VENGEANCE BURNED AWAY BEGINS IN THIS ISSUE

THE ARGOSY

JUNE

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THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY NEW YORK & LONDON

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Twelve Short Stories

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THE ARGOSY

Vol. LXVI. JUNE, 1911. No. 3

Midnight Between Towns.

BY FRITZ KROG.

A Trolley Tale of Adventure, Mystery, and Threatened Doom Over a Road Not Yet Opened to the Public.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

JUST FOR A LARK.

THE last of the merry crowd which had filled the trim little car-barn all evening had drifted away, and Gardner Lamar was left alone, standing before a shining new trolley-car gorgeously decorated with bunting, flags, and flowers — nearly all roses, white, red, yellow, and pink, plucked from every garden in Caldwell.

This was the night before the gala day which was to see the opening of the new trolley line between Caldwell and Manette, two thriving little towns grown up in the heart of the Ozark Mountains in Southern Missouri. Caldwell was a rich, old residential town; Manette, fifteen miles distant, was a hustling, dirty mining town.

Hardly a citizen of Caldwell but had money invested in some iron mine near Manette or worked there. Hence the need of quick communication between the two places.

Now the line was built and ready for service, and its builder, a young engineer, stood before the decorated car which was to be the first to ply between the towns. For almost a year Gardner Lamar had been straining every nerve-cell and blood-corpuscle of his body to finish his work on time and make no mistakes. He had given no thought to the people of Caldwell; their little social functions he had avoided, or, going, they had bored him.

But to-night, while he was one of the happy crowd of pretty girls and their escorts, something of the long strain had given way, so that by the time the party broke up, perhaps some of its gaiety was left in him, for he stood before the new car and smiled.

Presently he strode over and turned out the lights, whistling happily all the while. Then he started up the street, still whistling and both hands in his pockets. Before he had traversed the length of a block he stopped and began to chuckle.

"She called me a cunning boy," he said, moving on up the street.

The night, near gone now, was sweet and quiet; a mild, warm wind blew from the south; overhead a quarter-moon floated among rolling clouds, and from somewhere the stroller caught a whiff of lilacs.

"This is great," he murmured, removing his hat and running his fingers through his hair.

He had left the barn a few blocks behind by this time, and was walking along a dark alley of shade-trees. Here he stopped to stand stock-still and stare.

Advancing toward him was a white, straight, slim figure. If he had been less practical and more imaginative he might have thought it a ghost, it looked so light and unearthly in the gloom under the trees.

But the apparition proved to be very much of the flesh when it stopped and, uttering a low scream, turned to run.

"Miss Nader?" Gardner cried, and started forward at a quick walk, though his heart moved in leaps and bounds.

In a moment he had caught up with the fugitive, who stopped when he spoke. She stood with her hand over her heart as he

came up, a slender, graceful, beautiful figure in a simple white gown, bare-headed and with wide-open, frightened eyes.

"Mr. Lamar!" she gasped. "How you frightened me!"

"You looked like a ghost among the shadows," said Gardner, extending his hand.

Almost unconsciously she put forth a graceful, white arm and let her hand rest in his, while both laughed and looked each into the other's eyes.

"I'm glad I met you here," said the girl, withdrawing her hand. "I lost my locket while we were decorating the car. See!"

She held forth a long gold chain with both hands to show where the trinket had broken away.

"And were you going back to look for it?" asked Gardner.

"Yes, I wouldn't lose it for the world. It's a present."

"It ought to be easy to find," said Lamar, with a smile. "I'll go back with you, if I may."

"Oh, yes; that's good of you."

This was Eleanor Nader, the daughter of one of Caldwell's oldest and worthiest citizens. Gardner had often met her before this night, but he had never allowed himself to think of her.

During the work of decorating the car he had suddenly seen in her a lovely girl, and, hardly knowing that he was doing so, had been watching her all evening. Now, walking with her through the soft, languorous night, he felt his blood warm, and something went into his step that made it light and springy.

The two exchanged only a few words on the way to the barn. Once, when a wakeful house-dog sprang against a fence which they were passing, Eleanor shrank close to her companion's side, and he curved his arm around her for an instant.

"That's that terrible Thompson dog," she said, laughing apologetically for her fright.

"He couldn't hurt you," Gardner replied confidently, and as the girl stepped shyly away from him he caught himself sighing.

"Here we are," he said, as they stood before the dark archway of the car-barn, and while he went within to turn on the lights Eleanor waited outside, humming.

"It *is* pretty," she said enthusiastically, as the decorated car lit up.

The first hurried search of its floor and cushions did not reveal the lost locket.

"It might be under the seats," said Gardner, dropping on his hands and knees.

Thus his head brushed Eleanor's skirt, and she stepped back, blushing furiously. He hung his head and, ashamed and confused, began to search energetically.

"It must be here somewhere," he said.

But it was not there. They looked over every inch of the car's interior, the front and rear platforms, and the region outside just around the car.

"It may have rolled underneath," suggested Eleanor.

"That's right," Gardner replied, and stooped to crawl over the track with a reckless disregard of his best clothes.

"Wait," said the girl. "You'll soil your coat."

"I don't care," he declared; but added a second later: "Maybe it would be easier to find if I run the car out a little way."

"Oh," Eleanor exclaimed. "Will it run? Is it all ready to go?"

"Yes," Gardner nodded. "The current has been on since day before yesterday. We are using Beaver Dam power—the same they are using at Manette for their motors."

"Then wait until I get on," said Eleanor. "I'll be the first passenger."

"All right," Gardner replied laughingly, and took his place at the controller.

The girl followed him to the front platform, and as the car ground slowly forward she screamed softly in delight.

"It looks so easy to make it go," she said, as the engineer brought the car to a halt.

"Yes," he said, "it is."

"Show me how," she burst out impulsively.

"Let's look for the locket now," he said, "and then we can take a little run."

"Good!" Eleanor exclaimed. "So I'll really and truly be the first passenger."

The area just exposed proved as devoid of lockets as any which their eyes had covered. Their search was quickly made, at all events; for they were both eager for the lark of driving the car through the sleeping town.

"It's too bad," said Eleanor. "but let's not hunt any more now. We can find it to-morrow. It's getting shockingly late and I want to ride."

"Come on," Gardner replied, and led the way to the motorman's post.

There they stood side by side while Lamar swung the controller around, and the car leaped out over the deserted street.

"Oh, isn't it grand!" Eleanor cried.

Gardner had no words ready, but he laughed and turned on full speed, so that the car shot between the rows of trees along the walks with terrific speed. The engineer's blood was flowing swiftly through his veins; all thoughts of danger and of the consequences of this midnight "joy-ride" were absent, and he realized nothing except the pleasure of the car bounding under him and of this lovely girl at his side, with her wind-swept hair and shining eyes.

"Now let me run it awhile," said Eleanor, after they had traversed several blocks.

Gardner stepped aside to let her take the controller-handle, and while she held it he explained the various speed-notches. So engrossed were they in this business that they had passed out of the town limits and were well into the country before either of them noticed their surroundings at all.

"Look where we are," said the girl suddenly, with a note of alarm in her voice.

"That's all right," replied Gardner. "The car goes so fast—forty miles an hour — we've only been gone ten minutes. It's great out here."

If Eleanor had any further doubts about going on, she did not express them. Her companion went on explaining about the controlling mechanism, and he helped often to regulate the speed. Sometimes his fingers rested for a moment on Eleanor's as he took the handle from her; the touch thrilled him.

Engrossed as they were in this sweet play they forgot everything and observed nothing, unless it was the light in each other's eyes. Particularly, they failed to note that the clouds which had been lazily floating in the sky earlier in the night were now banking in the south in heavy, sinister masses.

Now the car was bowling well into the wild, wooded, and mountainous district that lay between Caldwell and Manette. On both sides of the right-of-way lay thick woods, sometimes below the track-level, sometimes on cliffs or hills. Of houses and other signs of humans they passed few, for in this mining district farming had been practically abandoned.

Gardner and Eleanor, flying swiftly and smoothly through this dark solitude, laughed and shouted. But suddenly Lamar's hair rose; his body grew tense and rigid; his one hand shot out convulsively to take the controller from Eleanor's and with the other he reached for the air-brake.

So quickly did he make these moves that Eleanor could not stand aside from her position between him and the controlling apparatus. Both his arms were around her and her hair blew into his eyes. At the same time she struggled and screamed, confusing him and interfering with his prompt action.

They had rounded a curve at the foot of a range of steep, short hillocks. Straight ahead and almost upon them they saw lying across the track the top of a huge tree, whose trunk disappeared in the darkness up the little hillside.

Gardner's endeavors to stop the car and avoid rushing into the foliage, beneath which might lurk a dangerous obstruction, came too late. Had he been driving the car himself and had Eleanor not stood in his way he might have stopped in time.

As it was, they rushed headlong among the leaves, there was a crackling of twigs and branches, and Gardner felt bits of wood and sticks lash his face. Then the car stopped with a suddenness and a lurch that threw both him and the girl in his arms to their knees.

CHAPTER II.

A HOLD-UP OR WHAT?

ABOUT the time that Gardner and Eleanor were searching in the car-barn for the locket, two men and a boy, the latter bearing a lantern and an ax, and the others carrying shotguns, arrived at the foot of a tall sycamore in a dense grove on the top of a hillock. They had been led here by four gaunt, yellow hounds who were now whining and restlessly circling the base of the tree.

"Shet up, will ye?" growled the oldest of the men, a tall, rough-looking individual as gaunt as his dogs and with a mass of uncombed whiskers and a face, tanned and wrinkled, showing in every feature a crude slyness and meanness.

"He's thar, all right, paw," said his oldest son, a youth of twenty, thin as a rail, heavy-faced and thick-lipped.

His brother, the one with the lantern and ax, was an overgrown, freckled-faced,

barefooted boy of fourteen, with a broken nose.

"I reckon he is," agreed the father. "But we can't see to shoot. And the tree's solid, so we can't smoke him out. Elmer, you best git to work and hack it down. It ain't so thick."

Elmer, protesting profanely that he was tired, nevertheless attacked the tree with his ax. After a few listless blows his brother snatched the tool from him and went at the chopping with a fierce energy which cooled presently.

"Well," said Elmer, as he drew back, "he's bigger than me."

"Nary one of you is any count," declared the old man. "When I was your age—"

"Do it yourself if you don't like my choppin'," snapped the oldest son.

Amid growling and quarreling, the work proceeded. At their best these people had ugly tempers; they felt worse than usual now because they had covered something like ten miles that night through the roughest country in Missouri in pursuit of a coon which, from the behavior of the hounds, they thought to be in the top of the tall sycamore.

