitation, he plunged into the thicket in the direction of the luring scent. Then he stopped suddenly and almost shouted with surprise and consternation.

CHAPTER XI.

ENTER THE QUEEN.

CREIGHTON'S momentary impression as he struck the little clearing was that he had come upon a small detachment of the hobo convention. There were several straggling camp-fires about which sprawled swarthy, picturesquely clad figures.

But the habitations of these people were tight, neat-looking tents, and here and there were covered wagons. Creighton noticed also that there were a number of gaudily clad women around. These features differentiated this encampment from the hobo community.

It was not, however, the appearance of this camp so unexpectedly that had occasioned his cry of surprise, but a figure standing at the entrance of the largest tent, just as he had so often seen her pause at the stage wings to bow an acknowledgment to repeated applause.

It was the gipsy queen.

It was as though a section of the metropolitan stage had been suddenly transferred to the Adirondack forest. There was the same setting of the gipsy camp, the same motley group of supers. And the queen! Never had she seemed more adorable than now, as she stood in the midst of this real forest dressed just as she had been the last time he saw her disappear behind the scenes at the theater.

Creighton, for the moment forgetful of his ridiculous garb, took a step forward, then stopped with a gasp.

Another figure had stepped up and joined the queen. It was a man dressed in Creighton's own clothes, the suit he had lost by the lake shore. And, yes, there could be no mistake about it, the wearer was the fellow who had stolen them.

The visitor's brain for the moment went blank with bewilderment. Things were happening too fast for him. As he watched the pair his bewilderment grew and it was accompanied with indignation.

It was no chance meeting between these two. They were engaged in intimate conversation. This common criminal was evidently in high favor. But what was Hortense Duré doing here? The thought flashed through Avery's mind that perhaps she had been kidnaped. If so, she appeared to be a most willing victim.

Then another possible solution came to him. Miss Duré may have become enamored of the life she portrayed on the stage and resolved to live it one summer. Doubtless she had taken a number of her friends, hired some rough and ready retainers, a few tents and wagons, and was spending a glorious summer in the open playing gipsy.

But how had this unscrupulous villain managed to impose on her? At the thought Creighton's blood boiled, and he was on the point of stepping up forthwith and giving the fellow the sound thrashing he so richly deserved.

But discretion ruled. On momentary consideration he skirted the camp and approaching a group remote from the queen, asked if they could furnish a weary wanderer with supper and a night's lodging.

He had feared suspicion and incivility. He was pleasantly surprised, therefore, to be received somewhat cordially.

"You do look as thought you needed it," admitted a tall, dark man who spoke with a slight foreign accent. "But we must ask the queen. It is not for us to say. Follow me and we will learn."

So the queen kept her royal title in the woods!

Creighton went with the man somewhat doubtfully. He had considerable faith in his disguise, yet he could not help being a little fearful that he might be recognized, and he was not ready for that until he had ferreted out the mystery.

He need have had no fear, however. Neither the girl nor her companion gave him more than an indifferent glance.

"Do as you please," said she in reply to the request of Avery's escort, then turned back to her friends as if she wished not to be annoyed.

Creighton in a disguised voice thanked her himself.

But before he retired for the night he was more puzzled than ever. In nothing he saw about the camp was there any hint of Broadway origin. If it was a masquerade, it was a most complete and successful one.

The men and women with whom he talked were plainly illiterate and decidedly dirty in their habits. Some of them habitually used a strange foreign speech.

The neat appearance of the tents on first sight, proved deceptive on intimate inspection. Within they were smelly and disordered. But Creighton had become accustomed to all sorts of accommodations, and despite his mental bewilderment, he crawled into a blanket and slept soundly.

The next day he showed no disposition to depart, and no one seemed in a hurry to have him do so. Accordingly he wandered about in apparent aimlessness, but in reality letting nothing escape his eyes in a search for a key to the mystery. He had unexpectedly within his grasp the man who had caused him all his recent trouble. But what could be the fellow's relation to the queen? And how had he best proceed to bring the fellow to justice and free himself?

But that afternoon the question was decided for him in surprising fashion.

He had seen the queen and the crook in his clothes start out for a walk in the woods and, making a circuit so as not to attract attention, he had followed them.

When he came upon them the pair were talking earnestly. Avery crouched behind a bush and listened. And the first words he heard shattered a fond delusion.

"So," came the sarcastic voice of the man, "you are getting so proud that you

are ashamed of your own people and want to desert us. You refuse longer to talk our tongue, and now you say you won't spend another summer with us."

"Why should I?" asked the girl. "I have seen a better way of living. I am no longer happy in this."

"But," returned the other, "you owe all you are to the fact that you are a gipsy. Your old father let you go to school. Then the songs and dances you learned here in this camp made you a favorite with these play-actor people. You were born to the part you have paraded before the big city and you are ashamed to let them know it."

As Creighton listened he felt his pride dropping to the lowest ebb. So this girl in whom he had fancied he saw innate refinement was, after all, nothing but a common gipsy. All her supposed talent was simply the natural, matter-of-fact habit of any gipsy girl. And she did not even possess the homely virtue of gratitude to her own people!

As for this criminal, he was one of them, her intimate, probably her lover, whom she was about to cast aside. But the next thing he heard proved to be a still greater shock to his pride.

"But listen, Jacques," she appealed. "Would you come between me and my future? We can no longer be happy together. I will pay you well to leave me. This Creighton Avery, I tell you, is a millionaire, and if I work him right, as I think I am doing, he will marry me in spite of his father. I'll trust to win over the old man. Meanwhile he mustn't learn who I really am. I will pay you well to let me get a divorce, for I shall never live with you as your wife again."

The fellow on that rushed at the girl in a livid fury. Seizing her two wrists, he drew her face close to his and poured forth a torrent of abuse.

"Now look what you've made of me," he wound up. "I couldn't afford to buy jewels such as these New York men lavished on you. Those I gave you the other day I stole at the hotel, and they are hunting me now. This very suit I have on I stole so that I would look right to you. Now you throw me over. I'll finish all this nonsense right here."

With a quick movement the fellow released the girl's wrists and grasped her throat.

Avery stepped from behind the bush.

"That will do!" he said, the muzzle of his revolver pressed against the gipsy's face.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

THE woman, released by her astonished husband, slipped to the ground in a faint.

"Now, you," went on Avery, giving the pistol an extra jab against the other's temple, "you're good at lightning changes. Just take that suit off before this lady comes to her senses and change with me, and if there's any monkey business you get a bullet right through the head."

In a few more minutes Creighton Avery was once more clad from head to foot in his own raiment. He had turned the tables after many days.

The girl was beginning to stir a little and he saw at a glance that she needed no assistance.

"March!" he ordered the gipsy, placing his pistol between his shoulder-blades.

An hour later the inhabitants of Malvin Lake village were astonished to see this strange pair enter its main street. Avery asked for the constable, and was piloted at once to that official by the dozen hangers-on at the village store.

"Here's the fellow who robbed the hotel," he explained. "I'm a private detective and happened to be working the neighborhood on another case when this came up, so I ran it down."

Then, fearing that in a minute some one would identify him as Creighton Avery, who was still officially wanted in connection with this crime, he hurried away to his boarding-place, promising to appear at the hearing against the fellow.

The news of his spectacular return had already preceded him, so he had no trouble in getting back his belongings.

Half an hour later Creighton Avery was his shaven self again, a little browner and leaner, but much harder of flesh and more self-reliant of mind for his fortnight's experience. He was busy writing letters.

One of them was to the sheriff who was holding his hobo pals, Mike and the Canuck, telling him that the evidence against those worthies had proved to be false and that there was no ground for keeping them longer. Within this letter was another to those two prisoners, enclosing two one-hundred-dollar bills.

"For, after all, the dirty rascals saved my life," mused Creighton.

Then he thought of writing to his friends he had left so summarily in Muskoko. He suddenly stopped short with a groan of despair.

After all, if a reward of ten thousand dollars was out for his capture, all his circle of friends by now knew where he had been. He could tell them no story that would square himself, for he had not the remotest idea how his presence in Malvin had been learned.

He was still wanted in connection with this crime and it was inevitable that he would be identified in the course of the hearing against the prisoner. He must face the music and prove his innocence of course. All his roundabout attempts to avoid exposure had come to naught.

He had gone through all this in hope of getting permission to marry a girl whom his father opposed, only to find in the end that she was already the unworthy wife of a gipsy criminal!

What would Avery Senior say to this escapade? That was the all-important question.

As he paced back and forth, vainly seeking some escape from facing the issue, his eye was caught by the heading of an old newspaper that had been dropped on the floor. It was dated the ninth of the month, the day on which his misadventure began. This was the head-line he read:

MILLIONAIRE AVERY'S SON KIDNAPED, 'TIS FEARED.

The story was dated from Muskoko Lakes, and announced that Creighton Avery of New York had mysteriously disappeared from his camp there and, as kidnapers had been working in the region, it was believed he had been waylaid on his way to the station to start for New York.

He had announced to his friends, the story went on, that he was called to the city by a telegram, the nature of which he did not reveal. He drove over to the station, some miles away, alone, to take a certain train. Immediately after he started something had come up at the camp about which his friends needed information. One of them had driven after him post-haste, but failed to overtake him. Nor did he arrive at the station.

Becoming alarmed, the friend had wired ahead to see if he was on the train. He was not. He had not arrived in New York or any other haunt of his. Immediately his father had been communicated with and a reward offered.

Creighton threw down the paper and laughed long and heartily. So he was never suspected in connection with Malvin Lake. The explanation of the scare was simple. After starting he had decided to drive across to another station, equally distant, and had missed the train he intended to take.

So, with the mystery cleared up, the rest was easy. He wrote two telegrams, one to Muskoko and one to his father. Both read:

Escaped from kidnapers. Letter coming.

"All I've got to do now is to feed them a slightly garbled story of my adventure with Mike and the Canuck, leaving out the gipsy queen," he chuckled.

When the theatrical season opened in New York that fall "The Gipsy Queen" continued its run to undiminished houses. The lady herself was as demure and "refined" as ever off the stage. Now she was free to lure whom she would, for the law had released her from the husband who was putting in his time pounding rocks at Sing Sing.

But it might be said here that among the box-parties of ardent young bloods who came nightly to swell the applause she received, Creighton Avery was conspicuously absent.

THE END.

LOVE'S RETURN.

THE thorn beside the garden gate had stood all winter bare;
To-day, behold, the sudden green was all a twitter there!

To-day I visited my heart—I'd left it stark and lorn—
And little throstle-throated joys were singing in the thorn!

Charlotte Wilson.

RUSSIA'S BLACK PAW

by Casper Carson

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A STARTLING PROPOSAL.

"IT'S all my fault," bewailed Anna bitterly, as they trudged sadly and disconsolately back to the settlement of which they now comprised the whole population.

"No. it's all mine," asserted Blair manfully. "I should have had too much sense to leave the money and car unguarded in the first place, and to leave them so after I knew what you had told those people was nothing short of idiocy. Oh, why, why couldn't I have shown a little common sense?"

"But is there nothing we can do, dear?" Anna replied. "Do you mean to tell me our every hope of escape is absolutely gone?"

Blair thought it better to be perfectly frank.

"I am afraid that is exactly the case, little girl," he said. "Without money or passports, and with the taint of a smallpox camp on us, our show to get away is practically none at all.

"You saw how that guard treated us down the road," he went on. "Well, there are guards just like him all around this settlement, who would feel no more compunction about shooting us down than if we were a couple of rats.

"Then, even if we were to get past the guard-line, where could we go for food or shelter? The dread word smallpox would be enough to close every asylum to us, no matter how favorably the people might be inclined toward exiles, or to the revolutionary cause."

"What then are we to do?" Anna sobbed despairingly.

"The one thing we can do—stay here. Presently, when the quarantine is lifted, the guards will come in, and we must try to pass ourselves off as the couple who have decamped with our car. There will probably be very little question raised on that point, as the guards will be only too ready to help cover up the fact that anybody has escaped.

"Come"—and he tried to cheer her up by simulating a buoyant spirit—"this is not entirely a misfortune after all. We are certainly better off here than we would have been at Turukhansk, and we have gained, too, a big diminution in the length of our sentence. Didn't you say that this couple told you that they had only two years to serve? Pshaw! That will be gone almost before we know it."

But his arguments failed to bring much comfort to either of them. When one has been counting on freedom in two weeks, an extension to two years seems a long, long time.

Still, there was nothing to do but make the best of it, so, when morning dawned again, they fell to discussing plans for their permanent establishment in the place.

There was no use in attempting to settle down in any of the huts already there, Blair pointed out, even if they had not themselves revolted a bit at the idea, because the moment the quarantine was raised everything in the settlement would be given over to the flames.

Consequently the thing to do was to pick out a fresh patch of land and build a new cabin, and Blair announced that he intended to set about this work at once.

First, however, it devolved upon them to pay the last offices of respect to the old music-master, so after Blair had dug a grave under a spreading tree a short distance from the house, they laid him in it, and reciting a portion of the burial service, covered him over and left him to his rest.

Anna tried to sing "Home, Sweet Home," as a part of the simple ceremony, but her emotions overcame her, and she had to give over the effort.

In fact, they were both a good deal depressed as they walked back to the house, and for a long time they sat quietly in the room where the old man had died, talking about him in hushed tones, and speculating as people will at such times on the great riddle of existence.

"Poor old chap," said Blair. "He balked my escape twice—once at the fortress in St. Petersburg, and again when he got us to stop over here. But I bear him no ill-will on account of it. He acted honestly, according to his lights. May he rest in peace."

So they talked on, until the sun had risen high and it was getting along toward noon, when Kellogg, with the remark that if they were going to select a location for their house, they had better be setting about it, rose and started for the door.

As he opened it he started back with a slight exclamation, for there, coming out from the woods at the back of the settlement, and evidently heading toward the cabin, was a man in the uniform of the guards.

Moreover, there was something furtive and uneasy about the manner of his approach which instantly aroused Blair's suspicion.

"They're certainly not raising the quarantine yet," he muttered, "and I don't see what else this fellow would be coming around for. He acts to me as if he wasn't up to any good.