The three — Sam, the father, Tom, and Elmer—were members of the Dance family, a huge clan of lazy, shiftless Ozark mountaineers who eked out a miserable existence from almost sterile farms scattered about on the mountainsides south of Caldwell and Manette.

Never leaving their homes except on hunting or fishing expeditions, or to buy groceries at some backwoods store, they had heard nothing of the new trolley line. And they never dreamed that they were within thirty feet of the track when they began cutting down the sycamore.

When the tree fell, its topmost branches scraped the trolley-wire and its crown dropped well across one rail. Almost by a miracle it did not cause a short-circuit. But, as it was, there were limbs enough of sufficient size on the rails to make dangerous passing for a car.

The Dances stood back as the tree crashed its length down the hillock; but as soon as it had fallen they, together with the hounds, dashed through the thicket to capture the coon. Just at that instant the trolley-car, its headlight gleaming like an evil eye, swept out of the darkness and bore down on them.

Elmer, the younger boy, was the first to see it. For the fraction of a second he was stunned with fright; then he dropped the lantern and screamed.

"Paw! Gawd!" he yelled. "Looky comin'!"

By this time Sam and Tom had likewise caught sight of the juggernaut, and stood as if transfixed, utterly bewildered and frightened to the tips of their souls. Even the hounds crouched with trembling limbs and waited.

The coon kept his head; perhaps he was better acquainted with the trolley-line; at any rate, he skedaddled when confusion fell on his pursuers.

The suspense of the hunters did not last more than a full second when the car rushed into the tree-top, stopped with a tremendous grinding and scraping of its wheels, and its lights went out.

"Wal, I'll be dinged!" said Sam, who recovered first; "it's one o' them new-fangled hoss-cars."

He had been to Kansas City once in his life and once to St. Louis. Hence he recognized the type of conveyance which had so frightened him and his sons, as soon as he had a good look at it.

The boys, who had never seen anything like a trolley-car, were slow in getting back to their normal state of mind.

Meanwhile the four hounds had started a wild baying and howling, and threw themselves at the front platform where Gardner and Eleanor were slowly gathering their wits and getting to their feet.

"Pete! Bump! Yaller!" Sam called to the dogs. "Gol ding your dirty hides. Git offen that car. Elmer, where's that lantern?"

After the hounds had been kicked and beaten and the boy had recovered the light, the situation cleared to a considerable extent; at least, so far as the Dances were concerned. And by this time Gardner was helping Eleanor to her feet.

"Are you hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"No, no," she replied, leaning on his arm. "But what has happened? Is the car broken?"

"No, I think—" Gardner began.

Eleanor interrupted him with a wild scream, and gripped his arm with both hands. She had just caught sight of the Dances lined up at the front steps, guns in hand and holding the struggling dogs—a wicked-looking group.

"Robbers!" the girl yelled shrilly. "We are held up!"

"Hush," said Gardner quickly, although in his heart he feared the worst as he looked into the rough, stolid faces of the coon-hunters.

An awkward silence ensued, while Eleanor continued to cling desperately to Gardner's arm, while the engineer and the Dances stared at each other. With fear and suspicion on both sides, each waited for the next move of the other. Only a restless hound whimpered.

"Hallo, you there," said Gardner finally.

The Dances gave no answer to this cheerful greeting except a grunt and a cough from Sam. They were embarrassed now.

"It's one o' them city fellers," said Tom in a low voice.

"And his gal," Elmer whispered.

"Shet up!" ordered Sam loudly and gruffly.

These last words Eleanor and Gardner heard; she was more frightened than ever, and the engineer thought things looked bad. He was convinced that the tree had been laid across the track for some evil purpose which would develop presently. Another silence followed, which Sam volunteered to break.

"Come from Caldwell?" he asked.

"It's none of your business," Gardner retorted. He was not going to show a white feather before Eleanor. "What's your game?"

"Game?" Sam growled, sensing an insult in the word. "I don't play no games."

"He's sassin' you, paw," Tom whispered. "Don't take nothin' offen him."

"He's too smart," Elmer added.

All this whispering had its effect on Gardner and the girl. They were thoroughly satisfied now that they had fallen into the hands of some sort of bandits. Eleanor began to cry hysterically.

"There, don't cry," said Lamar tenderly, patting her hand. "We must be brave."

By this time the clouds, which had been gathering thickly ever since the trolley expedition started, completely covered the heavens, and jagged streaks of lightning shot over the horizon. This added to Gardner's worry, because an electrical storm might put the line out of business. Hastily contriving a line of action, he went into the center of the car.

"Come on," he said to Eleanor. "Wait for me in here. I think nothing more is wrong than just the trolley off the wire. If I get it back, we may be able to give these fellows the slip."

Stepping outside again, he swung the trolley-pole around until its wheel touched the wire, when the car lit up again in a startling flash.

During these maneuvers the Dances stood by, stolidly watching. When the car lights blazed they jumped, and the hounds began a fresh clamor. One, bolder than the others, dashed at Gardner.

"Keep that dog off!" he called out.

"Pete!" Sam yelled. "Down, Pete!"

But Pete would not down. He continued growling and snapping at Gardner's legs, while the latter kicked and backed off. Then another dog attacked him, and Tom started forward to beat them into quiet.

In the confusion that followed Gardner saw an opportunity to escape. With a quick leap he cleared the steps of the car and stood before the controller-box. With a swift jerk he pushed the handle to the starting-notch.

Nothing resulted except that the lights went dim, the motors screamed, and the wheels groaned raspingly.

"Your car's off the track," said Sam as Gardner swung the controller handle back to the starting-point.

"I know it," Gardner replied angrily, and glared down at the Dances.

Here it began to rain, amid brilliant lightning and heavy thunder. At first a few big drops fell, then more and more, until the downfall grew into a shower. Meanwhile, Gardner stood on the platform and frowned.

The behavior of the Dances was puzzling him. If they were hold-up men, why did they not go on with their work? Or were they just playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse?

But he finally decided that, no matter what their intentions were, he would do all he could to get away.

He jumped briskly off the car again to examine its wheels, and found that only two of them had slipped off the track. Still, he could not put them back alone.

Meanwhile, the Dances had been conferring. They came to the conclusion that Lamar was a smart Aleck and a city dude, and they hoped he would have lots of trouble, so that they could laugh at him. They were willing, if necessary, to produce a little trouble of their own manufacture.

"Look here," said Gardner, who was be-

ginning to doubt now that the Dances were such bad characters, "I want to get this car back on the track. I can't do it alone; but if you'll chop down a lever with that ax there, we can make it."

"Haw!" Tom burst out derisively.

Elmer began to titter, and Sam spit on the ground.

"We ain't choppin' no more wood to-night," he said.

"Well," said Gardner in his exasperation, "what are you going to do? Why did you throw a tree across the track in the first place? What's next? What are you standing there for like a lot of sticks?"

The young engineer was growing very angry, and also wet, for it was raining fast now. The Dances were feeling their insults more keenly, were likewise getting soaked, and were frankly antagonistic to anything Gardner might want.

But something had to be done, and Sam suggested the next move.

"Got any money?" he asked.

"Not much," replied Gardner. "Why?"

"Oh," Sam went on, "it orter be wuth sumpin' to git that car back on the track."

"I've got five dollars," the engineer cut in.

Sam was silent, and puckered his face.

"Git all you kin, paw," Tom whispered.

"'Tain't nuff," said Sam.

"How will ten do?" want on Gardner. "That's all I've got."

The mention of so much money aroused the Dances' cupidity. Accustomed all their lives to such petty thievery as chicken-lifting, hog-stealing, and selling bad butter and rotten eggs, they saw an opportunity here to draw a lucrative benefit from Gardner's misfortune.

"I dunno," said Sam. "Seems to me like ten ain't much to git outen this."

"But that's all the money I've got!" Gardner exclaimed. "Look here."

He drew forth his wallet and showed two fives, really his only funds. The three Dances looked and grinned.

"'Tain't nuff," insisted Sam.

"The deuce!" Gardner burst out, and then caught himself. He could not afford to lose his head. "And here's my watch," he added.

"I don't keer for it," Sam replied. "I want two hundert and fifty dollars to move that car, and no less."

"This is a hold-up," Gardner declared.

"Wal," said Sam, "there ain't nobody else to help ye."

Lamar thought the matter over quickly. He decided that this was a unique manner of robbery, but effective nevertheless, and that he would have to pay.

"All right," he said, after a moment's hesitation. "Let's get busy on the car. You can ride back with me, and when I get home I'll pay you."

"Don't do it, paw," Tom put in. "Like as not he'll git on the car and run off."

"No," said Sam to the engineer. "You leave the car here, and when you git back with the money we'll move her."

"You're crazy," Gardner retorted. "How am I going to get back?"

"Walk, I reckon," said Tom, and the others laughed joyously. "You kin git back by mornin'."

The engineer raged, swore some, argued and pleaded; but Sam was obdurate, and the upshot of the affair was that Gardner had to give in. As it was raining in torrents now, all moved on the car for shelter. When Eleanor saw them entering her face went white as a sheet.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Nader," said Gardner, sitting down beside her; and, while the Dances gathered in the other end of the car and gazed curiously at everything, he explained the agreement.

"But I don't like the idea of leaving you here," he finished, "and you can't walk back with me through such a night."

"Oh, don't leave me here alone with such men!" Eleanor ejaculated, her eyes widening in horror. "I'd rather try the trip in the rain."

"The gal stays," said Sam, who had overheard her. "We'll take keer o' her."

"We'll settle this ourselves," Gardner flung over his shoulder, and then to Eleanor: "I don't think these fellows will do you any harm. But if you walked back with me through the storm your parents would find out about this business, and—"

"Oh, oh, oh!" Eleanor burst into tears. "This is terrible!"

"The best and quickest way out of it is for me to go back and get the money and bring it out in another car," Gardner added quickly. "You'll try to keep up your courage while I'm gone, won't you?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, striving to check her tears. "But hurry as fast as you can."

"All right," Gardner replied, rising to his feet. In his heart he feared to leave Eleanor, but he could see nothing else to be done.

"If that girl comes to harm while I'm gone—" he said to the Dances.

"She won't," said Sam. "You better git now."

With a last word to Eleanor, who was trying to appear calm with a spirit that made Gardner admire her with his whole soul, he made for the door. At the last instant he hesitated, but Sam pushed him out.

"And don't you fetch no town marshal and sech like," the old hunter yelled after him. "This ain't nobody's business 'cept-in' our'n. You do your end right, and we'll take keer o' the gal."

With this sinister suggestion ringing in his ears, the engineer buttoned his coat and stepped out into the storm.

He was more than eager to keep this affair a secret, as Sam suggested. He wanted nothing better than to get the two hundred and fifty from his bank in Caldwell and return as quickly as possible. Above all, he wanted to see Eleanor safe with her parents before morning.

CHAPTER III.

AN ANXIOUS NIGHT CHASE.

GARDNER decided that he would make the best time by following the trolley-track into town. As nearly as he could judge, he had about six miles to cover. But as he was in prime condition and had done much cross-country walking in the last year, he thought he could make the trip in two hours.

And allowing another hour to get the money, to run a car out of the barn, and retrace his way to the stalled car, he hoped the whole business would be finished by half past two.

Barring accidents, there was only one serious hitch that he could foresee—that consisted in the awkwardness of getting his money. He would have to wake Mr. Warren, the cashier of the bank. Mr. Warren would be anxious to know why he was being roused at one in the morning to let Gardner draw two hundred and fifty dollars, and Gardner would not feel at liberty to explain.

But as he pounded over the rails he told himself that if this little trouble were all, he would be getting off cheaply. Of course, there was the rain which was pouring down now, and had already soaked him to the skin. Then he felt more and more uneasy about having left Eleanor in the hands of three unknown roughs.

This uncomfortable thought made him run faster, and he tried to put it away; it was a worry, not a real obstacle. He brought his mind back to his original judgment of the Dances—that they were father and sons, not the kind to harm a girl; that they wanted money and nothing else.

It seemed to him that the miles between the stalled trolley-car and Caldwell were stretching into hundreds as he dashed on. He could not see five yards before him, nor look at his watch, so that he had no idea where he was, nor for how long he had been running. He merely leaped on from tie to tie, and hoped the town would presently appear in sight.

Long before he reached it he thought he must be there. The last mile seemed endless, and if the trolley had extended beyond the town he would have thought that he must have passed through the latter. At length, however, he saw a light shining mistily ahead, and, after a frenzied spurt, found himself on the smooth streets of his goal.

In distinctly better spirits, he lost no time in making for Mr. Warren's house. He found it dark and silent, and looking very gloomy in the midst of its wet, soggy lawn. Dashing up to the front door, he rang the bell and beat the panels steadily until a shutter scraped overhead.

"Hallo!" said a thick, sleepy voice. "Who's there?"

"Gardner Lamar," the engineer replied. "I want to see you quickly, Mr. Warren, on a matter of great importance."

The voice above murmured something unintelligible, the window rasped, and presonly the front door was cautiously opened. In its aperture stood a white-robed figure, out of which protruded a gaunt neck, topped by a gray beard and a red nose. A dim hall lamp illumined the whole feebly.

"Eh, ah, Mr. Lamar—it's you!" said Mr. Warren, gaping and looking much confused.

"Yes," replied Gardner. "But hurry, will you? I've got to get two hundred and fifty dollars in double-quick time."

"Yes—ah—I see," Mr. Warren replied. "But this is very unusual—at this hour—"

"I know, I know," the engineer replied. "But it's a matter of life and death. Can't you see?"

The old banker was so far impressed that he turned back into the house, after inviting Gardner within, and began mounting the stairs. Half-way up he turned to look at the engineer's mud-bespattered figure.

"You've been out in the rain," he croaked.

Gardner swallowed his rage and his desire to throw the hall-tree at Mr. Warren, and asked him again to hurry, which he did, appearing presently ready for the street and still protesting that this was most unusual.

Once outside, Gardner walked the old cashier to the bank in record time, and they exchanged few words until they stood before the vault.

"Do you mind, Mr. Lamar," said Mr. Warren as he counted out the bills, "telling me what this most unusual—"

"I can't tell you now," Gardner broke in impatiently, "but in the morning I don't mind explaining the whole thing."

With that he seized the money and rushed out into the storm again.

But Mr. Warren's awakening had other results. During its progress Mrs. Warren had been roused from sleep and wanted to know what was up. When the cashier returned from the bank he told her all he knew.

Mrs. Warren said that the affair looked very suspicious, and woke her mother, who slept in an adjoining room, to tell her about Gardner's extraordinary appearance. Mrs. Warren's mother said that they might depend on it there was something in the wind. Thereupon both females prepared for extensive gossip in the morning.

Meanwhile, Gardner was rushing as fast as his legs would carry him to the car-barn. Once there, he dashed to the front platform of the nearest car and turned the controller to the starting notch. Nothing happened.

With a sinking heart he jumped off the platform and pulled the trolley off the wire. There was no spark; therefore, there was no current on the line.

His disappointment was so keen that he stamped around and swore. But that grew tiresome, and he collected his wits for the next move.

By the side of the car-barn was a little coop of a house built for various line employees. Inside was Gardner's office and a telephone, to which he hurried. After a few impatient minutes, he was talking to the Beaver Dam power-house.

"Yes," said a voice at the plant, "the Manette circuit is out of commission."

"What's the matter?" Gardner jerked out.

"We don't know yet, but most likely the lightning blew out a transformer. We are sending a repair-gang out to look for the break."

The engineer hung up the receiver, and his hands dropped limply to his side.

It might require twenty-four hours to locate and repair the trouble on the line. Clearly, he could not run another car out to rescue Eleanor. Then he thought of horses, and, with a fresh burst of energy, set out for the livery-barn.

There he started a fat stableman out of a deep sleep, and, after an age of yelling and wild exhortation, managed to drill the idea into the newly awakened one's head that he wanted the fastest and strongest team hitched to the stoutest buggy at once.

"Sure," said the stableman as he comprehended and began slowly to dress. "But what's up?"

For the second time that night Gardner carefully explained that whatever was up, it was going to be kept dark, and that the chief thing now was hurry. As did Mrs. Warren and her mother, so did the stable-hand—he cleared the decks for a broadside of gossip to be discharged in the morning.

When at last the engineer was seated in a snug storm-buggy, with all the curtains down and a good lantern on the dashboard, he sighed with relief.

It was just two o'clock. By fast driving he might reach Eleanor and get her back to town before daybreak.

With fresh hope he lashed the horses, and the outfit sped off through the rain, which was still thrashing down in torrents.

He probably broke all previous records for driving through a pitch-dark night and over rough roads in his flight out of Caldwell. A dozen times his heart was in his mouth for fear that he had snapped a spring of the buggy, or that one of the horses had broken a leg. Once when the wheels grazed a tree he thought for a moment that the jig was up. But by a miracle nothing gave way, and he urged the horses on.

The road was not directly alongside the trolley-line, however; and after he had traveled about as far as he thought was necessary, he had to stop and stamp through more or less thicket to look for the car. After three or four such expeditions without result, he grew frightened that he had passed his objective-point, and made short trips up and down the track; but still without result.

Thereupon his alarm grew; and, tying his horses to a tree by the roadside, he

dashed off through the woods again, with the determination to walk the track now until he found the car. The lower limbs of trees and undergrowth scratched his face and hands, and several times came near poking his eyes out; but he pressed on, intent on nothing but to find Eleanor.

Once on the track, he set off at the best pace possible; and though his strength was beginning to fail, he made fairly good progress. Yet, all without result; he could see nothing except darkness, rain, and mud.

And just as he was beginning to despair he caught sight of a recently fallen tree lying along the track. On coming nearer, he identified it as the sycamore which he thought the Dances had thrown across the track to undo him. But the trolley-car was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

BREAKING THE NEWS.

For a few seconds Gardner refused to believe that he had found the spot where he had left Eleanor with the car. But a closer examination of the fallen tree and the ground around the track proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that this was the very place.

He was at his wits' end to account for what had happened. Then his eye fell on a log about the thickness of his arm.

Instantly it flashed into his mind that this was the lever with which the Dances had pried the car back on the track. Obviously, then, they had set out with it and its precious passenger for some other place. But why? And whither?

Gardner's fears grew a hundredfold. He turned sick and faint with horror. Now he was ready to imagine anything, and he imagined the blackest.

For a brief, terrible moment he let his mind revel in awful fancies. Then he shook himself and tried to be optimistic.

"Maybe they took the car to town," he reflected.

At any rate, he could not see any purpose in lingering hereabouts. There were ten miles of track to be covered if he tried to seek the car. Besides, he considered now, for the first time, that by withholding Eleanor's plight from her parents at this time was wronging them and her.

Before this he had not considered the girl as being in any serious situation; now all was changed. Hence he hurried back through the woods to his horses and set out again for Caldwell.

He carried a heavy heart on that return drive. He wanted nothing better than that his horses might dash his buggy and himself to destruction against some tree. But the animals were too tired for that, and nothing of the kind happened. And, despite his misery and doubts, Gardner several times caught himself dozing.

But, for the most part, he built theories of what might have happened to Eleanor. The best explanation of her disappearance with the car which he could formulate was that the Dances had taken her away in order to get more ransom.

This way of looking at the affair was bad enough, but not the worst that might have happened by far. And as it was comforting to a degree, Gardner clung to it all the way to town.

It was nearly four o'clock when he drew up his horses before the Nader premises, a rather pretentious place in the best section of Caldwell. The heavens were still pouring when he stamped across the gravel path to wake Eleanor's parents.

As he rang the bell he reflected dolefully what a sorry figure he would cut in their eyes. He knew very well how they would heap reproaches on him, and what an excitement and what fears his story would provoke.

After an age of ringing and waiting the glass pane of the door before him lit up. Then the door opened and a head appeared.

"Who's there?" asked a feminine voice.

"Gardner Lamar," replied the engineer, recognizing Mrs. Nader's servant-girl. "I want to see Mr. Nader."

The girl reluctantly allowed Gardner, who had pushed the door open while he spoke, to come into the hall. She forgot her own appearance while she stared at the strange, wet, and dirty caller.

"Gee, how you look!" she said.

"Never mind," replied Gardner. "Hustle along and wake Mr. Nader!"

The maid did her duty, waking not only Mr. Nader, but Mrs. Nader as well. Mr. Nader appeared first in a dressing-gown and slippers. He was a pompous, bald-headed old gentleman who had retired several years ago with a good-sized fortune made in Manette Iron Mines.

"Mr. Lamar?" he said, halting on the lowest step of the stairway to stare at

Gardner. "The Caldwell-Manette Traction Company engineer?"

"Yes," answered Gardner, and without further delay plunged into his story.