"Anna," he called over his shoulder, "you stay under cover until I have a word or two with this chap and find out just who he is and what he wants."

Then, closing the door carefully behind him, he leaned up against the wall of the cabin, and with a somewhat challenging air, awaited the other's approach.

The man came straight ahead until he was within a dozen feet or so of Kellogg, then paused, and without saying a word touched the finger of his right hand to his forehead, while at the same time the little finger of his left hand described the figure of a cross over his heart.

Instantly Blair divined the significance of the action. This was some revolutionary messenger, who had mistaken him for old Berloff.

On impulse he returned the sign, and held out his hand in welcome.

"Hail, true brother!" he said. "Have you some word for me?"

The man came closer, gazing at him searchingly.

"Are you 'Z3'?" he demanded.

"Do you need further proof than the sign?"

"Oh, no; that is enough of course. Besides, who else should I find here but you? Still, it was necessary for me to be sure, since I bear you a message direct from 'Z1'."

"From 'Z1'?"

"Yes. He wants you to come to St. Petersburg at once. He has need of you there to arrange a mission of vengeance."

"Come to St. Petersburg? H-m," observed Kellogg cautiously. "The way is prepared, eh, brother?"

The other nodded.

"But I will need a companion," stipulated Blair. "I am getting too old to take such trips alone. I want some one upon whom I can rely and trust."

His words as to his age did not belie his looks. Worn by the watching and anxiety he had been through, his cheeks were haggard, his eyes sunken, and his shoulders bowed as with the weight of years.

Nor did the messenger object at all to his suggestion.

"That has been foreseen," he said. "Any true brother you may care to bring with you will be entirely acceptable.

"Now, listen carefully to the arrangements," he proceeded, "for I must get back before my absence is observed, and besides, I have small stomach for lingering long in this neighborhood.

"My post on the guard-line is from the tall tree yonder to the clump of bushes down on the right. At two o'clock to-night you and your companion must be out there to meet me. I will guide you to the spot where horses will be waiting for you, together with rations, passports, and everything needed for the journey, and will then give you final instructions. Is everything understood now?"

"Quite," assented Blair. "Two o'clock to-night, and I am to meet you between the tall tree and the clump of bushes farther down."

"Well, then"—the man waved his hand hurriedly—"I must be off. Good-by until to-night."

"Wait just a minute," Kellogg called after him. "Do you happen by any chance to know the person against whom my mission of vengeance is to be directed?"

"Oh, yes." The guard unwillingly retraced his steps. "I had forgotten that. It is written here on a piece of paper which I was told to give you."

In spite of himself Blair could not restrain a start of surprise as he glanced at the slip handed him, for there stared up at him his own name—"Blair Kellogg!"

"Ah, you know the fellow, then?" commented the guard, observing his start.

"Not I. It was the name which took me by surprise. This must be an Englishman; certainly not a Russian. Neither is he an official of the government. Why has 'Z1' marked him for vengeance?"

"He is a Yankee spy, I understand." The fellow garnished his information with a blood-curdling oath. "And worse than that, they tell me he is a traitor to the cause.

"But I really must be off now." And this time Kellogg let him go.

"So we are to get to St. Petersburg after all," he muttered thoughtfully, "and at the behest of 'Z1'. What a strange old world this is!"

Then he went into the house to tell Anna the news, although he carefully suppressed the exact nature of the business he was supposed to transact, merely informing her that he was going in the guise of Berloff to engineer a deal for the revolutionists.

"I tell you this," he said, "but I can't really believe in it myself, nor won't until I actually come in sight of the Neva. It smells to me a good deal more like a trick of treachery than a *bona-fide* chance to escape."

"And even if it is all true, what good will it do you?" she added dolefully. "If you get mixed up with the revolutionists again you will be sure to be back in Siberia inside of six months."

"Will I?" He smiled. "If this game is straight goods, let me tell you something, little girl. It will not be I, but somebody else—and somebody a whole lot more important—who lands in Siberia."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BLACK PAW THREATENS.

In that moment, when Bishkoff, the censor, and Savage, the American lawyer, faced each other, it was hard to tell which was the more surprised.

Bursting with malicious exultation, the Black Paw had come in to gloat over his duped victims, only to find that here were two men whom he had never seen before in his life.

Cognizant through his private sources of information as to the effort the government was making to return Blair Kellogg to his own country, he had pledged himself to the desperate task of thwarting the wishes of the Czar himself.

In his hate for the man who had deprived him of the only woman he had ever wanted, and with all his former love for her now turned to hate, he was resolved to spare no risk and no expense to keep them from enjoying happiness.

So long as they were dragging out the life of miserable exiles in a convict settlement he was well content. In fact, it was through his influence that their place of detention had been fixed at the remote and undesirable station of Turukhansk.

But when he found that the two were to be released and sent back in honor to the United States, his rage knew no bounds. He swore to himself that he would stir heaven and earth rather than that should come to pass.

Through his agents, therefore, he traced every step of the Zasulitches as they were brought back from Yeniseisk, had them cleverly kidnaped at the railroad station from under the very noses of the waiting

government officials, and with them now in one of his several residences, was prepared to enjoy his triumph to the full.

Just what the nature of the punishment he would inflict upon these two who had so offended him, he had not fully decided, but on one point he was thoroughly determined —that they should not return to the United States.

Deep down under the cellar of his house he had two strong steel cells, and there he intended to keep the two in confinement until he had arrived at a conclusion as to what disposition might fittingly be made of them.

Imagine his chagrin, then, his amazement, his fury, when, instead of the victims he thought so safely in his hands, he found awaiting him two utter strangers.

Two people were never nearer annihilation, if they had only known it, than were at that moment the pair who had run into such a series of misadventures in their attempt to circle the globe.

Savage could see that the censor — although of course he did not know who Bishkoff was — was furiously angry, and gathered from the latter's remarks that the reason was because he himself did not happen to be Blair Kellogg.

Yet he was so stricken with astonishment at unexpectedly hearing the familiar name that for the moment speech was lost to him. He could only stare stupidly and scratch his head.

As Bishkoff advanced more menacingly toward him, however, and demanded a second time, "Who are you?" his wits came back with a rush.

Savage was a tricky lawyer, used to drawing quick inferences in the heated debate of the court-room, and it did not take him long now to jump at an approximately correct solution of the muddle.

This man—evidently a high official of some sort—had expected to see in his place Blair Kellogg. Yet the subordinate who had met him at the train and had brought him here to this house, had distinctly addressed him as Zasulitch, the name under which he had been freed and brought back from Siberia.

Did it not follow, therefore, that Blair Kellogg and Zasultich was, in short, an alias under which his former fellow townsman had been serving a convict term in Asia?

He recalled readily enough the conversation he had held with the young lieutenant in Washington, when Blair had said:

"We have to go entirely on our own responsibility. If we are caught we simply must take our medicine."

Kellogg had been caught, then; caught and sentenced to penal servitude, probably through the information which he (Savage) had furnished to the Russian government.

As in a flash of blinding light, it suddenly came over him, too, that Blair Kellogg was the man who had taken his car away from him out there on the road east of Yeniseisk, and had thus spoiled the darling project of his life.

Out there in a far-away corner of the globe—the last place one would expect to meet an acquaintance — he had failed to recognize his assailant under the uncouth garb he wore, and with the changes wrought in the young soldier's appearance by the experiences he had undergone.

But now, the scales off his eyes, he knew that he was not mistaken, and could only wonder that he had not realized the truth all the time.

With the knowledge, too, a storm of anger swept through him fully equal to that which had taken possession of the scowling figure before him.

He sensed instinctively that Bishkoff hated Blair Kellogg, and was eager to do him injury. It seemed certain to Savage also that the other was a high official of some kind, possessed of power and influence.

Accordingly, his eyes sparkling with a malevolent fire, he sprang forward.

"You want Blair Kellogg, eh?" he cried. "Then I think I can help you find him."

"Who are you?" demanded the censor for the third time, apparently not impressed by the other's offer.

"A man who served you once, and who is willing to do so again." Savage was taking a chance in making this assertion, but that subtle lawyer's sixth sense of his told him he was right. "I am Moreton Savage, attorney at law, of Vigo, Illinois."

Bishkoff's lip curled in sudden comprehension.

"Ah," he commented contemptuously, "the Yankee pettifogger who sold out his friend, eh? How do I know that you are not trying to play some such scurvy trick on me? What are you doing, anyhow, in acting such a bald imposture as trying to pass yourself off for him?"

His scorn, however, slipped off Savage like water from a duck's back.

"How do you know that you can trust me?" he repeated, his face going dark with the memory of his wrongs. "Because I have greater cause for enmity against Blair Kellogg than you can possibly know. Because I would do anything to get even with him. He has brought to naught the one great ambition of my life—the thing which I have dreamed over, and hoped for, and thought about for years."

There was no doubting the sincerity of his passionate resentment, and Bishkoff, after a moment's hesitation, waved him to a chair and bade him go on with his story.

As the details began to come out the intense disappointment faded gradually from the censor's face, to give way to an expression of cruel gratification.

"Ah, better than ever." He rubbed his hands together as Savage finished. "They cannot possibly escape me now, and moreover, I will not run counter to the desires of my imperial master. Yes, yes; with this automobile to trace them by, they cannot possibly get away. They might as well have a brass band, and banners proclaiming their identity."

"No," interrupted Savage ruefully, "that is the very deuce of it. Strange as it may seem, the automobile appears to have vanished. Of course your papers over here are rotten, but if the car was still on the road I should think they would have printed some mention of it."

Bishkoff frowned.

"You have seen no news of the automobile, you say?" he demanded.

"Not a thing for over a week now. It is absolutely incomprehensible to me. Even if they were delayed by some serious breakdown, it would seem that the fact ought to be reported."

The censor touched a bell, and when one of his secretaries answered, despatched him at once to the office to secure all information relative to the world-circling car.

Presently the man returned, but it was only to corroborate Savage's surprising statement. The last report of the car was from a little town one hundred and fifty miles west of Tobolsk, on the Thursday previous. Since then not a word had come to hand regarding it.

But while Bishkoff knitted his brows, and tried to ponder out the meaning of so inexplicable a phenomenon, the secretary came back to report that a telephone message from the office announced the discovery of the American car a few *versts* east of Nijni-Novgorod. It was, however, the information stated, apparently deserted by its occupants, and what had become of them was not known.

Instantly Bishkoff's face cleared.

"Ah!" he said. "That makes everything plain. They simply got frightened when they reached Russian soil, and lacked the nerve to carry through the exploit. Instead, they have taken to the more familiar, if slower, methods of the 'underground railway' to effect their escape.

"Well," he added, "that settles it. All possible routes that they could take are known to me, and within twenty-four hours my agents will have them trailed down and under constant surveillance.

"Now"—he turned to the lawyer and studied him searchingly—"the only question is, can I depend on you two?"

"I have already given you assurance on that point, have I not?" returned Savage.

"Yes, as far as you personally are concerned. But how about your companion?"

Bailey spoke up for himself.

"I'm a hired man," he said bluntly. "Whatever risks go with my job I take—so long as I get my pay."

Bishkoff seemed to be satisfied with the answer.

"You shall have double pay," he promised. "Both of you shall be most generously rewarded if you do exactly as I say.

"Listen, now," and he proceeded to outline his plans. "You must continue to go under the name of Zasulitch a short time longer, and as the two pardoned convicts, you must go from here to the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Stay away from the United States ambassador, though, and avoid carefully any chance of the deception you are practising being discovered.

"Instead, demand your immediate passports on the natural plea that you want to leave Russia as soon as possible and get back to your own country.

"Then leave at once for Germany, and when you are well on the other side of the frontier, secure fresh passports under your true names, which I will arrange for you to obtain without difficulty. Then double on your track, travel back to Nijni-Novgorod, and reclaim your car, giving as an excuse that you had to leave it to procure some necessary supplies.

"Thus," he finished, "you will be able to continue your automobile journey *in propriae personae,* and Blair Kellogg and his companion, or, otherwise, D. and A. Zasulitch, will have unaccountably disappeared. Is all perfectly clear now?"

"Yes," assented Savage, "except for one thing. What is to become of the real Blair Kellogg? I don't want any come-back in case he should ever learn the part I have played in this deal."

"Ah!" The censor grinned tigerishly. "You need have no fear on that score. I am going to turn him over to my friends, the revolutionists, to deal with as a traitor to their cause!"

As Savage and his mechanician took the train that evening for Germany, a note was handed to the lawyer from Bishkoff.

"Our parties are located," it read simply. "From Nijni they went to Moscow, and are now heading for St. Petersburg."

It looked as though there were trouble ahead for the pair who had so villainously requited self-sacrifice out there in the Ural Mountains.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE IDENTITY OF "Z1."

It was almost a week later, and General Yurdin, Chief of the Third Section, sat in his office, although the night was well advanced, and rested his head moodily in his hands.

Daily the terrorists became more bold and active; but for all his efforts he seemed unable to make the slightest headway against them.

Three assassinations of prominent persons had been perpetrated within a week, but although he had a score or more of prisoners under arrest, he and every one else in authority knew that he had yet to lay his hands on the men who were really responsible.

He knew, too, that his administration was being criticized in the highest quarters, and that even the "pull" on which he relied would not be able to save him much longer.

In short, some subtle and malign influence seemed constantly at work to discredit and undermine him, and although he had no proof to show for it, he was well satisfied that this emanated from no other than his ancient enemy, the Black Paw.

It will thus be seen that the duel between these two had by no means ended their feeling of animosity. On the other hand, that indecisive episode had only rendered them more bitter and vindictive toward each other than ever.

In fact, if there was one thing Yurdin longed for more ardently than to quell the rising spirit of terrorism, it was to accomplish the downfall of Bishkoff.

"Curse him!" he muttered now, as he sat brooding over the long series of defeats which he ascribed, rightly or wrongly to his official foe. "Curse him! He continually eludes me. I never seem able to put my finger on him."

At that moment a confidential agent entered with the announcement that a young man was below, and requested an interview.

"It is late," Yurdin said indifferently. "Tell him to go away. I will see no one to-night."

"But I think it might be wise, excellency," urged the other. "The young man, it is true, refuses to give his name, but he seems somehow to me to be worth while. He says he has important information for you in regard to 'Z1.'"

"Oh, 'Z1'!" exclaimed the general with a petulant curl to his lip. "Every fakir that comes in here professes to have information regarding 'Z1.' However, show him up. I will soon sift him out, and discover if he really knows anything."

"Or stay!" He raised his hand, as the other started to withdraw. "This may be another assassination plot. Enter the room with him, and if he makes the least suspicious move, or if I signal by dropping my handkerchief, shoot him on the instant."

With these precautions, he awaited the entrance of his visitor, but it cannot be denied that he was considerably taken back by the stranger's tactics.

Without introduction or preamble of any sort, the fellow marched right up to him.

"General Yurdin," he said, "I am Blair Kellogg."

The chief's start was so great that involuntarily he almost dropped the handkerchief he was holding. For one second the intrepid caller's life hung in the balance.

Then, recovering himself, the general turned sternly about.

"Young man," he said, "you are a liar. Blair Kellogg left for the United States a week ago. Eugene, show this fellow out."

But the stranger did not appear a bit feezed by the reception accorded his statement.

"Pardon me, general," he said quietly, "it is not I that lie, but you who are mistaken. And underneath that mistake of yours lurks one of the most involved plots which could well be imagined—a plot, as I think I shall be able to show you, of vital interest to yourself."

Yurdin hesitated a moment.

"Let him stay, Eugene," he finally decided. "Young man, I will give you exactly five minutes. If in that time you have not convinced me of your veracity, and shown me a good excuse for your coming here, I warn you that I will make you repent your foolish step."

But Blair did not need five minutes. Long before that period had elapsed the chief was listening with both ears and uttering from time to time short exclamations of amazement as the coil of the tangled story was unfolded.

First Kellogg took up the experiences of Savage and Bailey, and showed how they had duped the functionaries of two governments.

Then he described the travels of Anna and himself in journeying via the "underground railway" from the smallpox settlement to the capital.

They had been in St. Petersburg for two days, he said, and by his ability to counterfeit handwriting he had been able to communicate with the revolutionary leaders and learn their plans, but posing as Berloff, he had not dared to let any of them see him, and so had been compelled to feign illness and remain close to his room.

This was the first time he had ventured to stir abroad, and he had only done so then after taking the most elaborate precautions, and assuring himself that he was adequately disguised.

"And now what of the third couple?" questioned Yurdin eagerly. "The pair who ran away with your car from the smallpox camp, and whom, you say, the Reds believe are really you and your wife?"

"Ah, I was coming to them," rejoined Blair, "but I reserved them to the last, for therein lies the meat of my story. They also came to St. Petersburg, and are here now mingling in minor revolutionary activities. The supreme circle has kept them under espionage, but has made no move against them, since they were waiting for me to arrive and act as the instrument of what they call justice.

"To-night, however, the heads of the three great circles are to meet in conclave and decide upon the fate to be meted out. 'Z1' is to be there, also 'Z2,' and, I, as 'Z3,' am likewise expected to attend.

"I had hoped at first to be able to smuggle you and a party of your men in with me when I entered, but I find this would be impossible. You will have to break in."

"And where is this meeting-place?" demanded Yurdin impatiently.

Kellogg named a street and number.

"But that is the Reds' most impregnable stronghold," exclaimed the police official, throwing up his hands. "My spies have been in there, and tell me that nothing short of artillery could force an entrance to it."

"I will show your spies a trick, then," rejoined Blair. "Down in the automobile which is waiting for me is a little instrument which will crack a harder nut than that. Come, general, they will be waiting for me at the meeting. Are you game to go with me with a half-dozen of your men?"

Yurdin's only answer was to snatch up his coat and cap.

He would have embraced far greater risks than this enterprise promised for the chance to lay his hands on 'Z1.'

Fifteen minutes' rapid ride brought them to the place, and Yurdin's subordinates quickly captured and silenced the guards and lookouts on the outside.

Then Blair brought out from the automobile the little instrument of which he had bragged. It was a hydraulic jack capable of exerting a pressure of fifteen tons to the square inch.

Crack, crack, crack! went down the heavy steel doors before it, as Blair operated the levers, and over the ruins dashed Yurdin and his followers, to find two men within the innermost sanctum.

One of them, the general instantly recognized, must be 'Z2,' but as his eye fell upon the other, he recoiled in spite of himself and almost dropped to the ground.

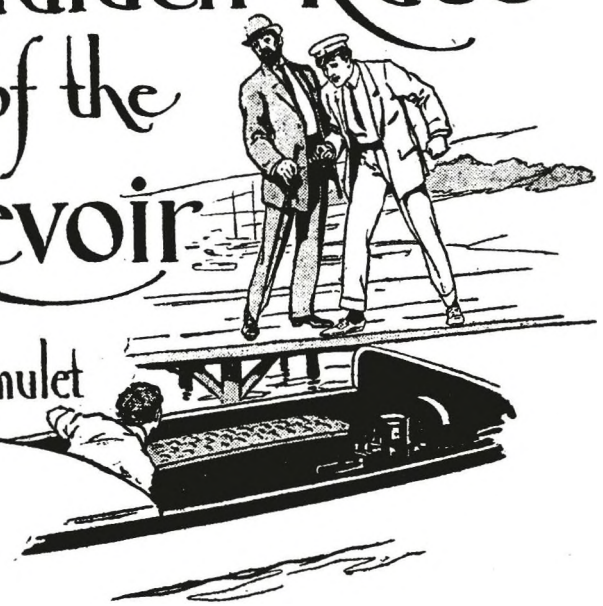
It was Baron Bishkoff, official censor of the Russian empire.

For a moment the Black Paw stood glaring in defiance, then whipping out a revolver, he shot himself through the temple, and fell dead at the feet of his victorious enemy.

THE END.

The Maiden Race of the Au Revoir

By Byron Amulet



RALPH CARLTON had motormania, a serious case, which an automobile and a half had failed to cure. It was more expensive than appendicitis, for Ralph had it on both sides. The governor hoped to cure the malady by giving the only son a six-cylinder car, but he promptly ran the machine through a closed gate, and the factory had to rebuild it.

The governor thought an automobile and a half about his limit in that line, but generously put up the coin for a motor-launch.

Ralph's views were very different. He had a full-fledged American hatred for moderation in anything, especially motor-boats. The annual regatta was being talked of at the club, and a longing for the running was in his blood. Therefore the Au Revoir left the ways a freak racing-boat—such a freak that the old boatmen laughed, and asked Ralph what he was going to do with her.

"Race her," he answered. "She may be out of it, but Au Revoir is her name, and will be fitting whether she is in the lead or in the rear."

There is nothing like marked individuality, even in a motor-boat, and the Au Revoir was marked. Her hull was somewhat knobby (not forgetting the k), with a large, covered space in the stern to store gasoline, of course; but when stripped for racing, her ballast out, the space was a large, black hole with no excuse for its existence.

Every detail of construction had been carried out according to young Carlton's ideas, including the placing of the engine, and young Carlton's specialty up to this time had not been motor-boats. Another thing against the Au Revoir's racing chances was the fact that it had been a hurry job. She was only launched the morning of the regatta. The elder Carlton was a very busy man, and had not seen the boat.

It was Ralph's earnest intention to keep him from seeing it—at least, until after the race. Miss Margaret Alan had consented to go with him to the yachtsmen's dance that evening. The dance was a subscription affair, and Ralph was waiting for an opportunity to strike the governor for a check.

Money had been rather scarce in Ralph's pocket since the boat had been in course of construction, for he had added to the sum put up by his father for a family launch, and had had installed a German engine; and, since his mechanical education had been somewhat neglected, this called for a German mechanician, and more money.

After the launching of the Au Revoir, Ralph loaded her down with several friends —who, by the way, piled on the stern— and went for a trial spin. It was great! The actual time showed the Au Revoir, in spite of her many questionable points, to be several seconds faster than any boat on the lake. Ralph Carlton was a happy man.

With the assistance of Hans, the mechanician, he ran the craft up to the landing near the Carlton mansion, where a happy throng had gathered, and was greeted by hearty applause.

Ralph knew he was hobnobbing with a tremendous supposition, but as soon as he could do so diplomatically he called the governor to one side and asked him for a loan of fifty dollars to "bridge him over" until the next regular allowance. The old gentleman said a few things to Ralph which would have been highly amusing in a musical comedy, but which were not within the scope of Ralph's sense of humor, and concluded by consigning the Au Revoir to a region where boats are worse than useless.

A point that had been missed entirely by young Carlton on the trial trip was that the engine of his boat, which was rather heavy for the hull, had been placed too far forward. One of his friends, seated on the stern, had unconsciously served as ballast. When the party went ashore they left a somewhat overbalanced craft, as she sank down in the bow, while the stern was almost out of water, at just the right angle for a submarine experiment.

Ralph, however, was far too well satisfied with the trial to notice a little thing like that; so, after getting the call from his father, but no money, he left the boat in charge of Hans, and went to luncheon.

Hans also went to lunch, and with his lunch he drank American beer, which always made him drowsy; so he returned early to the boat, and, lying down in the Au Revoir, tried to sleep. The sun was too hot, however, and Hans soon disappeared.

At four o'clock the ten-mile race was to be run, and the Au Revoir was entered. Ralph came down early to prepare for the contest. He was surprised and annoyed by the non-appearance of his mechanician.

Hans could not be found. Finally the small cannon on the committee boat announced the call for Class B, ten miles, prize fifty dollars! Still no sign of Hans.

Now, Ralph Carlton was very much inclined to have his own way, and had many little weaknesses of the age; but, plutocrat though he was, he had determination. So when the call to the line came, and his helper had not appeared, he resolutely seated himself in the Au Revoir and ran her out into position alone.

The boat took the water like a cup defender, to the great surprise of the knowing boatmen who had looked her over as she lay at the landing apparently ready to dive.

Bang! went the gun, and the race was on. Barring a slight delay, caused by Ralph having a long reach to throw on his sparker, the Au Revoir started in good shape. The first round of the five-mile course showed the three boats in the lead to include the Au Revoir. In the last three miles Ralph's boat gained steadily on the other two, and as they came down the course on the final leg a mighty cheer went up from the shore. The Au Revoir was two hundred yards ahead of the Daisy C., her nearest rival!

It was a great victory!

Ralph was beaming as he ran the Au Revoir up to the pier in front of the clubhouse and took Miss Alan and her friends aboard for a spin over the lake. The race had concluded the events of the day, and as they cut through the water they were cheered and saluted on all sides. When they landed again at the club they went to the bulletin-board to learn the official time. This was what Ralph read:

> Third race won by the Daisy C. The Au Revoir, entered by Mr. Ralph Carlton, disqualified on account of having only one man aboard. (Signed) COMMITTEE.

As soon as possible Ralph excused himself and strolled down to the water's edge, where he proceeded to exhaust the vocabulary of profanity he had inherited from his father. For the son of a millionaire to lose a fifty-dollar prize is not such a serious matter, but to lose with a freak boat! What would the governor say?

Finally Ralph ran the Au Revoir up to the Carlton landing. His father was on hand, but the friends were at the club; in fact, it seemed to Ralph that he had not a friend in the world.

"Well!" snarled the enraged governor. "Are you satisfied? You can pay me for that boat out of your allowance!"

"It was all the fault of that blamed Dutchman not showing up, father. If I had had another man in the boat I would—"

"Phot's dot about dommed Dutchman?" demanded a voice from the Au Revoir as the

much disheveled Hans emerged from the dark hole in the stern.

"H a n s !" exclaimed Ralph. "What have you been doing in that hole?"

"I vas asleeb. Ven is der race?"

"The race is over. How long have you been in there?"

"Since you been to eat!" answered the wild-eyed German, who explained that he had crawled under the seat and into the stern to avoid the sun.

"Then, you were in the boat during the race. By Jove, I win! Father, I won the race! I was two hundred yards ahead of the Daisy C. I'm going to the clubhouse."

Ralph hurriedly pushed his father into the boat, and was himself followed by Hans. He put on all speed at once, but the Au Revoir seemed to have lost her wings.

"I vill fix him," said Hans, who climbed over the seat and onto the stern, and seated himself as near the rudder as possible. Instantly the boat righted herself in the water and picked up speed.

A short explanation to the racing committee and proof, offered spontaneously by the elder Carlton, that there were two men in the boat, brought a reversal of the decision, and the Au Revoir was declared the winner, the only question being the weight of Hans, who easily proved that he weighed one hundred pounds.

"Father," said Ralph as he put a check in his pocket alongside the prize-money, "I made a mistake when I put that engine in, and it will cost twenty-five dollars to have it reset. It is too far forward."

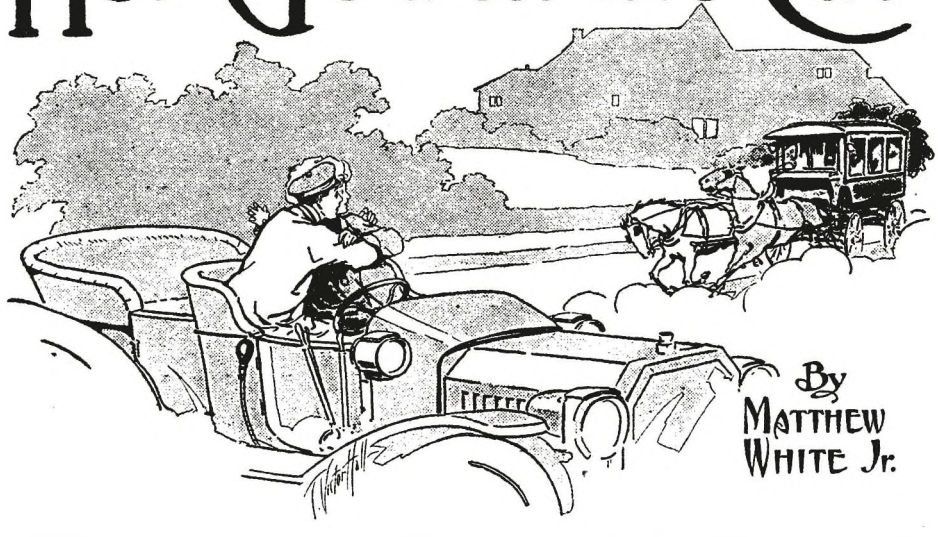
"Well, my boy," answered the governor, "have it altered, and send the bill to me. I want you to give me some points on running that boat. I rather like the way she travels—when your Hans is sitting behind to hold her up."