Long before he finished, Mr. Nader was gasping with astonishment, the account literally taking his breath away. And near the end Mrs. Nader rushed down the stairs clad only in a nightgown. Gardner had to repeat for her, and when she caught the main outline she began to grow wildly excited.

"My daughter?" she screamed. "Where is she?"

"I don't know," said Gardner, "but—"

"Sir," Mr. Nader interrupted with great emphasis, "this is astonishing."

"I think—" Lamar began.

"Where is poor Eleanor?" screamed Mrs. Nader, clutching his arm.

"My dear," said Mr. Nader, putting *his* arm around his wife, "let me deal with this situation."

Mrs. Nader screamed again, wept, and prepared for hysterics. Meanwhile her sister, a maiden lady, appeared at the head of the stairs; and while Mrs. Nader rushed up to bring her down to help make a demonstration commensurate with the calamity which had befallen the family, Gardner tried to finish his story.

"Stop!" said Mr. Nader. "Did you say these individuals were coon-hunters?"

"Yes," Gardner replied.

"Did you see the coon?" demanded the other.

"No," the engineer answered.

"Ah," said Mr. Nader, as he scored his point, "then I should say they were brigands of a most dangerous kind."

"I don't believe a word of what he says," cried Mrs. Nader, who had swooped down from above by this time with her maiden sister in her wake. "What have you done with my daughter?"

"Madam," Gardner replied, "I want to know nothing better myself."

Mrs. Nader took this impatient answer as an affront, and, throwing her hands over her head, let go a scream that would have waked the dead.

"Arrest him!" she shrieked. "He's guilty!"

"Young man," the spinster added solemnly, "you'll be lynched before noon."

"There, there!" said Mr. Nader, who was greatly agitated, and did not seem to know what to do nor what to believe. "We must not judge Mr. Lamar too hastily. This is a very serious affair. I can hardly think—"

"No, no!" cried Mrs. Nader. "He ought to be arrested!"

With that she went off into hysterics, and nothing more could be made out of her remarks. While the maid and the spinster were holding her, Mr. Nader led Gardner to the door. Any extended discussion was plainly impossible here.

"Now, you and I will have to talk this over," he said. "You can meet me at your room at the hotel?"

"Yes," replied Gardner. "I want to change clothes, get a bite to eat, and then chase off again to find your daughter."

"Very good," said Mr. Nader.

While Gardner was driving his horses to the barn, and afterward making for the hotel, the Naders were digesting his evil tidings. Mr. Nader and the maiden sister were calm enough all the while; but Mrs. Nader varied wild weepings and wailings with frenzied bursts of advice and activity.

One of the first things she did was to telephone to her brother, Walter Hastings, that Eleanor had been kidnaped and, after various tortures, put to death. At any rate, this was the interpretation which Mr. Hastings put on Mrs. Nader's incoherent remarks at the mouthpiece.

Before Mr. Nader left his house to call at Gardner's room, he stopped to telephone Dr. Mansur, his oldest friend and chief solace in all family emergencies. The doctor was asked to hurry to the Star Hotel as soon as possible.

Furthermore, Mr. Nader gave him a brief outline of what had happened. This Dr. Mansur told his wife, who instantly forsook her bed to call on Mrs. Nader for details.

Then Mrs. Nader's maiden sister took her turn at the telephone, and solemnly informed three other old and highly respected spinsters, fellow members of the Ladies' Aid Society, that Eleanor Nader had disappeared in a mysterious manner in company with the young engineer of the Caldwell-Manette Traction Company, and that she was either being held for ransom or had been killed, or worse.

While all these communications were being telephoned about and half understood, the servant-girl was talking to the milkman at the back door. The maid had only half heard Gardner's story and the Nader's re-

marks about it, and her interpretation to the milkman was most interesting.

She said that Gardner had dragged Eleanor from her home, had tied her to a new trolley-car, and conveyed her to a lonesome spot in the woods, where he had left her while he returned to town to get ransom from her parents. Meanwhile something had happened to her; no doubt she had been killed, and Gardner Lamar would be lynched by noon. Mrs. Nader's sister was going to organize the lynching bee.

The milkman told this story, with additions, variations, and expansions, at every house at which he delivered milk. Thus, through Mr. Nader's, Mrs. Nader's, the spinster's, and the milkman's efforts, there was hardly a household in Caldwell that did not know by breakfast-time more or less about Eleanor's disappearance. The stories were as various as the people who told them, but one and all agreed that Gardner Lamar was a guilty man.

CHAPTER V.

THE BIGGEST MYSTERY OF ALL.

MEANWHILE the innocent author of all this mischievous gossip was taking a cold plunge at the Star Hotel, changing his clothes, and eating a huge breakfast. He was tired, nervous, conscience-stricken, sad of heart, and long of face. So Mr. Nader found him just as he finished eating.

"Let's go up to my room," Gardner suggested.

This room overlooked the main street of Caldwell, up which the new trolley-track disappeared in the misty rain. Across the street stood the car-barn.

It was near six o'clock when Mr. Nader and the engineer sat down in this room in the dismal early morning half-light.

"Well, Mr. Nader," Gardner began, "it seems to me there is not much more to be said, but we ought to begin searching the woods at once."

"Pardon me, Mr. Lamar," Mr. Nader replied, looking very grave, "but I wish to satisfy myself in regard to several points of your story."

"Can't we go over that afterward?" Gardner asked impatiently. "I want to find your daughter now, first of all."

"Do I understand that you yourself wish to continue the search?" demanded Mr. Nader.

"Of course I do," Gardner answered. "Nobody could—"

He stopped, and colored to the roots of his hair. It had suddenly occurred to him how dear Eleanor had grown to be.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Nader, leaning back in his chair.

He had misinterpreted Gardner's redness as the blush of a hypocrite.

"If you don't mind," Gardner went on, rising to his feet, "I'll leave you to organize a search party and start away again myself right now."

"Hold!" said Mr. Nader. "Mr. Lamar, your haste to be off is suspicious."

"What?" cried Gardner.

"Yes," went on Mr. Nader sternly, "you are conducting yourself like a man whose conscience is pricking him, sir."

"Now, look here, Mr. Nader," said Gardner, controlling himself with difficulty, "you don't think I'd do your daughter any harm, do you?"

"How do I know?" Mr. Nader replied. "Appearances—"

"Appearances be blamed!" Gardner burst out. "Why, man, Eleanor's safety is dearer to me than my life. That's why I can't find her too fast."

"Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Nader. "How dare you speak of my daughter with that familiarity?"

This conversation might have led anywhere, but at this point some one knocked at the door; and to Gardner's "Come in!" Dr. Mansur, a weazened, dapper little man, all bones and wrinkles, hopped across the threshold, a dripping umbrella in his hand, and stared quizzically from Mr. Nader to the engineer.

"Ah, Mr. Lamar!" said the doctor, fixing his beady eyes on Gardner.

"Yes," said the latter.

"Mr. Nader," the doctor continued, giving his hand to his old friend, "I offer you my sympathy. Has the body been found?"

"Oh, my Heavens!" groaned Mr. Nader, turning ashen pale and staggering to a chair. "Have you heard any news?"

"I just now met Mr. Wynn, who let Mr. Lamar have two horses last night," Dr. Mansur continued, "and he told me the shocking news of your daughter's disgrace."

"It's a lie!" Gardner shouted, with clenched fists. "It's a black, damnable lie!"

"My dear young man," said the doctor,

turning to the frenzied man, "your boldness is astounding. Mr. Nader, I am amazed that this person has not yet been properly incarcerated."

Gardner, his every muscle rigid and his hair on end, rolled his eyes from one to the other of his accusers, and could only splutter by way of argument. There followed another knock at the door, and Mr. Warren, the old bank cashier, entered in breathless excitement.

"Mr. Lamar," he gasped, "you hound—so this explains your most unusual demand for money last night!"

"Ah!" Mr. Nader exclaimed, starting up. "Mr. Lamar, you told me nothing about that!"

"You didn't give me a chance," Gardner cut in. "If you had listened to me, I could have—"

Another knock at the door, and Mr. Hastings, together with Mr. Barker, Mr. Endor, and Mr. Peeler, stamped damply into the room, and looked angrily at Gardner and sorrowfully at Mr. Nader.

"Scoundrel!" said Mr. Peeler.

"Wretch!" said Mr. Endor.

"Low-down dog!" said Mr. Barker.

"Why ain't he in jail?" demanded Mr. Hastings.

Gardner was making a desperate effort to make himself heard, but his every attempt was cut off by accusing questions, threats, and bloodthirsty suggestions. Meanwhile more men appeared in the doorway, footsteps in the hall promised still more, and some, crowding into the room, added to the confusion.

Finally there strode calmly through the throng Hiram Kale, the town marshal, a big, six-foot, two hundred and fifty-pound man, armed with a long club and decorated with a big, nickel-plated star. As he appeared, the others fell back to let him get at Gardner.

"You come along," said the officer with the real Missouri drawl, taking a firm grip on his club with his right hand and laying his left heavily on the accused man's shoulder.

"Now here," cried Gardner, who had gathered himself together by now and was the calmest in the crowd, "this is the most senseless performance I ever saw. You've been hearing a lot of fool rumors and got everything twisted."

"You can talk afterward," said Hiram heavily. "This ain't no court o' law."

"No," replied Gardner quickly, "but you people in this section of the country never wait for a court of law in a case of this kind. I don't want to be locked up now on mere suspicion and afterward lynched for it. It'll only take a few minutes for me to tell you the straight story of this. Afterward you can lock me up if you want to. I can't get away in this mob."

"Gentlemen," put in Mr. Nader, coming majestically forward now, "if the girl's father may be allowed to say a word—"

"Yes, yes," the crowd exclaimed.

"Very well," Mr. Nader went on. "I should like to hear Mr. Lamar's story again. It does seem to be a little confusing, and no harm can come of his telling it all before he is arrested by our esteemed officer of the law, Mr. Hiram Kale."

"All right, go ahead," said the marshal to Gardner.

The engineer told his story to no less than twenty eager listeners, and there would have been more had his room been large enough to hold them; for the hall was full of excited Caldwellers just awakened from sleep and charged with a more or less bloody account of Eleanor's disappearance.

And down in the lobby and on the street were more people, and more were coming. Among these later arrivals were not only men, but women as well, and their number was increasing rapidly.

From all parts of town they trooped to the hotel, bearing umbrellas and spreading garbled tales of the calamity.

Gardner gave a good, clear-cut account of himself, omitting nothing of the escapade from the time Eleanor told him that she had lost the locket to the time when he left her in the hands of the Dances. He dwelt much on this latter point, explaining exactly why he had acted as he did, and finally blaming himself for the whole painful business.