That evening, between dances, as Ralph and Margaret sat out in the arbor to avoid the shower of congratulations, Ralph told her the whole story.

"Did you discharge the mechanician?" asked the fair one.

"No; I think I will keep him," answered Ralph as he thought of the roll of bills in his pocket. "He is such good ballast when he's loaded, and a balance of a hundred helps a lot."

Her God *in the* Car



By Matthew White Jr.

THERE were times when Estelle asked herself if it were not unmaidenly for her to take so deep an interest in Wendell North. To be sure, it was undeniable that he fancied her. A girl always knows when this is the case, even when the man never mentions the fact.

Her mother made no secret of her predilection for the young man, and her father

liked nothing better than to talk politics with so good a listener. North had been coming to the Powells now for several months. He had met Estelle at a dance and had seemed particularly pleased that she remembered seeing him before.

"Where was it?" he asked. "I didn't see you. Tell me about it."

"On the old post-road," Estelle replied. "I was spending Sunday with a friend. Perhaps you noticed the house, just before you come to Brentford? It's the only one that sets close to the road, on the right-hand side."

"Yes, yes," assented North. "And where was I? I think I remember the place."

"You were cranking up your machine. You had stopped your car—"

"Oh, if I was cranking," laughed North, "the car had probably stopped itself."

But as time sped on there was one fly in Estelle's ointment. Wendell North never asked her to go out with him in the automobile. It was a beautiful car and sometimes it stood for hours outside the Powell door, the admiration of all passers-by.

North spoke frankly to her about the matter.

"I am afraid of an accident," he told her. "You know it is always under such circumstances that they occur, and I think so much of you, Estelle, that I would not have you run the slightest risk."

Deep in her heart Estelle realized that he was right, but sometimes it was awkward replying to the queries of her friends as to how many times she had been out in Wendell's car.

But at last one afternoon he came around with the machine, which he always drove himself, and announced that he was going to take her to Valley Spring.

"I have had the car overhauled," he explained, "and we can watch if the oil drops properly," indicating the gages at his feet, for Estelle had lost no time in accepting and establishing herself beside him in front.

It seemed selfish not to take mother and the girls, too, with that rear seat holding three. North had suggested their going along, but not very heartily, and Estelle explained quickly that they all could not get away at once. She felt that this afternoon was to be a crisis in her life.

It was even so. They were still ten miles away from Valley Spring, speeding through a beautiful strip of woodland, when she heard the question which your mother once had put to her. It was not a very flowery proposal. North had both hands literally full with the steering-wheel, and he didn't dare take his eyes away from the road ahead for more than a second at a time.

But Estelle didn't notice any drawbacks. All she noticed was Wendell, who was now actually and for all time her god in the car. And then it happened.

The quiet of the summer afternoon was shattered by the pounding of hoofs, and around a bend dashed the time-worn "depot bus" of the Mansion House, at Grove Center. Nobody was at the reins, and nobody in the bus, and the runaway team had things altogether their own way. From side to side of the road they careered. North tried his best to decide which side they would pick out when they reached the automobile, but it was with only a forlorn hope that he crowded the machine as close as he could into the hedge on the left.

Then he threw a protecting arm around Estelle, and drew her close against his breast as the bus dashed by, its rear wheels just hitting the back of the car, and making an ugly streak along the bottle-green body.

"Whoa there!" yelled North as the horses passed him, and whether it was his commanding tones or the jar they received when the bus struck the automobile, it is certain they stopped a few yards away and were cropping the grass by the roadside when old Zeb, the stage driver, came panting up.

"Hurt ye any?" he demanded of North.

"Scratched the machine," answered Wendell ruefully, pointing to the streak, which he had jumped out to inspect on the instant.

"Wal, I'm durn glad it wan't any worse," rejoined Zeb, as he went on to get his team.

"I suppose I ought to be, too," muttered North, resuming his seat beside Estelle, "but I don't know what Mr. Ransforth will say. Didn't I tell you, Estelle, that accidents always happen on 'joy rides' when the chauffeur takes his master's car without leave."

"Well," replied Estelle, "it's only a scratch, not a smash, and I'm glad anyway ma and the girls were at home tending store. They would have been scared to death."

The Argosy's Log-Book

By the Editor

THE fortunes of the great London publishing house of Harmsworth (who was raised to the peerage as Lord Northcliffe) were laid with a small paper called *Answers*. In this the replies to correspondents formed a prominent feature, and the circulation grew to enormous proportions. To-day the Harmsworth holdings include the famous London *Times* and *Daily Mail*, newspapers in other parts of the United Kingdom, and countless weeklies and magazines. This reminiscence is called to my mind by the growth of our own Log-Book as a feature of THE ARGOSY. The Log-Book, however, is in direct contrast to *Answers*, from the fact that instead of the editor replying to questions of the readers, they answer his. Your preferences in respect to serials or complete stories, the manner in which you read the magazine, what led you to take it, your opinion of the various stories—to all these and other queries of mine you have responded in a way that is not only enlightening in the matter of editorial policy but, I have every reason to be assured, has been found of deep interest to the entire ARGOSY constituency. Just now I am particularly eager to learn what you think of our new contributor, Lawrence Perry, whose serial, "Between Two Alibis," begins in the present number. There will be an even longer instalment of it next month, and not only because the narrative pulsates with action, mystery, and drama, but because Mr. Perry is a writer of especially fine equipment for his work, I am anxious to hear in how far you coincide in my estimate of his abilities.

And now, before opening this month's mail-bag, I must explain that the enormous popularity of the Log-Book has compelled me to put a somewhat different complexion on it. The letters have been pouring in to that extent that to print them all would take up more pages of the magazine than it would be fair to devote to any one department. Besides, so much fine type is trying on the eyes. On the other hand, I want all my readers to feel that their expressions of opinion are welcome, and not to make any unfair discriminations. Here, for instance, is a communication from H. J., Colusa, California, I have been holding many months for lack of space. It contains a kick which is at the same time in the way of being a compliment, implying that THE ARGOSY is so hard read that it should be better equipped to stand the strain of so much handling. He says: "I like the whole ARGOSY from cover to cover, and right here is where I have my kick a coming, for I don't think that the binding is good enough." This state of things is explained from his statement that every member of his family reads THE ARGOSY. He is a business men, he tells me, adding, as if the custom needed an apology: "And that might be the reason why I always read the advertisements first. My wife and children laugh at me for doing this, but I see some very good examples of up-to-date ad writing, which interests me very much." He reads the serials after the whole story is completed, and likes Mr. Terhune best.

Victor S., who is an actor, writes from Hanover, Kansas, declares that *Hawkins* is always funny and likewise *Mr.* and *Mrs. Scales*. He adds: "Some of your scientific stories are immense and give a man plenty of material for thought." He mentions having tried his hand at stories, and suggests that possibly he may send one for criticism at a later date. I beg him not to do this. When the Log-Book was first inaugurated I devoted a great deal of space to advice to would-be authors, was flooded with MSS. in consequence, and out of the thousands received in a year's time from this source, how many do you suppose were found suitable for acceptance? Only one. All my rules were disregarded, if not deliberately overridden. A magazine, you must remember, is not published as a kindergarten for aspiring writers, but as a book of entertainment for the public, in which they have the right to expect fiction by trained hands, not the product of fledgling authors groping their way to the top. I do not mean by this that the Munsey house is averse to encouraging new talent, but the editors do not wish it to present itself with the label so freshly applied that it is sticky to the touch. If you must write, and feel that your story is at least as good, if not better than any you see in print, send it along in the ordinary way, without any comment to the effect that this is your first effort and you hope the editor will overlook any mistakes. It is your business to see that there are no mistakes. Since our weekly *Cavalier* was started, this office has been receiving over a thousand stories a week. Of this number perhaps five or six may be purchased, sometimes not as many as that.

But I must get on with the mail. Here is J. M. H., of St. Louis, calling THE ARGOSY a "joyous sheet," and adding that he starts right in at the beginning and doesn't stop until he reads everything in it, "the advertisements also, as quite a few of them have helped me considerably." He thinks that "With Sword and Strategy" promises to be very good. An odd trait in this reader is the fact that he never looks at the author's name unless the story doesn't appeal to him. Then he glances at it and goes right on with the yarn, saying charitably to himself: "He'll do better next time." In a postscript he suggests: "Try

us on a little baseball and see if we reject it," which reminds me to mention that the national game is entering largely into THE ARGOSY'S program for 1912. Aside from the short stories we have already printed bearing on the fan's delight, a serial is now being written for me that promises to be the most novel thing in baseball tales that was ever put forth. I will tell you more about this later.

From Sherman, Texas, J. F. A., who has been a reader for some nine years, finds Edgar Franklin and A. P. Terhune running neck and neck for the stakes in his esteem as good writers. He considers Terhune more imaginative and dramatic, and Franklin more humorous and steady in style. What will the kickers on the first-named think when he adds that he regards "Just Like Wyoming" as Franklin's best story, and "When Liberty Was Born" taking the lead among Terhune's? This correspondent regards Arnold Hofmann's baseball yarns as the best of our many good short stories. He takes exception to the style and subject-matter of H. E. Twinells and F. V. Greene, Jr. "What has become of Elizabeth York Miller, George Bronson-Howard, and Johnston McCulley?" he asks. Well, Mrs. Miller has for some time past been resident in London, where she writes stirring serials for the Harmsworth newspapers. Their length is gaged by their popularity with the readers. If they seem to take, Mrs. Miller is requested to keep them running for as long as possible, and I may say here that her stories have usually extended upward toward sixty and seventy chapters. This custom of getting the public's comment on a story while it is still flowing from the author's brain recalls the days of Charles Dickens, whose early books were issued in fortnightly parts, as he wrote them. As "The Old Curiosity Shop" proceeded toward its close he received many letters begging him not to kill *Little Nell*. As to George Bronson-Howard, whose first story to appear in print ("The Making of Hazelton") was published in THE ARGOSY, he is now devoting himself to playwriting, and I saw him working hard in his shirt-sleeves the other night with Mr. Belasco, getting ready for the stage his latest drama, which is to be the new vehicle for Blanche Bates next season. From Johnston McCulley, who lives in California, I have just received a corking story, which I am preparing to issue complete in an early number.

E. Everett S., Morristown, New Jersey, doesn't care for Terhune or war stories, likes *Hawkins*, but wants fewer short stories. Mrs. R. S. J., Yorkville, Michigan, thinks THE ARGOSY is all right because it has enough variety to please everybody. She reads the Log-Book first, then looks through the index for Howard Dwight Smiley's name. A. A. J., St. Louis, Missouri, says that a month after the publication of "Four Magic Words" a store was opened in that city which bore the words "We can do anything" on both windows. He doesn't see how any one can kick on "The Clown's Mate," which, together with "Four Magic Words," "Her Hero from Savannah," and all the *Hawkins* stories, are his favorites. O. G., Marysville, Ohio, has been a reader of THE ARGOSY and *All-Story* for several years, and has not missed a copy, which means, as he quaintly puts it, that he has two or three hundred pounds of good reading, as he has saved all the numbers, and frequently rereads the stories. L. A. H., Rosebank, Staten Island, New York, has been reading THE ARGOSY for fifteen years and never found a story that he did not like. Wants more *Hawkins*, and thinks "The Shooting at Big D" O. K. in every respect. R. D. W., New Orleans, commenting on the correspondent who asked for a socialist hero, declares that the secret of our success is because we do *not* handle the economic question at greater length.

Ray McN., of Chicago, wants to know if his city hasn't any authors. Well, as it happens, there are none just now writing for THE ARGOSY. As to having scenes of stories laid there, this second city in the country has on more than one occasion been used as a background for our fiction. "Chicago by Thursday," published some years since, was one of Edgar Franklin's most striking serials. "Please don't consider this as a kick," he adds, "for the stories are good, no matter where they are situated as long as they are in THE ARGOSY." Speaking of kicks, it's about time now to insert one to vary the monotony of the praise chorus. H. V. W. writes from Cochrane, Ontario, that he has just returned from Hudson's Bay, in which region he bought his first copy of THE ARGOSY some years since at a cost of $1.50. He thinks the best story he ever read in it was "A Parlor Car Mix-Up," and regards THE ARGOSY very highly, "although I must admit," he adds, "it has some weak points, such as 'On the Frozen Trail' in the February issue. I have been a prospector for fifteen years, mostly in the north country, and have traveled on trails in Alaska, Yukon, Porcupine, Africa, and Australia, and can certainly be called a 'sourdough,' but never in all my wanderings have I heard of a trail like in the above story, and will wager that Mr. R. K. Thompson has never seen a 'Husky,' let alone an Alaskan or Klondike trail. I have at present a litter of them and would be pleased to send Mr. Thompson one, and he can learn to 'mush' in his back yard." And in the very same mail with this letter comes along one from Miss C., of Carroll, Iowa, who says: "In the February number, the novelette, 'On the Frozen Trail,' was about as good a story as I have read in some time. It certainly was my idea of a good story." Her favorite author is Albert Payson Terhune, which is evidently not the case with A. L., Fort Yellowstone, Wyoming, who writes "When I buy your magazine I do not expect to find history in it, but fiction." He has no favorite author, but thinks the best story he ever read was "The Kidding of the Boob." And where do you suppose he became acquainted with THE ARGOSY? "A Long Way from Home," to borrow the title of last month's complete novel, or, as he quaintly phrases it: "The first time I butted my knob into your wonderful magazine was in Jolo Jolo, the Philippine Islands. I think the first story was 'The House That Jack Bought.'"