"But so far as my doing that girl any harm is concerned," he finished, "I would as soon have attacked my mother."

"A most unusual affair," commented Mr. Warren.

"Mr. Lamar," said Dr. Mansur, "here's my hand. I have wronged you. I believe you are telling the truth."

"I don't believe a word of that tale," exclaimed Mr. Peeler.

"Nor I," Mr. Barker added.

"Wal," said the marshal doubtfully, "I dunno."

"And now," suggested Mr. Nader, "perhaps we had better proceed to search for my daughter."

"But arrest that man first," Mr. Peeler insisted. "If he is guilty, and made his escape, it would be a disgrace to the town."

These remarks Gardner was able to make out above the babel of a hundred others which arose on all sides. All sorts of suggestions and opinions filled the air. Some wanted to let Lamar go at once, some wanted him locked up, some were hesitating.

But finally the crowd divided itself into two camps: one which exonerated the engineer, one which blamed him. The latter were much in the minority, for Gardner's story had made a strong appeal to all the men of good sense.

While this was going on a wild shouting and hallooing floated up from the street. At the same time a commotion arose in the hall and some one beat on the door, which had been closed during Gardner's recital.

A momentary silence fell on the crowd in the room, while wonder was written on every face. Then Mr. Nader looked out of the window.

"The car," he exclaimed; "your car, Mr. Lamar!"

Gardner pressed his face against the window-pane, and there, sure enough, he beheld mistily through the rain the decorated trolley-car skimming toward the car-barn. With a cry of relief he sprang across the room, down the hall, and out on the street.

Nobody ventured to stop him. On every hand the coming of the trolley car had produced such exciting curiosity that he was, for the time being, forgotten.

Those people who were not already on the street when it was sighted, hurried out of the hotel along with Gardner. Before the car arrived the whole crowd was gathered before the barn breathlessly waiting.

In his impatience the engineer dashed up the track, shouting and waving his arms. There was little doubt in his mind that Eleanor must be driving the car. None of the Dances knew how to handle it, and certainly they would avoid, rather than hurry into Caldwell.

Just how it was that Eleanor had managed to get away with the car did not puzzle Gardner for those brief seconds while he stood on the track waiting for it. His mind was packed full of the fact that Eleanor had returned.

Now the rapidly approaching car was within fifteen yards of him and he strained forward to catch a first glimpse of the most welcome sight in the world at that moment.

But Eleanor was not at the controller. Nobody was there.

CHAPTER VI.

BAD, AND WORSE THREATENING.

GARDNER'S hair rose on end; he tried to shout, but not a sound could he utter; he turned cold throughout his body, and his knees knocked together. He closed his eyes for the fraction of a second and then opened them again in the hope that now he would see aright.

But in vain; the car, not three yards away now, proved as tenantless as before and all its lights, brightly illuminating the whole interior, made it impossible for him to be mistaken.

Now it was almost upon him, and the danger of being run down roused him sufficiently to enable him to stagger off the track. As he stepped over the rail he stumbled and fell on his hands and knees. With a hum and a rattle the empty car passed him and shot into the barn.

Dismayed and unmanned as the engineer had been by the uncanny fact that the car was returning empty to Caldwell, so was the remainder of the crowd. Women fainted, strong men shook like leaves, and some turned and ran with all the fierce energy of those who behold the supernatural.

Most of them, however, stood as if petrified, while horror raised their hair and fear froze their blood.

Gardner was one of the first to recover. He had, at no time, been so much impressed by the abnormal return of the car as by the fact that Eleanor was not driving it. Hence he regained his composure quickly.

Scrambling to his feet he rushed after the car into the barn, and leaping to its front platform, shut off the motors. He was none too soon, for by the time he had the controller in hand the car was pushing another just before it through the rear wall of the barn.

The wheels had scarcely stopped grinding when others in the crowd recovered from their stupefaction, and mounting the rear steps of the car, began to file within. Gardner, entering by the front door, met them, and together they examined the interior.

The lights, which were still burning, made this an easy task.

What was now disclosed was more horrible even than the appearance of the car without a driver. The floor and seats were streaked with blood. It was splattered about freely, though most of it was spread on one of the long seats in the rear.

"Good Heavens!" cried Gardner, transfixed by the sight.

The others stared mutely from the blood to the engineer. Now Mr. Nader entered and cried out like a man in mortal pain at his first sight of the ghastly stains. Suddenly he stooped beside a seat, and lifting something there, burst into tears. It was a girl's handkerchief, soaked with blood.

"My poor Eleanor!" he exclaimed chokingly. "My poor little girl!"

Hiram Kale came forward now and stood by Gardner's side.

"Close them doors," said the marshal in his slow way. "Don't let anybody else in. Lamar, you're under arrest."

All this while Gardner had been standing listlessly in the car aisle, staring dumbly at the blood stains. He saw in them certain evidence that the Dances had done their worst; his blackest fancies had materialized for him, and all the light went out of the universe.

"Let them hang me to the nearest tree," he said hoarsely. "I want to die."

"Never you mind that," the marshal drawled. "I'll take care o' you."

Thereupon he slipped a pair of handcuffs on Gardner's wrists and led him off through the car and the crowd. No one molested them. The story of blood in the car was just circulating around, and was adding to a mystery already confusing enough to most onlookers.

But by the time Gardner was locked in jail and the crowd had seen Mr. Nader, pale as death, stagger homeward with a friend on each side to help him, rumors and theories became rife again. Afterward, at breakfast-tables, and later, in saloons, there were more rumors and ugly stories.

The more staid citizens of Caldwell, even though tremendously excited at first, were content to let matters rest as they were until further facts came to light. Meanwhile, too, search parties were organized to scour the woods along the trolley-line.

But among the hot-heads of town and among the lower classes, the excitement and extravagant stories grew at a tremendous rate. Everybody in town knew Eleanor Nader and liked her; scarcely anybody had made Gardner's acquaintance, and nobody knew him intimately. In most quarters he was known by sight only.

Moreover, most people who heard the story of Eleanor's disappearance, listened to a much-garbled tale from which nothing could be gathered except that she had been murdered, that Gardner Lamar had been arrested for the crime and that a blood-stained trolley-car on Main Street bore undeniable witness of the whole affair.

To make things worse, this day had been declared a holiday by the mayor on account of the ceremonies to attend the opening of the new trolley line. Therefore there was more time than usual for gossip and drinking, and no sobering influence of the daily work to counteract these evils.

Under these conditions, by nine o'clock that morning, before Gardner had been, presumably, in jail for two hours, there was considerable talk about lynching bandied about. Such pastimes are seldom indulged in around about the southern parts of Missouri; but sometimes they are.

By ten o'clock, in a few of the meaner saloons, mobs were forming. Shortly afterward a gang of men broke into a hardware-store to steal a rope, and guns, and came into evidence here and there, as if by magic.

About twelve a wild-eyed drunkard reeled into a saloon on Main Street and yelled thickly that Hiram Kale had started for Manette with the prisoner. The news produced a wild racket among the loungers who packed the place.

The noise was quelled by a big, powerful man with a heavy jaw, long arms, and red hair, who leaped on a table with a loud oath and demanded quiet.

"Bud Lamson!" yelled the crowd.

"That's me," he retorted.

"Whopee!" yelled the crowd, while Bud rubbed his heavy jowls with a hairy hand.

"Let's git him," he said laconically, and jumping down into the throng, pushed his way to the street.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WHY OF IT.

ALTHOUGH so much happened to Gardner when he left Eleanor weeping in the stalled car, much likewise happened to her.

To begin with, when he waved her good-

by and closed the door amid the crash of rain, the flaring of lightning, and the boom of thunder, her heart froze, and what little courage she had summoned to speed him on his way with a brave appearance, rapidly forsook her.

She needed but another look at the villainous Dances and their wet, restless hounds, which were sniffing around everywhere, to bring forth tears again in cataracts. Shrinking back into a corner and covering her face with her hands, she gave herself over without restraint to her terrors.

The Dances regarded this outburst from the other end of the car with considerable curiosity and a little resentment. They thought that Eleanor had no right to cry, that she had brought this grief on herself, and that she really had nothing to fear. But they did not know how to put all this in words, so they merely stared at her.

Finally, as Eleanor showed no indications of ceasing to weep, the Dances accepted her tears as a matter of course, and Sam and Tom filled their corn-cob pipes, while Elmer picked at a thorn which had lodged in the big toe of his left foot.

"Wal," remarked Sam, "I reckon as how we orter git this car back on the rails purty soon."

"Wait till she stops rainin'," Tom now replied.

"It ain't goin' to stop," Sam declared.

Eleanor listened to these brief remarks eagerly; there was something encouraging in them, for she gathered that the Dances were really going to carry out their end of the bargain.

But she had scarcely derived from this conclusion its crumb of comfort when a fresh calamity befell her. One of the hounds discovered her and trotted over to her to investigate. When she saw him coming she screamed, and when he sniffed at her dress she jumped up on the seat and screamed again.

The oldest Dance boy started forward to the rescue, but Sam dragged him back and advanced himself. He fell on the poor hound and kicked and beat him with such merciless vigor that he would have killed him if Eleanor had not begged him to stop.

"I dunno," said Sam. "Seems like dogs ain't got no sense at all."

"No?" Eleanor replied, coming down from her perch.

She began to pet the dog, whimpering and cowering at her feet, and Sam grinned broadly over this. There was something in that grin which was vastly encouraging to Eleanor.

As a matter of fact, the Dances were keenly anxious to put the girl completely at her ease; all they wanted was two hundred and fifty dollars. The less fuss in getting it, the better.

Hence, when Sam left Eleanor with the hound he felt decidedly better; there would be no trouble, as he had feared, with the girl.

"Gosh, paw," Tom whispered, as Sam rejoined him, "wasn't she purty a standin' on that thar seat!"

"Shet your dirty mouth!" said Sam gruffly. "Hear?"

Tom's observation, which was all too true, had, nevertheless, shocked Sam's sense of the propriety of things. He was of two minds whether to kick Tom or not. But a better idea occurred to him.

"Here, you," he said, "and Elmer, git out and clear the track, and hist the car back."

"It's rainin'," objected Tom.

"I got a splinter in my toe," Elmer protested.

"I don't care if it's rainin' cats and dogs," Sam retorted, warming up to the subject, "and I don't care if you got a fence-rail in your toe; out you git!"