Here is F. M. M., of Salt Lake City, on the other hand, who thinks "The Hoodoo Fighter" about the best serial we have published, wishes we would have more like it and "The Spy of Valley Forge," and was enthusiastic over the starting out of "With Sword and Strategy," all in the historical vein, you note. James W. E., Tacoma, Washington, has six favorites among our writers: Scribner, Lebbar, William Wallace Cook, Edgar Franklin, Seward W. Hopkins, and the brightest star—Albert Payson Terhune. He likes the dry

humor and thrills of Hopkins, thinks Franklin's *Hawkins* and "Just Like Wyoming" great, and wants the *Hawkins* serial hurried up. Well, he will see it announced to start next month, which reminds me to say that even the anti-Hawkinsites should be delighted with this yarn, as it has all the exciting elements of a desert island tale plus the humor and fantasy of the amateur inventor himself. "I have one or two kicks coming," continues our Tacoma friend, who liked "Settled in Seattle," "being near home, except for the author's heinous crime of calling Mt. Tacoma Rainier. About four stories have been poor. 'The Swivel of Suspicion' and 'Why Williamsport?' were 'way below THE ARGOSY standard. Why? Because of the made-to-order finish. I knew how they would end as soon as they started. 'The Shooting at Big D' was not much account either. The worst one, however, was 'Dexter's Home Run Hit.' Ye gods. If we have baseball stories, let us have *some* truth in them. I have read poor ball stories, but of all the absurd things I ever read, Hofmann takes the prize. I can beat him any day on a baseball story myself. Excuse my heat, but as ball-player and lover of good baseball stories (publish all of them possible) I have to get mad at the crazy untruths in that darned 'Dexter.'"

The fact that New York City bears the same name as the State sometimes gives rise to misconceptions. Some months ago in reply to queries as to whether I was not amazed to receive for this department so many letters from the South and the Far West, I answered no; that I was only surprised when they came from New York. I meant the city, but C. M. F. writes in from Syracuse to say: "I notice you mention that you are surprised when letters to the Log-Book come from New York. We New Yorkers usually follow the owl fashion—take it all in and remain quiet. Not that we do not appreciate your efforts, but are simply slow to put into words our feelings. The stories are all rattling good, but can't you occasionally give us a genuine love-story?"

With regard to this last request I have an idea that love-stories are not in great favor with the majority of ARGOSY readers. I do not mean the "mushy" sort. Of course, *they* are all trash, but the good, red-blooded stripe, in which the hero goes through all sorts of perils and privations, not for glory, money, or the flag, but simply because the woman he adores can be saved only that way. I myself have no use for the species of love yarn where the man does this sort of thing as a "stunt" to prove himself worthy of the girl. No girl worth the winning would ask the fellow she cared for to earn her in any such fool way. To my mind, real affection can't be bought or cajoled or bartered for. It must come of itself. And now, readers, what do you say to a love yarn once in a while?

New York City, by the way, is represented in this communication from A. W., who thinks THE ARGOSY is better now than it has been in the two years he has been taking it. He doesn't care much for the short stories, but likes the novels, of which he ranks "Why Williamsport?" and "Settled in Seattle" best. H. G. P., of Dallas, Texas, declares that THE ARGOSY, like good Bourbon, improves with age, and that he doesn't bother with serials unless the whole story is in the house at one time, "and that isn't likely to happen." He adds —"too many borrow my ARGOSY." Our new plan of printing a whole serial-length story as a complete novel will help him out in this respect. He is a stanch *Hawkins* admirer, and of Louis Gorham he remarks: "If he wants to write any more stories about swamps, I can show him some swamps in southeast Texas where he can 'bog' his hero in the marsh and he'll stay stuck until some one comes along with a yoke of steers and pulls him out."

C. W. S., Friend, Nebraska, reads the Log-Book first, as it seems just like talking with the editor, and likes the picture heads to the stories. B. D. M., Calgary, Canada, who wishes THE ARGOSY came twice a month, is referred to our weekly *Cavalier*. He liked "The Fighting Streak," didn't care for "Roy Burns's Handicap," but calls "Just Like Wyoming" one of the best stories THE ARGOSY has ever published. M. E. T., Thomaston, Connecticut, who has been a reader of THE ARGOSY since it was an eight-page weekly, regards its stories as of a clean, high character and always interesting. J. H., San Mateo, California, writing under date of January 26, declared that he had read a great many serials in the THE ARGOSY, but never "any which have kept me going for the next part to come as Jenks's 'Wresting a Pittsburgh Secret' and Gorham's 'Trembling Earth.'" A. D. H., Kennedy, Ohio, likes Terhune's stories best of all; also approves of the *Hawkins* and *Scales* yarns, and asks for more sea tales. Elmer W., Yulee, Florida, takes exception to "The Silent Foe" in February on the score of its savoring too strongly of the dime-novel order of fiction. Otherwise he thinks THE ARGOSY all right.

I am sure you will all be interested in reading another comment on "The Silent Foe" from an Indian reader, who signs himself "Your Cherokee friend, Chocky Runningdeer, Fort Smith, Arkansas." He says that he has been a reader of THE ARGOSY four years, and finds all our stories tip-top. He reads all the serials and thinks "Trembling Earth" just fine. "But being an Indian," he adds, "I can't admire 'Silent Foe.' I have lived among the Indians all my life, and I have found several errors in 'Silent Foe.' Unlike most boys, I was wanting the Indians to come out victors. I would like to see something in your book about the Indians that would please us." Possibly we may be able to give our friend Runningdeer a story from the Indians' standpoint. Crossing the plains myself as a boy I was frequently thrown with the red men, and never found anything treacherous among them. Indians play a big part in Mr. Terhune's "As the Dice Fell" in the present issue, and a serial by Edgar Franklin, "In Savage Splendor," was based on an idea that no doubt this early association of mine with the red men had etched into my gray matter and nourished there.

Here is Luther T. D., South Boston, Virginia, who thinks "The Silent Foe" very good, and calls both "The Shooting at Big D" and "War in the Cuban Canebrakes" fine. You recall the awful roast of poor *Schultz* a few paragraphs back? Well, Mrs. G. H., Los Angeles, California, comes to his defense right royally, harking back to another objector. "I noticed some time ago that some one kicked at *Schultz*. Well, I never was in Kansas City, but it was one of the most laugh-inspiring stories I ever read." Being fond of mystery and science, this reader was greatly pleased with "Russia's Black Paw" and "Trembling

Earth," and felt that "Her Own Angel" had a very good lesson in it. She wants to know if, supposing she should send us on a story of southern California, we would ever bother to read it, which moves me to remark that certainly we would—that is part of our business. But I wish to emphasize the fact that a publishing house is not a primary school for embryo authors. With over 150 stories coming in each day, you can easily imagine that editors have no time to tell would-be contributors why their offerings fall short. Look at the announcement under "Authors" in our Classified Advertisements section, and you will note that there are concerns which make a business of criticizing the output of beginners.

J. K. H., Osage, Iowa, objects to characters in fiction holding their guns by the butt when they club them. "One swipe with the awkward, wabbly thing used in that manner," he declares, "and it would slip from the strongest grasp like the tail of a greased pig. Fifteen years of pioneering in the mining camps of the Rocky Mountains and of Alaska, mostly as a newspaper man, gave me a rather intimate acquaintance with the noted gunmen of the time and their methods, and while almost all of these 'beat up' twenty victims for every one they shot, it is safe to say that in no instance did they hold their gun by the muzzle while doing it." W. J. D., Sparks, Nevada, finds "The Amiable Aroma" very fine, "evidently the product of a most active brain." This reader declares that *Hawkins* is full of humor and originality, and has this to say about a knock on "Trembling Earth": "Having lived in Waycross myself, I know that the story is based on conditions that really exist in the Okefinokee swamp, and while the happenings that are narrated are hardly probable, they are quite possible, and, as the author says, he is writing a story and not a newspaper article. I myself have enjoyed many a coon hunt on horseback." With respect to a comment of this correspondent on the use of "fudge" in "The Silent Foe," I must remind him that the expression is surely much older than the home-made candy it evidently suggests to him.

The "Yeas" seem to have "The Silent Foe" by a large majority. "'The Silent Foe' is certainly a dandy," writes A. F. B., of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, who thinks the Log-Book a great addition, calls "Russia's Black Paw" thrilling, and stigmatizes such stories as "Roy Burns's Handicap" and "Just Like Wyoming" as no good. He enjoys *Hawkins*, and finds the *Scales* yarns very interesting. C. H. P., Cincinnati, starts with the Log-Book, thinks Albert Payson Terhune *good*, but hints that he has too many heroes of giant size with light hair and blue eyes. Says *Hawkins* gets him on edge, as the stories seem all to have the same trend, but commends their author for the fact that he makes no mechanical or scientific blunders. Right here I may as well remark that Mr. Franklin has been in the chemistry line and is an authority in articles on popular mechanics. Continuing, A. F. B. thinks "Roy Burns's Handicap" could have been told in a short story, found "Just Like Wyoming" foolish, and "The Savage Strain" fine for a change. "All in all," he sums up, "THE ARGOSY is *good, better, best.* I enjoy, I judge, about ninety-eight per cent of the stories. Every time I lay down the ten cents I consider myself getting something for nothing, as I consider one issue of THE ARGOSY worth ten times the amount."

Why, I wonder, if Mr. Hofmann was so greatly at fault in laying on his local color in "Schultz," which appeared in the November issue, does nobody in Kansas City itself register a complaint? "Kansas City and Schultz" was the only story in the city series written by a native, and has been the only one to arouse comment on the score of not being true to its background. Mrs. C. M. writes from Redondo Beach, California: "Mr. Hofmann claims to be a native of Kansas City, does he? Well, all I have to say is, he knows less about Kansas City than I do about London, and I was never there. He must have been writing of Kansas City as it was in the sixties or seventies, but I can't for the life of me tell where he got his taxicabs. It has been many a long year since a man could pick up a cobblestone on Walnut Street. Poor *Schultz* had an awful time finding some one who could speak German! Just think of it, and in Kansas City, too! *Ach, du Lieber!* Please don't disgrace the dear, good, clean ARGOSY with any more garbled stories like 'Kansas City and Schultz.'"

Now I must take a dip back into the past. It certainly seems a shame that for lack of space I should have held this corking letter from early November until we are beginning to watch for the first crocus to stick its head above ground. However, with the increased room in this department, I hope to catch up after a while. And it won't do to put all the back dates in at once. F. G. B., out in Montana, starts in: "Twenty-one miles to the city of Missoula and twenty-one miles back to our Senate Mine for THE ARGOSY every month; but it pays me to have a good live story to read after a hard day's work. My wife and I read them all. We all like such stories as 'Her Own Angel,' also 'Kansas City and Schultz.' They are written by persons who appear to have had the experience they write about. How did we find THE ARGOSY? Why, we hunted for a magazine that was not made up of one-half advertising, with good, clear, large type, and up-to-date reading. And we found it in THE ARGOSY. The snow is now piling up on our trail, but we got to have THE ARGOSY if we have to snow-shoe those forty-two miles to get it."

Percy C. C., Detroit, Michigan, thinks "Disentangled in Detroit" a corker. "When the author named off the familiar streets," he adds, "it touched the spot." Has read THE ARGOSY for ten years, and "thinks it all to the mustard." John B. A., Rat River, Quebec, Canada, being a lumberman, thinks stories of the woods always welcome, and likes especially "The Hoodoo Fighter" and "The Frame-Up." T. L. B., Syracuse, New York, doesn't care much for *Hawkins*, but likes the *Tommy Castleton* stories. Wants more sport yarns and a story about Syracuse.

Apropos of what I said about love-stories a while back, here is J. C. H., Fulton, Kentucky, after calling "A Pair of Eyes in Cleveland" and "The Silent Foe" fine, and stating that he likes the baseball yarns best of all, going on to say: "I do not like the sloppy, sickening love-stories that always end with the same 'they married and lived happy ever after.' I like a love-story woven in a story of adventure." C. E. H., Roseville, New Jersey, hopes that the author of "Just Like Wyoming" will forgive him for saying that he jumbled his characters so that he gave the story up

in despair. This reader likes war stories, also "The Swivel of Suspicion," "Russia's Black Paw," and "A Break from Annapolis." Thought "The Savage Strain" was a good tale on the Jules Verne style, until the author spoiled it by injecting that elixir stuff. He calls the Log-Book dandy reading, but leaves it until the last, as it usually hits the stories just completing. Wants us to "turn on some more of 'The Shooting at Big D' kind, with a better ending, however. To my mind, Mr. G. spoiled a good story by not letting *Monnie's* bluff go through."

H. W. N., New Orleans, has been reading THE ARGOSY for the past five years and has yet to find a dull story in it. He wants another story by Mr. Wiggins, author of "In Quest of the Pink Elephant," and he will find it in "The Lure of the Nile," starting next month. He calls the illustrations a great improvement, and the Log-Book excellent, having particularly enjoyed "that bit of 'horse-play' between Louis Gorham and J. B. B., of Georgia," in February, in which issue he thought R. K. Thompson's "On the Frozen Trail" one of the best stories he ever read. He suggests in a postscript that the only way in which we could improve THE ARGOSY would be by publishing it twice a month. But he can get his serials hotter off the bat than that by ordering his newsdealer to serve him with our weekly *Cavalier* every Thursday.

C. C. H., Orme, Tennessee, thinks "The Shooting at Big D" can't be beat, although he was in hopes that *Crawford* would make good. Regards the Log-Book as a great institution, and asks for stories of logging or hunting in the big woods of California. Clyde G., Girard, Kansas, is informed that ARGOSY is pronounced with the accent equally distributed throughout the word and not with especial emphasis on the second syllable. He is not very keen for *Hawkins*, but calls "The Hoodoo Fighter" just fine, and the Log-Book O. K. From C. H. P., Chickasha, Oklahoma, comes the first kick on "Russia's Black Paw." He calls it silly, but thinks "With Sword and Strategy" fine thus far. Did not care for "A Pair of Eyes in Cleveland," but did like "The Silent Foe." Thanks to S. C. Z., of Detroit, for his report from the reading club, in which he took up the matter of favorite stories with 127 readers of THE ARGOSY. I have not space to give the whole of the tabulated results, so will confine myself to the three serials mentioned that have appeared since the Log-Book was started in February, 1911. Out of 127, the highest possible vote for any story, "Trouble in Bunches" received 119, as did also "In Quest of the Pink Elephant," and "The Trail of the Flashlight" 114.

From Chillicothe, Ohio (which is to figure as the background for a novelette now in stock), Forrest E. A. writes to urge that we print more *Hawkins* stories. "So far they have not become so common as to grow tiresome. Speaking of tiresome stories, I almost think the hard-luck ones may be classed as such. Like the chase scenes in moving pictures, they have lost their original novelty." This correspondent should be delighted with our full-length complete novels, for his letter continues: "I always save the issues to read the serials when they are completed, for, like Poe, I think a story or novel should be read at one sitting if possible. In this way, too, I have a complete serial or two falling due each month. I think the Log-Book furnishes very interesting reading and always read it first."

This last comment reminds me that the first kick on the Log-Book has just come to hand, from S. B., Milestone, Saskatchewan, Canada, and I hasten to give him the floor.

"I will tell you right at the start I would like you to quit the Log-Book and publish something sensible. I would sooner be compelled to read 'Just Like Wyoming' every day in the week than read the Log-Book. Why not put *Hawkins* in its place? Really, I have no use for the L.-B. It's just one man fighting another with a pen, and I am sure the authors don't like some of the letters. What will the writer of 'Roy Burns's Handicap' think of S. L. S., Attica, Ohio? (See February Log). But I must admit that Mr. Albert Payson Terhune is the best writer in the whole bunch. But I say live and let live. Give them all a chance. Here's wishing them all success, but not the Log-Book."

After this last blow to our self-esteem, I am sure I shall be forgiven for printing the laudatory comment for both ourselves and our weekly *Cavalier*, that came, in the same mail, along with a subscription for our weekly running-mate, from Richard F., Rothwell, Wyoming:

"I have received a copy of the weekly *Cavalier*, and I think it will supply a long-felt want. I send my subscription to encourage a pioneer in that line. Enclosed you will find money-order for $4. I have read THE ARGOSY over fourteen years. I first chose it on account of its name, thinking I might find rich cargo in it. It was so attractive to others that I seldom got more than six copies during the year, the rest being intercepted by some one who wanted something to read and had the chance to handle it before I did. But of late years I have had it pretty regular, only missing December. I have no improvements to suggest, and would be sorry to miss such old friends as *Hawkins* and *Mr. Scales*. I like both long stories and short ones. I find reading THE ARGOSY has a very beneficial effect on my nerves. It soothes them, yet keeps them toned up and keeps the mind from worry. I hope your new venture will prove a success."

B. L. S., St. Paul, Minnesota, has been a reader of THE ARGOSY for nearly twenty-six years, thinks our weekly *Cavalier* has so far been all to the good, and wants to know if any of *Hawkins's* adventures have been the cause of his demise. Another Minnesota friend (E. H. F., Monterey), ran across a copy of the March, 1897, ARGOSY while stranded in a small town of northern Minnesota in the early spring of that year, and at once acquired the ARGOSY habit which still lives. In the fifteen years that have followed, he doesn't remember a single story but what has excited sufficient interest to be read clear through. Summing up: "I like THE ARGOSY primarily because it entertains and is restful to a weary toiler, but I would have none of it if it were not clean and wholesome and of good moral tone."

A. N. C., Mandan, North Dakota, a locomotive engineer's favorite writer is Terhune, and he did not think much of "When No Trains Ran," "as it did not seem possible that men did not know more about an engine." He adds: "Tell that critic from Omaha that it matters not when the poem, 'The Raven,' was published or the battle of the Alamo fought. Terhune wrote a splendid

story in 'The Hoodoo Fighter.'" J. C. D., Sanger, California, six years ago hired a tramp to help him on the ranch, came across a copy of THE ARGOSY said tramp had picked up along the railroad, got interested in a story of the Soudan, and has paid ten cents a copy for every number since. I may tell Reginald W. K., Albuquerque, New Mexico, who admires "A Break from Annapolis" so greatly, that I have in stock another serial from Mr. Lebhar, "The Motor-Bus Mystery," to be started before many months. "The Shooting at Big D" furnished J. B. M., a civil engineer, writing from Hillsboro, Oregon, the text for a dissertation on Western stories, from which I quote: "The day of the gun-toting desperado in chaps and his miner brother passed away with the buffalo and the wagon-train. I would like to see a good engineering story founded upon a possibility, *but* the hero engineer should not be a degenerate spendthrift from New York who has made a failure as a stage-door Johnnie or as a third-class office-boy, and who, upon arriving in Arizona, immediately blossoms out as a railroad locator or a record-breaking constructing engineer. Neither should he be the newest young graduate fresh from Harvard. The graduate is a good man after he gets some of his theories knocked out of him by hard, practical experience, and then forgets most of the rest."

This writer makes the same mistake about New York he charges authors with in respect to the Far West. One would suppose the stage entrances of Broadway theaters were bombarded every night with "Johnnies." I live in the theatrical district, and nothing of the sort has ever come under my observation. The biggest crowd I ever saw around a stage-door in New York was a throng of women waiting for Maude Adams to come out of the Empire Theater after a matinée of "Peter Pan." So you see Eastern authors are not the only citizens in ignorance of how the other half (of the continent) lives. Just at this writing, what with its bold daylight taxicab hold-ups, Manhattan, at the present writing, far more nearly resembles a primitive frontier settlement than it does the chorus-girl paradise as our friends on the Pacific slope persist in painting it.

"What we want," writes H. M. G., of Washington, District of Columbia, "are more stories of the *Hawkins* kind. By the way, hurrah for *Hawkins,* the best thing in the book. The only trouble with his last adventure was that it wasn't long enough. I cannot see why some people are opposed to his stories. As to their not turning out well, as Mr. W. said in his letter, we have so many stories that *do* turn out well with the curtain going down on the hero and heroine locked in each other's arms, that a story that is different is decidedly refreshing." Speaking of *Hawkins,* here is a reader who doesn't care for him (Charles M., Muscatine, Iowa), becoming rather keen to hear from the amateur inventor again. "And Edgar Franklin is simply great," he says "(when he doesn't write about *Hawkins*). Still, after I haven't heard anything from *Hawkins* for about three months, I begin to wonder what he is doing, and feel rather anxious to hear from him again." And listen to this, oh, ye objectors to a certain serial that ran last summer: "If Franklin has any more like 'Just Like Wyoming,' hurry them along." The kicks about this particular story have rather mystified me. Untrue representations of ranch life and the hero's failure to make good his bluff, have been named as the causes of dissatisfaction with "The Shooting at Big D," while the fight against poverty of *Roy Burns* has been cited as a drawback to his "Handicap." But with "Just Like Wyoming," correspondents have simply declared that they didn't like it, and let it go at that. Sometimes I wonder whether the fact that the eight prominent characters in the story all belonged to the so-called fashionable set had anything to do with detracting from the interest in them. It happens to be the only story we have ever run in which this was the case.

And here's a coincidence! The very next letter I picked up, after writing the foregoing, was from Guy Z. F., Washington, Indiana, who starts off in nautical fashion thus: "Aye, aye, sir, I am a lover of THE ARGOSY and think her the best ship afloat, but such letters as J. N. S. writes from Chicago make my blood boil. Supposing 'Just Like Wyoming' to have been a mistake (which it is not) is it possible that you, sir, do not dare make one mistake without being handed a lemon? Long live THE ARGOSY, say I, and I am ready to fight all who condemn her."

T. V. A. R., of Detroit, Michigan, being a traveling man, likes our American city stories, as he is familiar with all those towns that have thus far been treated. He considers the Log-Book a noteworthy feature, and Terhune is his favorite author. X. Y. Z., Olean, New York, enjoyed "The Sign of Fear," "Vengeance Burned Away," and "War in the Cuban Canebrakes," didn't care for the finish to "The Shooting at Big D," likes Terhune's historical stories, and adds: "The only time I enjoy *Hawkins* is when I think he will be killed by his inventions." C. M. J., Kansas City, Missouri, thinks "Her Own Angel" the best story THE ARGOSY has printed in six months, likes city tales and all kinds of hard-luck yarns, and doesn't care for cowboy, Indian, frontier, or fantastic stories. E. E. R., Hamilton, Texas, who likes THE ARGOSY from "kiver to kiver" and never misses a copy, protests against Terhune calling Travis "captain" instead of "colonel" in his "Hoodoo Fighter." To all Texans, he writes, "Travis is *Colonel,* not captain, and we always spell it with a big C. Will you please have Captain (?) Travis promoted a couple of steps." To the mind of W. G. C., Winnipeg, the Log-Book is the best thing in THE ARGOSY. He tries to stretch the magazine out over a month by reading two stories a night, and hopes the time will come when we will have THE ARGOSY twice a month. But the time has already come when he can get *The Cavalier* every week. John J. T., Fort William, Ontario, first became acquainted with THE ARGOSY through having a friend lend him a copy, always reads the Log-Book first, and likes all the stories. He wants us to continue to publish *Hawkins* as fast as possible as they suit him O. K., as do also stories of the future and of the impossible kind. He will be glad to learn in this latter connection that I am now in correspondence with William Wallace Cook about a sequel to his "Round Trip to the Year 2000." After growling, as he himself phrases it, through three pages of letter-paper about various stories, Fred B., of Toledo, Ohio, emerges from his doldrums to wind up thus: "The Log-Book is fine and THE ARGOSY the best ever. 'Disentangled in Detroit' is fine."

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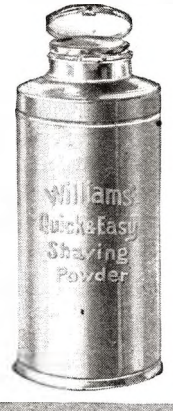

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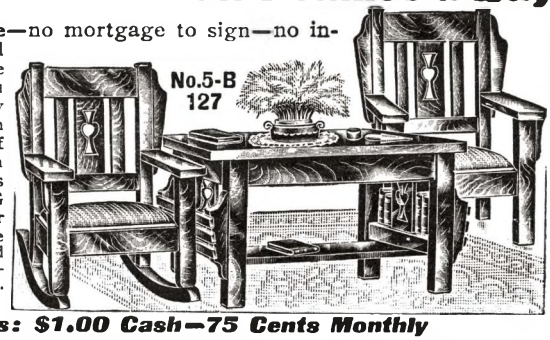

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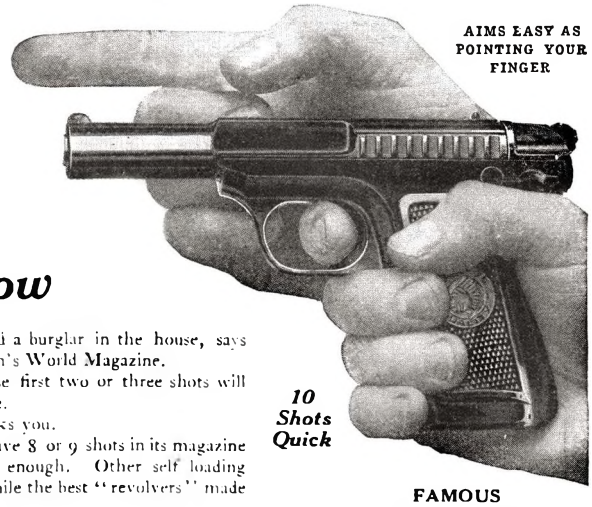

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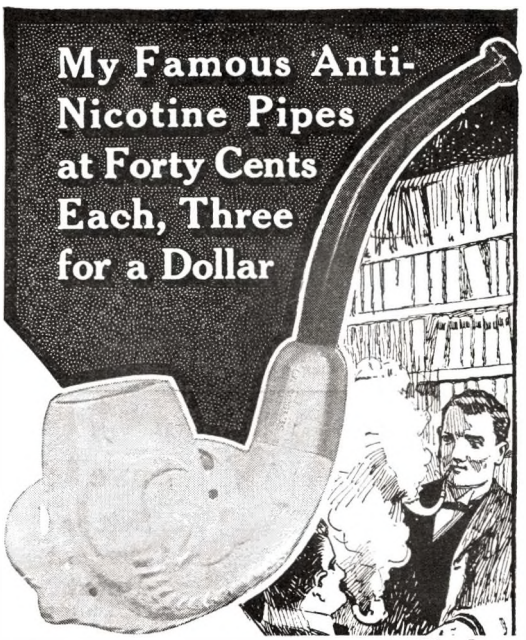

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Here's my original Anti-Nicotine Pipe at the top of this advertisement, and my new Anti-Nicotine Imitation Calabash Pipe is at the bottom. In both these pipes I put the famous bowl that does the work—that makes the nicotine disappear. This bowl is made of a material as old as the Babylonians, a special composition like clay, first discovered by the ancients. This material while as hard as any clay, has a peculiar porous quality—just like the finest meerschaum—which *absorbs* the nicotine, keeps it out of your system and uses it to give the pipe a beautiful meerschaum coloring. I know that my special low price cannot blind you to the *quality* in these pipes. I know that the value to your health and the enjoyment derived from these perfectly-made pipes, will get me twenty more customers every place that I send one now.

Any Three for a Dollar

Above is my popular claw design—the kind you see at the rich men's clubs. And below I show my new imitation Calabash, modeled after the original African Calabash Gourd, graceful and highly finished, trimmed in German Silver and containing my new removable bowl of special material. The claw design colors like the finest Meerschaum; the Calabash colors and looks EXACTLY like the genuine African article, which sells anywhere from $10 on up. With them there is no burning the tongue—no charred wood fumes—no disgusting odor—and you do not have to "break them in." Any three for a dollar. Choose two of one design and one of the other, or all three of the same—just as you desire. I will sell these pipes to you at 40 cents each or three for a dollar. Order now—if you are not entirely satisfied, your money will be returned cheerfully. Send the Coupon NOW.

My handsome Illustrated 1912 Smokers' Book sent FREE with every order.