And out they got. Sam helped Tom with a well-aimed kick, and Elmer he threw out bodily, along with the ax. That done, Sam cast a sidelong glance at Eleanor to see if she approved.

She was watching with awe and wonder in her eyes, and still petting the hound and another which had joined his comrade for a little of this sweet attention. Just as she caught Sam's furtive eye, one of the dogs reached up and kissed her.

As a hound's osculation is very generous, Eleanor screamed a little, and then laughed. Sam laughed, too, and rubbed his shins with delight.

"Are those your sons?" Eleanor asked timidly, when she had recovered from the kiss.

"Yes," said Sam, shamefacedly.

Thereupon both laughed again, and so a comfortable sort of understanding grew up between Sam and Eleanor. She was not in the least afraid of him any more, and he was delighted to see her face clear and smiling.

But just in that instant of peace the door

opened at Eleanor's elbow, and Elmer's white face appeared in the opening. Eleanor screamed, and Sam leaped to his feet.

For a second Elmer could not utter a sound, while the rain ran down his face and dripped from his clothes.

"Tom's killed!" he gasped when he found his voice.

With that, he leaped away into the darkness and the rain. Eleanor sat stunned and motionless; but Sam, forgetting her for an instant, ran out after Elmer.

For a brief space of time Eleanor remained motionless; then she rose to her feet and stepped out on the platform.

What she saw just beside the car was a gruesome sight. The sycamore which had brought on so many events had been cleared away; but across the ties now lay another shorter and smaller tree, recently cut, and by its side was Tom, his head on Elmer's arm, while Sam was bending over them with a lantern.

For an instant Eleanor stood and stared through the rain, while her blood froze and her head went light. Then Tom raised one hand; and though it fell listlessly to his side again, it impressed the trembling girl that he was not dead.

In the flash of a moment her timidity vanished, and all the woman's courageous instinct to help the suffering asserted itself. As long as there was life, something ought to be done.

Without any more hesitation, she stepped out into the storm and joined the Dances.

"Quick," she said, "bring him into the car!"

It was indeed imperative that Tom should receive some care at once. He was bleeding so profusely at two wounds—one somewhere under his unkempt hair, and one in his neck—that his head and shoulders and the ground under him were covered with blood.

"Hurry!" said Eleanor.

Elmer and Sam bestirred themselves now from the stupor into which they had fallen, and between them carried the prostrate man into the car. There, while Eleanor tried to stanch the flow of blood, Elmer told excitedly what had happened.

It seems that he and Tom had cleared the track of the sycamore limbs and Tom had cut down a young ash for a lever. This he was carrying on his shoulder across the track, when he raised one end, apparently, to put the other on the ground.

"Then," said Elmer, "sumpin hit him—kerbang!—like that—and he wanged his head on the rail, and a splinter from the ash druv through his neck so as to come outen the other side, so it did. Paw pulled it out."

Just what had knocked Tom down neither Sam nor Elmer ever knew. They had a vague notion that it must have been some malicious quality of electricity, like the force of lightning.

No doubt, Tom's ash-tree touched the trolley-wire overhead; and as he stood on the ground which was the return circuit of the line, he had received a violent shock. Often such contact means death; Tom was probably saved by the thick, callous skin in the palm of his hand.

Carrying the wounded man into the car and laying him on the seat had spattered the interior liberally with blood; and after Sam and Elmer, whose hands were covered with the stuff, had touched things here and there, and Eleanor in her efforts to stay the flow had done likewise, the car looked like a shambles.

But, in spite of all she did, Tom's life fluid continued to flow copiously. To begin with, Eleanor covered the worst wound—the one in the neck—with her handkerchief. Then she tore strips from her underskirt, and with these bound up both hurts.

In this process her little handkerchief fell to the floor and was forgotten, to bring the thirty-third degree of horror and dismay to her father some hours later.

Eleanor realized presently that she must have help, for Tom's condition grew more alarming. He lost consciousness entirely; his face turned a pale, livid color, and the bandages proved almost useless. But she did not let go her wits.

"Mr. Robber," she said to Sam, and startled him thoroughly by this mode of address, "you had better put the car on the track, and we'll hurry to Caldwell with your son. He needs a doctor, and I know how to manage the trolley."

Sam did not demur. He was thoroughly frightened now, and ready to try anything which might save his son. Moreover, Eleanor's conduct had won his heart completely, and he trusted her absolutely.

"All right, missy," he said, and, calling Elmer, started at once to get the car back on the rails.

"Look out for the wire!" Eleanor called after them.

There was no need for that warning, because Sam and Elmer were more than cautious about touching anything, even the sides of the car. Very gingerly they applied the young ash to the truck, and shortly had the car, which was not a large one, back on the track.

"All right," said Sam, as he returned to Eleanor.

"Very well," she said. "Now, robber-boy, you hold your brother's head, and, robber-man, you keep him from falling off the seat. It won't be more than twenty minutes before we reach town."

Eleanor had her doubts and fears when she took her place as motor-girl. In her brief instructions on driving, she had neither started nor stopped the car. But, after a few experimental moves with the air-brakes and controller-handles, the car started forward.

It lurched away with a suddenness that almost threw her off her feet; but she held on, glad that the car was going, and in the right direction The rain thrashed at her, and soaked her through and through presently, and oftentimes terrible forks of lightning and tremendous crashes of thunder made her heart jump.

But she was not daunted; she knew where the full-speed notch was on the controller-box, and to it she pushed the handle, reckless of grades, hills, curves, or anything else. It was time she wanted most of all to save, and she closed her eyes to everything else.

Perhaps because she turned such a fearless face to the storm did it play her such a scurvy trick; for the car had not covered more than two miles, and was about four from Caldwell, when the lightning put the line out of business.

The lights in the car went out when that happened, and the car, after running some distance on its inertia, came to a dead stop.

Eleanor could not imagine what had happened. Her heart was in her mouth when the lights went out, and when the car stopped she could not suppress a cry of dismay.

With frenzied impatience she turned the controller and brake-handles back and forth; but no matter what she did, the car remained motionless. Then Sam came to the front platform.

"What's wrong, missy?" he asked.

"I've done something," replied Eleanor, "but I don't know what. The car won't go."

After another futile attempt to start it, she followed Sam within, where the lantern was now the only light. Tom looked ten times more ghastly in its rays than before, and Eleanor cast but one look at him when she was convinced that he would die within the hour unless he were better cared for.

In despair she hastened back to the front platform and tried again to make the wheels go round. Of course, she was unsuccessful. But while she was experimenting a great, long sheet of lightning gave her a fairly good view of her surroundings.

When the night was all darkness again she stood thoughtfully at the controller-box for a moment and then rushed back to the Dances.

"We can't be far from old Granny Mull's house," she said. "She's an old friend of mine, and she'll very likely have something to help us. Hurry now, and let's carry your son there."

So they set off through the rain. Eleanor's last endeavors at the controller-handle had left it on a starting notch. Therefore, when, some hours later, the current was switched on to the line again, the car ran into town, with the staggering results already recorded.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO REFUGES FROM THE STORM.

GRANNY MULL lived in an ancient hut with sagging roof and crooked sides, almost overgrown with Virginia creepers and wild-rose vines. It was completely overshadowed by an old cherry-tree and two squat, gnarled willows. When the Dances and Eleanor approached it in this wild night it was totally obscured; and if it had not been for the lightning and a tiny ray of light which escaped through a crack in the door from the old lady's night-lamp, they could not have found it at all.

Granny was about as aged as her hut, and her back was bent nearly double with her years and digging up mysterious roots to heal people. She had a long, pointed chin and a nose like the beak of a bird of prey; her face bore a thousand wrinkles, and her fingers were crooked almost to talons. Like some evil witch she looked, but she had a heart of gold.

Hardly a child in Caldwell of at least two generations but had gathered hickory-nuts and blackberries in Granny's woods,

and she loved them all. But she had her favorites from time to time, and these she invited into her hut to let them pet her cats and to feed them cakes. Eleanor Nader had always been one of the these favored ones.

Granny's chief business in life, so far as anybody could see, was to raise cats, of which she had fourteen, and to gather roots and herbs for her famous rheumatism compound, in spite of which she had been suffering for time immemorial from that very affliction herself.

But with her medicines she made enough money to buy her groceries and a few other things. The rest of life's necessaries she derived from a cow, chickens, and the woods.

Her establishment was situated between the trolley-line and the Caldwell-Manette pike, about half a mile from the former and a quarter-mile from the latter. So it required some thirty minutes for Eleanor and the Dances, together with the hounds, to reach the place.

It had been a trying struggle, and sometimes the frail girl doubted if she could ever find the little hut. And, for all she knew, Sam and Elmer might be carrying a dead man.

"Thank Heaven!" she said wearily, as they finally stood before the door under the dripping willows.

After a long siege of knocking the shutter of a little window beside the door was cautiously opened, and Granny Mull's head, surmounted by a nightcap, and half-lighted from a lamp in her hand, was thrust out into the rain.

"Who's there?" she croaked.

"It's I, Eleanor Nader," Eleanor replied, advancing so that Granny could see her. "You remember little Eleanor Nader, don't you, Granny?"

The old lady gasped, cackled something unintelligible, and, after a second's hesitation, closed the shutter. A few minutes later, which seemed an age to those waiting, she opened the door, and Eleanor slipped inside.

Granny seemed still to be in doubt that this could really be her little Eleanor Nader, and she remained skeptical until she had stroked the girl's cheeks with her trembling talons and Eleanor had kissed, impulsively, the wrinkled old face.

"Mercy me, dearie, but how come you to be here this time o' night in sech a rain?" Granny quavered.

Then she caught sight of the Dances through the open door and shrieked shrilly. And when one of the hounds appeared between Sam's legs, she would have fallen if Eleanor had not caught her.

Thereupon Eleanor hastened to tell something of what had happened; and while she was at it, Sam and Elmer, tired of waiting, carried Tom within and laid him on Granny's bed.

All this was too much for the old rheumatism doctor, and she was so flustered and confused that she fell into a chair, whereupon Eleanor put her arms around her, caressed her, and tried to finish some sort of explanation.

But Granny had scarcely become reconciled in a degree to her extraordinary guests, and was beginning to take some active interest in Tom's wounds, when two of the Dance hounds, nosing about the room, smelled out three of the largest Mull cats and started hostilities.

This brought forth the rest of Granny's fourteen felines and the other two dogs, and the racket they all produced in the tremendous fight that followed, with the baying, howling and barking of the hounds and the spitting and snarling of the cats, made the little old hut sound worse than Bedlam.