H. Menges, The Smoker's Friend **664 Menges Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.**

COUPON—Cut out and mail today

Claw is Design A. Calabash is Design B.

H. MENGES, 664 Menges Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Enclosed find 40c for one, $1.00 for three of your Anti-Nicotine Pipes, or for two pipes and one Pocket-Lighter. Please send Design A . Design B

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

I do pipe repairing.

Deaf People Hear Whispers

With Common-Sense Ear Drums —"Wireless Phones for the Ears"

For twenty years the Common-Sense Ear Drums have been giving good hearing to hundreds of thousands of deaf people, and they will do the same for all who try them.

Every condition of deafness or defective hearing is being helped and cured, such as Catarrhal Deafness, Relaxed or Sunken Drums, Thickened Drums, Roaring and Hissing Sounds, Perforated or Partially Destroyed Drums, Drums Wholly Destroyed, Discharge from Ears—no matter what the cause or how long standing the case may be, there is hope of good hearing for all the afflicted deaf.

The Common-Sense Ear Drum is made of a soft, sensitized material, comfortable and safe to wear. They are out of sight when worn, and easily adjusted by the wearer.

Good hearing brings cheerfulness, comfort and sunshine into the life of the lonely deaf.

Our Free Book, which tells all, will be sent on application. Write for it today to

WILSON EAR DRUM CO. 718
168 Todd Building **Louisville, Ky.**

Men! Men! Men!

More Men Wanted

Write Today We want more men right away and will pay you big money—more money than you ever thought of making before. Show our magnificent line of samples and nifty styles and the orders will come in a hurry. Exclusive territory open now. Don't delay. Let us explain how to get a magnificent suit **FREE.** Write today.

Let Us Start You In Business

Be your own boss! Start a money-making business of your own. No money, no experience needed. You can never get ahead on a salary. We'll start you in a business of your own—give you an opportunity to make big money—make it easily and quickly. Write **at once.**

EARN $30 to $50 a WEEK

Yes, and then some. Agents make from $1,800.00 to $4,000.00 a year. You can do the same. Or you can keep your present position and earn $50.00 to $75.00 a month on the side. No trouble at all in taking orders. Nice, clean, easy work—short hours—big money.

Write Today Get full particulars of this exceptional offer **right away.** Just send a post card or letter and we will tell you all about it—will send all accessories for taking orders—**FREE.** Latest styles—finest fabrics. Start in to make big money right away. Write **at once**—now.

The Fidelity Tailors **651 South Fifth Avenue Dept. 1074 Chicago**

Write for Free Catalog

SEND ONLY

50c and We Ship You This Superb Rocker!

Yes, only 50c and we ship you this magnificent Rocker. Only 50c down and then 50c per month—$4.85 in all for this handsome piece of furniture. **Positively the greatest bargain ever offered here or at any other place.** Write for free catalog and bargain list today. We defy any house in America to equal our stupendous offers. You can see for yourself what an elegant rocker this is. It is made in American Quarter-sawed oak finish. Large with high back. Handsomely upholstered. Profusely carved back, front posts and under-seat. Upholstering throughout in best grade Boston Leather, beautifully diamond tufted. Steel spring seat with ruffled edge. Shipped from factory. **No. A1268.** This rocker is only one of the special bargains we are now giving. **Send for this bargain list today.**

Easy Payments

The great house of Straus and Schram, with a proud quarter century record, **endorsed by the greatest bank,** will trust you and allow you to buy any article on easiest monthly payments. If you want anything in rockers, chairs, bedsteads, carpets, rugs, curtains, washing machines, crockery, silverware, baby carriages, go-carts, Men's, Women's and Children's apparel, stoves, ranges or any other article of housefurnishings, don't fail to get our sensational easy terms.

FREE Special Bargain List and Catalogs

Don't wait a minute before sending for our great bargain catalog and special monthly bargain list. Bargains which are positively astounding; bargains which simply cannot be met by our competitors because of our stupendous buying and manfacturing facilities.

Write Today, Don't Wait

Send the free coupon, a postal or letter—but send right now. Take advantage of these special offers while they last. **This month only.** So hurry. Just your name and address on postal or letter and we will mail, free and postpaid, our catalog and bargain list.

STRAUS AND SCHRAM (Inc.)
Dept. 9074
35th St.,
CHICAGO

FREE COUPON

STRAUS & SCHRAM (Inc.)
Dept 9074 35th St., Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen: Please send me **free** and **prepaid** your big bargain lists —also the catalogs I have marked with X. No obligations on me whatsoever.

- ☐ General House Furnishings
- ☐ Stoves & Ranges
- ☐ Ladies' Clothing
- ☐ Men's Clothing

My name is .....

My address is .....

701

If you would like to have the rocker shipped at once send only 50 cents.

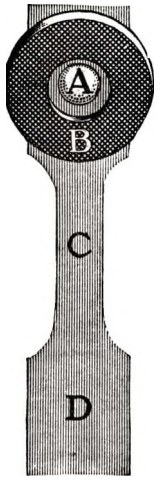
Don't Doctor Corns With Steel

Don't pare them. That just removes the top layer. It leaves the main part to grow.

A slip of the blade may mean infection. Sometimes a dangerous infection.

This form of home surgery should be ended forever.

A few years ago a chemist invented the B & B wax —the heart of the Blue-jay plaster.



Now you simply apply this plaster. It is done in a jiffy. The pain instantly stops, and the corn is forgotten.

This wonderful wax gently loosens the corn. In two days the whole corn, root and branch, comes out. No soreness, no discomfort.

Please don't doubt it.

Fifty million corns have been removed in this way. Millions of people know it. Just try it yourself, and never again will you let corns cause you pain.

A in the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
B protects the corn, stopping the pain at once.
C wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.
D is rubber adhesive to fasten the plaster on.

Blue-jay Corn Plasters

Sold by Druggists—15c and 25c per package

Sample Mailed Free. Also Blue-jay Bunion Plasters (159)

Bauer & Black, Chicago and New York, Makers of B & B Handy Package Absorbent Cotton, etc.

LABLACHE
FACE POWDER

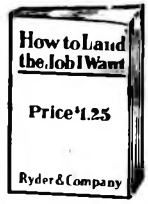
SPRING BLOSSOMS—

with their freshness and fragrance — may be compared with woman's rarest gift—a beautiful complexion. That velvety smoothness of skin is retained by users of LABLACHE, that wonderfully adherent yet invisible boon to women who know. The same dependable toilet requisite for over 40 yrs.

Refuse Substitutes

They may be dangerous. Flesh, White, Pink or Cream, 50c, a box of druggists or by mail. *Send 10c. for a sample box.*

BEN. LEVY CO.,
French Perfumers. Dept. 41.
125 Kingston Street, Boston, Mass.



Land *the* Job You Want

THIS invaluable, cop righted book positively teaches you how in four hours. Written by an expert business counsel, especially for office workers, bookkeepers, clerks, stenographers and salesmen. Helpful to others. Indorsed and highly recommended by educators, employers and every owner. The only book ever written that really teaches you—how to answer an ad—how to write a winning letter of application (gives exact wording and model forms)—how to gain an interview—how to secure a desirable position—how to make good—how to win promotion—how to get a raise in pay—how to change from one situation to another to better your chances for success, etc., etc., with complete, detailed, understandable instructions.

This Book *Must* Pay *for* Itself

All we ask is that you send 25c. silver to show good faith and help defray expense. We send the book to you, post paid, by return mail. You pay the balance, $1, after you prove by test and experience that the book does for you, personally, exactly what is claimed for it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Be prepared to land the first position that comes to your notice. If you don't need the book, order for some friend who does. Write name and address plainly.

RYDER & CO., *Publishers*, Portland, Oregon

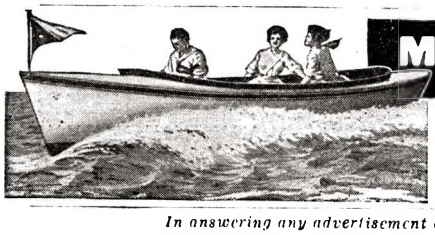
WHITE VALLEY GEMS IMPORTED from FRANCE

SEE THEM BEFORE PAYING!

These gems are chemical white sapphires —**LOOK** like **Diamonds.** Stand acid and fire diamond tests. So hard they easily scratch a file and **will cut glass.** Brilliancy guaranteed 25 years. All mounted in 14K **solid gold diamond mountings.** Will send you any style ring, pin or stud for examination—all charges prepaid—**no money in advance.**

Write today for Free illustrated booklet, special prices and ring measure.

WHITE VALLEY GEM CO., D702 Saks Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind.



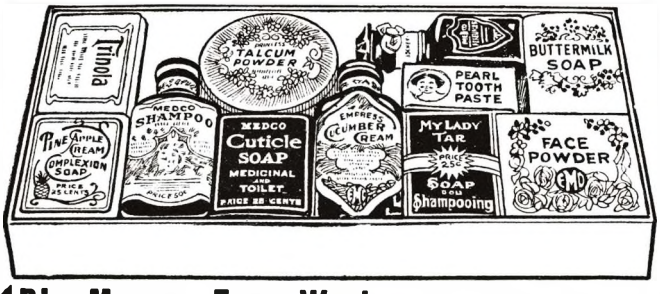
Magnificent Steel Launch $96

Complete With Engine, Ready to Run

18-20-25 and 27 ft. boats at proportionate prices. All launches tested and fitted with Detroit two-cycle reversible engines with speed controlling lever—simplest engine made—starts without cranking—has only 3 moving parts—anyone can run it. **The Safe Launch**—absolutely non-sinkable—needs no boathouse. All boats fitted with air-tight compartments—cannot sink, leak or rust. We are sole owners of the patents for the manufacture of rolled steel, lock-seamed steel boats. Orders filled the day they are received. Boats shipped to every part of the world. **Free Catalog. Steel Rowboats, $20.** (83)

MICHIGAN STEEL BOAT CO., 1200 Jefferson Avenue, Detroit, Mich., U. S. A.

Want This Outfit? Live Agents—I Want to Pay You $3000 to Work for Me This Year



I'VE got the greatest money making proposition in the country to offer **wide-awake men.** It is easy to pick up **$10 to $20 a day** representing me, and your business keeps getting better the longer you are with me.

By offering this "Lucky 'Leven" outfit (value $3.20) to your customers for only $1.00, don't you think you can make a hit in your town? It will pay you big, too.

Here Is the Explanation:

I am a big manufacturer in Chicago and **sell only through my representatives.** I make the **Finest Toilet Articles** and **Soaps** in the country. My scheme of introducing them is a tremendous money maker.

Big Money--Easy Work

We Back You with our capital and experience and supply everything you need with full instructions so that you can start right out at once to make money.

The goods sell themselves. You would understand this better if you saw my **Soap and Toilet Article Combinations.** I manufacture my own goods, and sell direct through my own representatives only—that's why you can offer better goods than others and undersell them 25 to 50% and still make for yourself 150 to 300% profit.

My claim that you can make $3000 per year is quite conservative—for you can actually make more than that if you want to hustle and put energy and ginger into your work.

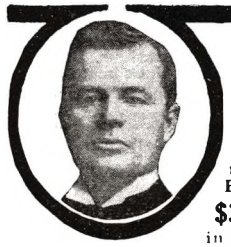
What Others Are Doing

G. O. Earnest for five consecutive days averaged $8.00 an hour profit. The following week one day he made $25.00 in 5 hours. E. F. Newcome averages 30 orders a day, a profit of over $15.00 a day. J. C. Messick reports 45 to 55 sales a day, averaging easily $20.00 daily profit. They are going at a clip away beyond the $3000 a year mark set for you. It is partly up to the man—UP TO YOU—our nobby goods and **"the plan"** do the rest.

Special Offer

I want a live agent at once in every community, and in order to establish an agent in your territory I am making a **Special Offer** whereby you can get this entire outfit, with a handsome plush-lined leatherette case, without any cost to yourself, if you reply at once. Get my literature and valuable information now. This is no ordinary proposition—I TALK big money for you and I MEAN IT. You can't afford NOT to write, no matter how much of a doubter you may be. Just a postal or a letter saying "send me your plans" will bring you the whole proposition FREE. Send today, address:

E. M. DAVIS, Pres., E. M. Davis Soap Co., 493 Davis Bldg., 1442 Carroll Ave., Chicago, Ill.



J. H. JOICE, Pres.

I Can Increase Your Earnings

No matter where you live, if you are honest and want an independent business of your own, send your name and address and I will mail you our **Big Free 64-Page Book,** showing how you may earn

$3,000 to $10,000 a Year

in the **Real Estate, Brokerage and Insurance Business.**

Our system is a positive success. We will teach you by mail and appoint you our

Special Representative

and help you to make money from the start. Write today.

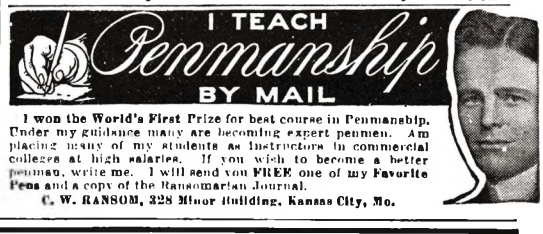
INTERNATIONAL REALTY CORP., 2449 Manhattan Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

VENTRILOQUISM

ALMOST ANYONE CAN LEARN IT AT HOME

This is no special gift as you have supposed, but an art. I have taught thousands in all parts of the world. Cost small. Send to-day 2 cent stamp for particulars and proofs.

O. A. SMITH, Room W 59—823 Bigelow St., PEORIA, ILL.



I won the World's First Prize for best course in Penmanship. Under my guidance many are becoming expert penmen. Am placing many of my students as instructors in commercial colleges at high salaries. If you wish to become a better penman, write me. I will send you FREE one of my Favorite Pens and a copy of the Ransomerian Journal.

C. W. RANSOM, 328 Minor Building, Kansas City, Mo.

Dealers Sell This Dining Room Table for $45.00—and It Is Worth It

Constructed of the choicest quarter-sawed Oak, 54-inch top closed, 90-inch extension. Massive, substantial—no furniture you can buy is better made and

Our Factory Price To You Is $19.00

Saving You Over Half Average Retail Price

We absolutely guarantee that you will be satisfied with this piece and everything you purchase of us—or *your money will be paid back at once.* Write for our beautiful illustrated Furniture Book now and see many more equally attractive pieces at equally low prices for living room, den, dining room, library or bedroom. Everything shipped in complete sections. A few minutes with the screw driver and it is all ready for use.

BROOKS MANUFACTURING CO.
4204 Rust Ave., Saginaw, Mich.

From *Factory* to *You*—that's how we do it. Write for book.

It will tell you all about the Famous Brooks Furniture and 100 bargains.

Photographing the Secret Service

The Inner Story of the Civil War After 50 Years

Receiving a Message from General McClellan

FROM shore to ship, from hill to hill, innocent-looking flags, like that in this photograph, sped their silent messages—and saved an army, started a battle—caught an enemy off guard. They were part of the Union Signal Corps—best friends of the Secret Service—and the camera caught them as they did a man's size job in those days of confusion and dismay. Their work, so valuable to the nation, so fascinating to hear about, was but slightly remembered till vividly recalled by 3800 photographs of the Civil War, lost for fifty years—now found again and contained in the ten extraordinary volumes of the

April 20th Last Day at Present Price

PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY *of The* CIVIL WAR

In the bewildering mazes made by 4,000,000 fighting men, those of the Signal Service worked silently and swiftly, and now at last the camera has brought them their long-deserved glory. On the sensitive glass negatives, too, flashed scene after scene from the busy war life of the telegraphers, showing them as they set up their clicking machines in bomb proof and trench, in muddy road and deep forest. But most startling of the newly revealed secrets are the amazing glimpses into that inner Secret Service of guerrillas, spies and scouts—men and women both—for whom each sunrise threatened a disgraceful death. That Secret Service in the North was organized by Allan Pinkerton, famous detective, and it was under his protection that Mathew Brady and other Union photographers took this and the other 3800 photographs now contained in the Photographic History. Here in these pages you also see photographs of Union troops taken by Confederate photographers as secret information for their armies. All this and much more, you will find in the part of one volume of the Photographic History devoted to Secret Service. There are ten volumes, covering every phase of the war, and besides the photographs, they contain a million-word text history freshly written by fifty famous men.

Low Price Extended to April 20th

By special arrangement with the publishers we are able to extend the present low price and terms to April 20th. On that day the price will be advanced. This is your last chance to save money. Don't miss it.

Send for . . . Sample Pages FREE

Send the coupon at once for sumptuous specimen pages from the set — with reproductions of these strange photographs. At the same time we will send you—also free—the romantic story of Brady, of the taking, loss and rediscovery of the photographs. And we will tell you how to get your set of the Photographic History at the special low Club price and convenient monthly payments.

Remember you must postmark *your order* on or before April 20th. Send the coupon today *to make sure.*

John Wanamaker
New York

Mail Coupon To Day

Argosy, 4-12

JOHN WANAMAKER
New York

Send me free specimen pages from the Photographic History of the Civil War with reproductions of the beautiful photographs and the full romantic story of their taking, loss and discovery. At the same time, tell me how I can get a complete set of the **Photographic History** through your Club at low price and small payments.

Name.....

Address.....

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

One Minute Post Cards—
One Minute Profits—
One Minute to Investigate

6-lb. Portable Post Card Gallery

$581.00

PROFIT IN THREE MONTHS

That is what Lopez Diego earned over and above all hotel bills, railroad fares, and other expenses while traveling in Mexico. Browning, of Miss., says: "Made $16.70 in two hours." William Baker says: "Made $25 in six hours. It's the thing the people want." J. M. Weidow writes: "I made $10 in only one and one-half hours' work." Hundreds of similar letters and reports tell the records of quick, big, easy profits with the

"Mandel" Photo Post Card Machine

A new business of tremendous, immediate and unlimited money-making possibilities. No experience required—no canvassing—no waiting on deliveries to collect profits. Pleasant, healthful, vitalizing, out-door work—all or spare time—traveling or at home. Wonderful, new photographic discovery—a new scientific process—excites interest, arrests attention, compels immediate orders from every onlooker. Big, quick, clean profits at private homes, parties, picnics, on the street, in the country, in small towns, in great cities, at fairs, carnivals, conventions, jollifications, institutes, reunions, etc., etc.—

Photos Direct on Post Cards—
No Plates—No Films

A wonderful machine that takes, finishes and delivers three original photo post cards per minute RIGHT ON THE SPOT where you take them. No rent to pay—no profits to divide with anyone. A cash business of pleasure and a great volume of profit. Machine is everything in one—a complete

6-lb. Portable Post Card Gallery

500% Profit and no Expense. A chance to travel and see the world—make your expenses and a lot of money besides. A new high class business, representing the opportunity of a lifetime—a chance for any man, young or old, without experience or large capital, to own and control a splendid, permanent high grade business, earning from $2000 to $5000 a year profit. Within one week from today you can, if you will, own such a business and be making that much money over and above all expenses. Write today for complete FREE INFORMATION.

$26.00 Is the Total Investment Required to Start This Big Paying Business of Your Own

Sale of supplies that come to you with Outfit practically gives you back entire investment—and you have the business clear and fully established. You begin making money the same day your outfit arrives. Immediate sales—immediate profits. *Write right now.* Complete information FREE. Address either office.

THE CHICAGO FERROTYPE COMPANY

125 Ferrotype Bldg., Chicago, Ill. or Dept. 125 Public Bank Bldg., New York City, N. Y.

I WILL MAKE YOU PROSPEROUS

If you are honest and ambitious write me today. No matter where you live or what your occupation, I will teach you the Real Estate business by mail; appoint you Special Representative of my Company in your town; start you in a profitable business of your own, and help you make big money at once.

Unusual opportunity for men without capital to become independent for life. Valuable Book and full particulars Free. Write today.

NATIONAL CO-OPERATIVE REALTY CO.
Marden Building
E. R. Marden, Prest. **Washington, D. C.**

PRINT YOUR OWN

Cards, circulars, books, newspaper. Press $5. Larger $18. Rotary $60. Save Money. Big profit printing for others. All easy, rules sent. Write factory for press catalogue, TYPE, cards, paper, &c.

THE PRESS CO., Meriden, Connecticut.

Buy Your **NECKWEAR** Direct From Factory

Pure Silk, Barathea weave, solid colors, 1¾ in. wide, reversible, or "Nat'l Fan" like cut, 4-in-hand, 48 in. long. GENUINE ONE DOLLAR QUALITY; PIN PROOF. Introductory price **2 Scarfs for $1.00, post paid**

Colors: Navy, Garnet, Helio, Dark Green, Tobacco, Purple, Steel Gray, Cadet, Black, White. Silk Socks, reinforced sole, toe and heel, to match Scarfs, 50c pair. Send postal for illustrated catalogue and samples.

ELECTRIC CITY SILK CO., J2, W. Market, Scranton, Pa.

Are You Interested In The Theater?

READ "Stage Comment" in THE MUNSEY for April. The editor of this department, who has been contributing articles about the theater to THE MUNSEY for twenty years, will compare the ideals and purposes of the plays and players of nearly a quarter century ago with those of the present. You will find this article intensely interesting and informative.

The April MUNSEY will appear on your dealer's news-stand March 25. Ten cents a copy.

Where the World's Best-Dressed Men Come From

THE ROYAL TAILORS

THE ROYAL TAILORS

In the stores of over 8,000 Royal Tailoring

dealers, there is now on display the Supreme Spring Woolen Exhibit; a full half-a-thousand of the picked "plums" and "peaches" that the looms have turned out *new* this season.

And every bit of it is YOURS—for you to delightedly browse through and uncover the cloth *ideal* of your fancy. For somewhere, here, is that *one particular AFFINITY* of your fabric taste that you would call "just right" for *your* Spring suit or overcoat!

Made-to-measure De Luxe

The Royal System is *exclusively* a service in high-quality made-to-order clothes.

Behind your dealer's showing of the season's best woolens, is the famous Royal Broadway Tailor-shop Service—ready to build to your order in Chicago or New York, the made-to-measure suit of your dictation and "body-direction."

This is Your Invitation

The main purpose of this opening Spring announcement is to invite you to enjoy the hospitality that our 8,000 Royal merchants have authorized us to extend. We want you to call and inspect the big Royal Woolen Show; to see for yourself how this service is building at $20, $25, $30 and $35 the utmost in made-to-measure, all pure wool clothes.

Royal Tailored-To-Your-Order Clothes

The Royal Tailors

Chicago

Joseph Schön

New York

President

"The Clothes That Real Men Wear"

AMERICAN TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH CO.
LOCAL AND LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE
BELL SYSTEM
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

The Pony Express

A Pioneer of the Bell System

FIFTY years ago the Pony Express became the most efficient messenger service ever known.

Pony riders carried messages from Missouri to California, nearly two thousand miles across mountains and deserts, through blizzards and sand storms, constantly in danger of attack by hostile Indians.

Fresh horses were supplied at short intervals, and the messages, relayed from rider to rider, were delivered in the record-breaking time of seven and one-half days.

Railroad and telegraph took the place of the Pony Express, carrying messages across this western territory. Today the telephone lines of the Bell System have done more, for they have bound together ranch and mine and camp and village.

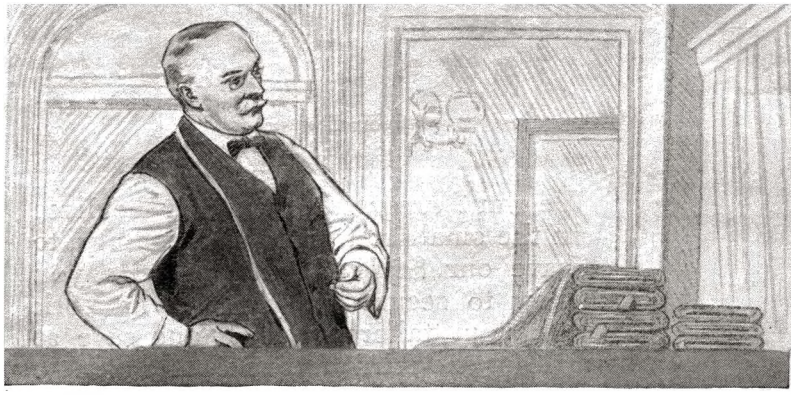
This network of telephone lines, following the trails of the Indians, connects with the telegraph to carry messages throughout the world.

By means of Universal Bell Service the most remote settler is no longer isolated, but has become a constantly informed citizen of the American Commonwealth.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY

AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy ***One System*** ***Universal Service***



The Fabric that is SURE to meet with your Approval!

"Well, how is it, Mr. Tailor?"

"How do *you* like it?"

"It looks good to me. I'm *sure* the cloth is right because you can't go wrong on the American Woolen Co.'s Puritan Serge. It's becoming and it stands up. But you are the doctor as to fit and tailoring."

"Well, sir, I'm proud to say the work in that suit is worthy of the cloth. It's a pleasure to make a suit of Puritan Serge because, no matter how long it's worn, it's a credit to the workmanship put into it."

PURITAN 1620 SERGE

A thoroughbred style fabric for the man who cares

—is one of the most beautiful rich shades of blue ever woven. It is a distinctive serge, with the warmth of sunlight in it, with a draping quality and feel that mark the true style fabric. Pure wool, through and through. Thoroughly dependable. Width 58-60 inches. London shrunk.

Tell your tailor you want Puritan Serge. He has it or can get it. Puritan Serge is also used for high-grade ready-to-wear suits. The name PURITAN 1620 SERGE is stamped on the back of the cloth.

If unable to obtain Puritan Serge, send us the name of your clothier or tailor, with money order or check for quantity required at $3.00 per yard (3½ yards for man's suit), and you will be supplied through regular channels, as we do not sell at retail.

American Woolen Company

Wm M Wood, President.

AMERICAN WOOLEN COMPANY

Selling Agency

American Woolen Co. of N. Y.

AMERICAN WOOLEN BLDG.

4th Ave., 18th and 19th Streets

NEW YORK

Send for it today

Bell Tailors' $20 SUIT to your measure $13.50

We want *every man*, whether he lives in the smallest town or largest city, to have our Style Book. It tells you how to secure the *finest* New York Custom tailored clothes and save at least one-third of your clothes money.

Send for our Spring Style Book—It's Free

How We Sell—We have no agents—we have no representatives of any kind—our business is done *direct*, and our very comprehensive catalog does it. This direct method *eliminates* the agent and in-between man, and that saves you at least *one-third* on every garment we produce. Take your own order and save at least $6.50. To *prove* it, we will make, *to your individual measure*, a

$20 Guaranteed Suit for $13.50

Our Guarantee *is as broad and clear as it can possibly be made.* It means that the clothes *must* fit you—they *must* live up to every claim we make, or you are under no obligations to keep them. Our measuring system is so *simple* that *anyone at home* can take your measure as expertly as a skilled custom tailor. Even if you *should* make a slip in measuring yourself, we hold ourselves responsible.

Our catalog is our only salesman. We will put its mute evidence up against any salesman's strongest arguments. No matter what priced clothes you wear, we are *anxious* to come in direct competition with the man who sells you now. *Don't* think of placing your order for clothes until you *send for our catalog.* Like thousands of others every season, you also will become a steady BELL patron and an enthusiastic BELL admirer.

OUR FABRICS, TAILORING AND OUR STYLES

Our catalog contains 64 beautiful samples. Show them to *anyone* who is a *judge* of woolens and *prove* to yourself the *superiority* of our fabrics. You won't find a *better* choice of fabrics—you won't find more *thorough* tailoring than we put into our clothes. Certainly you *won't* find so much *quality* at so little cost. This catalog contains photographic reproductions of the styles that will be worn by the *best* dressers in New York and every style centre. It contains numerous letters from the thousands of *pleased* customers who have learned the *saving* and the *perfection* of Bell Clothes.

The Bell Tailors, 116-120 Walker St., New York
Please send your new catalog and samples free.
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THE BELL TAILORS OF NEW YORK

116-120 Walker St., New York City

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