But at last Sam managed to kick his dogs outside and close the door, and while the cats straightened out their tousled furs and ruffled feelings, Granny and Eleanor began a businesslike looking after of Tom's injuries. Though he was not dead, he was in a weakened and pitiable state from the loss of blood, and the care came none too soon.

"He's a bleedin' too much, he's a bleedin' too much," Granny Mull mumbled, as she puttered around to get at her roots and herbs and old linen. "But I know how to fix him; I'll fix him."

Presently, after she had started a fire in the kitchen stove and Tom had been freshly bandaged, Eleanor made plans for the next move. Somebody had to go for a doctor; of that she was convinced, and after a moment's thought she hit on what she thought would be the quickest way to get one there.

She wrote a note to Gardner, telling him very briefly what had happened, and then asking him to bring Dr. Mansur to Granny Mull's house; the doctor would know where she lived. In a postcript she asked

that Dr. Mansur leave word with her parents that she was safe.

This note she gave to Elmer with instructions that he should hurry with it to the trolley-track and walk along the latter toward Caldwell until he met the car which Gardner would be driving to meet the Dances with the ransom money.

There was not much doubt in Eleanor's mind that Elmer would meet Gardner on the track. She did not know that the trolley-line was out of commission, and was thinking that her car had been stopped through some mistake of hers in running it. As no more than an hour had elapsed since Lamar had set out for Caldwell, she wisely judged that Elmer would meet him somewhere on his return trip near the latter town.

Elmer was loath to leave the comfortable shelter of Granny Mull's hut, both on account of his sore toe and the storm. But Sam's word was law, and the boy set forth, growling and limping, with Eleanor's note jammed in his pocket.

To make matters worse for him, the cinders no the trolley road-bed cut his feet and he bumped his toes on the ties. But he stayed manfully on the job and followed the track clear into Caldwell and to its end at the car-barn. He arrived there while Gardner was well out of town with the hired horses.

Bewildered and frightened, Elmer turned to retrace his steps. His instructions comprised nothing except to find Gardner and, according to Eleanor, he must be somewhere on the trolley-track.

Hence the boy obstinately refused to believe that the engineer could be found anywhere else, as he had a perfect right to believe from all that had been told him and from all that he knew.

But about a mile out of town Elmer's strength gave out, to say nothing of his feet. The long night's coon-hunt, the exciting adventures at its finish, and this last hike along the trolley track through the storm had sapped every ounce of the boy's endurance.

Seeing a cow-shed just off the track, he decided to get under its shelter and wait there until Gardner's car came along. Crawling into the straw of his refuge, Elmer watched for about three minutes, and then fell asleep.

Of course, he slept like a log, and when the ill-fated trolley-car which Eleanor had abandoned hummed by, it did not wake him. And all the while the mob was forming to lynch Gardner he slept on.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE NOOSE.

We left Gardner walking, handcuffed, toward the town jail in company with Hiram Kale, the city marshal.

To the engineer, at that moment, nothing would have been so welcome as death. All hope of his ever seeing Eleanor alive again was dead in his heart, and if the crowd had attempted to lynch him then and there he would have acquiesced like a stone.

But Hiram had another notion of the fate best for his prisoner. Unlike Gardner, Mr. Nader and others, the marshal was not convinced from the evidence at hand that Eleanor had been murdered.

True, he could not explain the blood-stains, nor the return of the empty car; but there was enough mystery in the matter to make him withhold judgment.

Besides, he did not intend that his charge should be lynched, in any event. Hiram had had a lifelong experience with lynching parties, and he had become expert in foiling them. In this case, where a crime was only suggested, he was doubly determined that no harm should come to the prisoner.

Therefore he led him ostensibly to jail; but when he neared the dirty little calaboose he suddenly switched his man off into a near-by alley, and thence by way of vacant lots and little-used streets, to his own home near the edge of town.

Gardner, following him mechanically, with his head bent to the rain and his eyes fixed dully on the wet ground, did not pay the least attention to his surroundings, and never once looked up until Hiram stopped under the porch of his house.

"Where are we?" Lamar asked, then looked listlessly around.

"These is my diggin's," Hiram answered. "Come on in and we'll rest a while. I'm goin' to drive you over to Manette in a little bit."

"Manette?" Gardner repeated dazedly.

"Yeh," said the marshal. "You'll be safer there."

In a vague way the engineer understood the significance of these words. But he derived no comfort from them; escaping a

mob did not interest him. Sighing heavily he followed Hiram within.

Now Hiram, in order to cover up his movements, did not get his horses from the livery-stable, but borrowed them from a friend. This caused a delay, and it was not until noon that he started for Manette with his prisoner.

As they set out over the pike the rain ceased falling, and the warm summer's sun burst brightly through the clouds. The dripping trees by the roadside seemed hung with diamonds until the heat stole their momentary brilliance; and on every hand birds, who had postponed their morning carols on account of the storm, burst into song.

Hiram began to whistle merrily along with the feathered tribe; but Gardner's face merely clouded darker. This glorious afternoon seemed a sort of mockery to his misery. The singing and whistling jarred on his nerves, and he would not look twice at his lovely surroundings.

"Kind o' tough lines, son," Hiram drawled presently, "but don't take it so hard. You ain't sure that the gal—"

"Don't," Gardner cut in quickly.

"Wal," Hiram continued, "it might 'a' been one o' them coon-dogs that spilled the blood."

"Why should those cutthroats kill one of their dogs?" Gardner demanded.

"I dunno," Hiram replied. "But it goes to show we can't tell."

Gardner refused to argue further, and lapsed again into silent gloom. At the same time, Hiram's suggestion set him wondering what might have happened if Eleanor had been spared. All in a burst it came over him that he would have loved her.

For a moment he was appalled by the revelation; but every new second of reflection convinced him that it was true, and for a brief time he thrilled throughout his being with the idea.

Then a deeper gloom than ever settled on his soul. The thought shot through his consciousness now that he was not only responsible for the loss of a human life, but he had lost that being who would have been dearer to him than any one else in all the world.

"Lord!" he groaned aloud, and buried his face in his hands.

"Whoa!" Hiram exclaimed, as if in answer to the cry of agony.

Gardner started, and, looking up, saw three horsemen, all armed with guns, riding furiously down the road at the buggy. A moment later the sound of hoofs splashing in the mud came faintly from the rear.

These were lynchers, the vanguard of the mob. Unknown to Hiram, his strategy to avoid them had been discovered, and about the time he left the edge of town two parties set out in pursuit.

The first division, under Bud Lamson, rode by short cuts and across country to head the marshal off. The others rode swiftly after the buggy directly up the pike.

All three parties met now about four miles out of Caldwell and about a mile and a half beyond Granny Mull's, at somewhere between one and two o'clock in the afternoon.

To Gardner it seemed the jig was up when the horsemen surrounded the buggy, and two of them seized the horses' bridles. But Hiram thought otherwise.

"Git down thar behind the dashboard," he said quickly.

"Never mind," Gardner replied. "Let 'em have me."

"Down with you," Hiram repeated, and seizing the engineer by the collar, dragged him off the seat.

At the same time he whipped a long revolver from his pocket, and holding Gardner down with his knees, raised the gun to a level with his eye.

"Bud Lamson," he said sternly to the leader, "let go that bridle, quick."

"Hiram," the rider replied, "don't yoo start nuthin'. We want that man."

"You can't have him." Hiram retorted. "This is my last word. Let go that bridle."

For a brief instant the affair hung fire. The mobbers quailed before the marshal's determined air, and none ventured to move or say a word more.

Then suddenly a fist shot under the buggy-hood, and some one seized Hiram's revolver-hand. It was one of the second party of mobbers who made this move. He had stolen quietly up to the buggy while Hiram and Bud were exchanging words.

Then fresh horsemen galloped up, and a herculean struggle started to disarm the marshal. He was a powerful and determined man, but in the face of the odds he now encountered he did not long hold his own.

He was presently dragged bodily from

the buggy, and with a howl of triumph the lynchers fell on Gardner. While some of them held the marshal, others jerked the engineer to his feet and slipped a rope over his head.

To Gardner the whole drama seemed like some wild, fantastic dream. He offered no resistance from first to last, and when he was led across the road he never uttered a word or even looked up.

The lynchers quickly made their preparations. At the roadside stood a stately oak, and over its lower limbs some flung the rope, while others bound Gardner's arms to his sides.

Then a momentary quiet fell on the mob, and one of its members laid his hand on Gardner's shoulder.

"Anything to say to the boys?" he asked.

"No," Gardner replied in a low voice.

"Ready?" called the fellow.

"All right."

"Hist away!"

CHAPTER X.

A FORTUNATE ENCOUNTER.

WHEN Elmer woke up in the cow-shed it was nearly ten o'clock and raining so thickly that it might have been four so far as he knew. For a time he rubbed his eyes and wondered what had happened. When the memory of the note came to him he leaped wildly to his feet.

For a moment he stood by the trolley-track, scowling at the rain and gathering his wits. After a second of that, he resumed his course, as he had started seven hours before, toward Manette. The same idea which had guided him then made him go on in the same way now—that is, he was still obsessed with the notion that he must find Gardner somewhere on the trolley-track.

Of course he did not find him, but that did not hinder him from doing his best. In spite of his sore toe, his aching limbs, and the rain, he plodded all the way to the fateful spot where the trolley-car had run into the sycamore.

Utterly bewildered and frightened, he then turned to retrace his steps. That he had not found Gardner and had not encountered the car which Eleanor had abandoned, puzzled and worried him. But seeing nothing else to be done, he determined now to proceed into Caldwell, and there make some inquiries as to Gardner Lamar's whereabouts.

Elmer put the idea of stopping at Granny Mull's aside when he reflected how Sam would beat him up and then kick him out into the rain to find the engineer anyway; in all of which reasoning Elmer was perfectly justified.

He had scarcely covered the first mile of his second trip to town when he ran into Mr. Hastings, Mr. Peeler, Mr. Barker, and six others, all armed to the teeth and very wet. They were searching for Eleanor's body and any other evidences and persons connected with the crime by which she had departed this world.

Elmer tried to escape from this formidable band, and was about to succeed when Mr. Hastings, who was fleet of foot, overtook him, and held him by one ear.

"Hey, boy!" he said. "Don't you try to run away from me again."

Elmer, seeing that escape was impossible, shoved his fists into his eyes and began to bawl. Thereupon the Caldwellers gathered around him with great suspicion.

"I'll bet he knows something about this," said Mr. Peeler.

"Boy," added Mr. Hastings, "have you ever heard of Eleanor Nader or Gardner Lamar?"

"The hoss-car man?" Elmer jerked out.

"Yes," said Mr. Hastings eagerly.

Thereupon Elmer produced the note, wet and dirty, but happily still in his possession, and while Mr. Peeler let go seven "I told you so's," Mr. Hastings read it.

"She's alive!" he shrieked, and reread the note aloud for the benefit of all.

The wildest kind of excitement followed, and the party set out through the woods for the Caldwell-Manette pike in order to reach quickly Granny Mull's hut. Before they started, however, they bound Elmer's hands on his back and tied another rope around his left ankle.

And as they proceeded on the way two specially delegated guards walked directly behind the captive with two double-barreled shotguns continually pointed at the back of his dirty neck.

The group had barely reached the pike when they saw Bud Lamson and his two companions gallop out of a byway and dash on madly toward Caldwell. Mr. Hastings yelled at them, but he was not heard.

"I'll bet that Bud is up to something," said Mr. Peeler.

Half-guessing the truth, the whole party hurried after the horsemen as fast as they could. They caught sight of the lynchers again, together with Hiram's buggy and the rest, just as the marshal was fighting to save his prisoner. But the scene was fully a quarter of a mile away.

With wild hallooing and under tremendous excitement, Mr. Hastings and his friends ran toward the struggle. In this flight the man who held the rope tied to Elmer's left ankle managed to drag the boy to the ground, and so Elmer hopped part way and rolled the rest *en route* to the rescue.

Mr. Hastings, the best runner of his crowd, arrived just as the lynchers were dragging Gardner's feet from the ground. Eleanor's uncle, past the power of speech and all but exhausted, executed one last forward leap and. clutching the terrible rope just above Gardner's head, hung there desperately.

A scene of wild confusion followed. More of Mr. Hastings's friends burst into the crowd and seized the rope; Hiram Kale freed himself in the excitement and dashed to his prisoner's side; the lynchers, recovered from their first surprise, rushed thickly at the center of commotion, some to attack the marshal and some to thwart what they supposed were the newcomers' efforts to prevent the lynching.

A fresh party of mobbers from Caldwell arrived at this point, and, after them, a party of more law-abiding Caldwellers, who had set out after the lynching party to help Hiram Kale. These lost no time in joining the fracas, which they assumed, of course, to be over the possession of the prisoner.

The man who had Elmer in charge dragged the unfortunate boy into the midst of this mêlée, and those contestants who did not step on him were prevented from doing so because more fortunate ones were just then in the very act, or were standing on him, or rolling on him.

All this went on until a shotgun was accidentally discharged. In the comparative lull that followed, while the rioters looked about to find out who had been hit, Mr. Hastings managed to make a few people listen to him.

Presently a few more were listening, and in a few seconds practically the whole crowd was hearing Eleanor's letter to Gardner. Only on the outskirts, here and there, some were left who clawed each other until solicitous friends finally pried them apart. When Mr. Hastings had finished the letter and added a few opinions of his own, the lynchers held a council of war with the more staid of the gathering. After ten minutes of wild debate, which almost brought on more blows, it was determined to move on Granny Mull's to obtain the clinching evidence of Eleanor Nader's safety and well-being.

CHAPTER XI.

THE AWAKENING IN A GARDEN.

WHILE this huge crowd is marching up the pike, let us go back to the time when Elmer left Granny Mull's to find Gardner.

Through the first three or four hours after Elmer's absence Eleanor did not worry at all. She helped Granny prepare the roots and herbs to stop Tom's bleeding, and afterward made coffee.

Sam sat before the kitchen stove, drying his clothes and smoking his pipe, and finally dozing away. Granny's cats ran around everywhere and enjoyed having guests as much as their old mistress did.

Then Tom regained consciousness, and this removed the fear that he would die before a doctor could come to the rescue.

"I told you! I told you!" Granny cackled through her toothless gums, when Tom opened his eyes. "We don't need the doctor; no, we don't need him!"

But when daylight came, and Elmer did not return, Eleanor began to grow uneasy. And, strange as it may seem, the domineering figure in her worrisome fancies looked distinctly like Gardner Lamar. Of herself, she gave little thought, and what her parents might be suffering she considered very vaguely.

At seven o'clock, however, she was keenly worried, and awoke Sam, who had been snoring blissfully all those hours, to send him after Elmer. He was reluctant to leave the comfortable hut, particularly as Tom seemed in no danger now of succumbing. But Eleanor was insistent, and after the old man had been fed on a good warm breakfast, he departed.

Like Elmer he chose the trolley-route to get into Caldwell, for it was Sam's idea that he would find either Elmer or Gardner on the track. As it happened, he found neither, though he passed within five yards of his son fast asleep in the cow-shed.

In Caldwell, which Sam reached about ten o'clock, and where he was unknown, he heard rumors of a mob, and without stopping to investigate what the mob was for, sensed that it might have some connection with the trolley-car business, and slunk out of town. He was not the sort to take any risks.

All the while the mob was forming Sam was hiding in the woods somewhere between Granny Mull's hut and Caldwell. There he remained until two o'clock, when he set out again for Granny's, in the hope that Gardner would be there and that dinner would be ready.

About the time Sam started for the hut, old Granny was standing in a spot of sunshine before the door. Looking up, she was startled to see a great cavalcade of men advancing toward her through the woods. Try as she would, she could not explain this marvel until she caught sight of the guns. Then it came over her in a rush that another such war had broken out as she had experienced forty years ago, and turned to hide in her little house.

But before she had hobbled inside and bolted the door, Mr. Hastings and Hiram Kale, supporting a pale, haggard young man between them, confronted her.

"Is Eleanor Nader here?" asked the young man, who was Gardner Lamar, his heart beating like a trip-hammer, and his legs weak with excitement.

Before Granny could answer, the rest of the crowd came up with their horses and buggies and what-not, and crowded around. The old lady was so frightened that she could hardly talk, but she managed finally to gasp that Eleanor was in the garden back of the hut.

"Thank God!" Gardner exclaimed, and started around the cottage.

But Lamson and about a dozen others of his gang, still doubtful, followed him.

Granny's garden, a revel of bright hollyhocks, roses, peonies, nasturtiums, and sweet peas, lay in beautiful, colorful quiet beneath the splendid sun; but there was no one visible either to Gardner or the roughs. Then the engineer caught sight of a bit of white at the far end of the garden.

Hurrying thither, he came upon Eleanor seated behind a screen of wistaria on a bench built around the foot of a gnarled old pear tree, all blooming with white blossoms. She was fast asleep, with her head resting on one plump, bare arm, and her lips half parted in a smile. There was no flower in Granny's whole garden more lovely than she.

The men of Bud's gang stopped abruptly when they saw this wonderful picture of innocence and beauty and a sort of reverence fell on them. Almost with one accord they took off their hats, and with bowed heads, and all the murder gone from their hearts, stole awkwardly away, leaving to Gardner alone the task of waking her.

For a long time he stood before her, powerless to move, while his eyes filled with tears of gratitude and relief. In a thousandfold measure, like Bud Lamson and his crew, he was completely awed and abashed.

Then the horrible fear swept into his soul that if he did not hurry to awaken Eleanor, somebody else would be along and spoil it all. But as he timidly reached forth his arm to touch her shoulder, she opened her eyes, and seeing who it was, leaped to her feet with a little cry of fear.

"Did I frighten you?" he asked, advancing toward her.

"Oh," Eleanor exclaimed laughingly, "where have you been all this time?"

Gardner sat himself on the bench beside her to answer that question, and long before he had finished Eleanor's heart was bleeding for him. Near the end of the recital, when the engineer reached the point where they were lynching him—he told that with a wealth of gruesome detail entirely unnecessary—she burst into tears.

"Don't cry like that," begged Gardner in alarm.

"B-b-but it's *dreadful*," Eleanor sobbed; "when I might have—when they would have—"

"It's all over now," Gardner went on hurriedly. "But if you cry so, I can't finish the story."

"Is there any more?" asked Eleanor, trying honestly to stop the flow of tears.

"Yes — yes," Gardner said, suddenly overcome with a tremendous agitation that seemed to rob him of the power of speech and convulsed him with long and terrible shudders.

"Why, Mr. Lamar!" Eleanor exclaimed, but, nevertheless, she did not dare look at him. "Is—is the rest—"

"Eleanor!" Gardner managed to gasp, as he clutched at her hands. "I love you—that's the rest! When the empty car came back to Caldwell, I knew that you had been

dearer to me than life, and I wanted to die because I thought I should never see you again. Oh, Eleanor—that's all."

She drew back at his first words, but when he had her hands fast in his own and she had looked into his blazing eyes, she gave herself without restraint into his embrace, and with their arms tightly clasped about each other all their trials of the last day and all else except the beautiful and the good of this world rolled from their souls.

For a long time after their wonderful confession they just sat side by side holding hands, saying little, looking furtively at each other from time to time; or they listened to a bumblebee that droned near-by, or watched a flower nod in the wind.

They might be sitting there to this day, if in one of their rosiest moments they had not been startled by a slight cough, and looking up saw Hiram Kale standing before them.

"You all fixin' to git in trouble for life?" he drawled gravely. "Miss Eleanor, I'm goin' to tell your mammy."

"Tell her," said Gardner proudly; "tell all the world!"

The mighty procession which marched into Caldwell late that afternoon was a sight to behold.

First came about twenty men on foot, all armed with guns and revolvers. Following, was Hiram Kale's buggy, containing himself; a bright-eyed, smiling young man, looking very proud, and a sweet-faced, glowing girl, looking very happy.

After them came seven other buggies full of armed men; then, fifty men on horseback, variously armed, and laughing and singing boisterously; then more men and small boys with dogs, on foot.

All the way into town from Granny Mull's more people joined the outfit. Men, women and children appeared as if by magic at every turn of the road, and by the time the van reached the city limits the line was half a mile long and contained fully a thousand people.

Within the town a brass band, which had been disappointed in the failure of the trolley opening because there had thus been lost an opportunity to blow their horns, seized eagerly on the opportunity afforded them by the triumphal march to produce their instruments and furnish music; which they did with a gusto that left nothing to be desired, among the small boys and the dogs.

This prodigious turnout bearing down on the grief-stricken Naders, produced an excitement and a subsequent joy which were beyond the power of words to express. Eleanor's maiden aunt, however, was suspicious to the last, and glared solemnly at Gardner until Eleanor had kissed her spectacles off her nose, when she gave up glowering because she could no longer see.

Now as for the Dances, and Granny Mull. Tom recovered in three days, not much the worse for his accident, and the only other excitement which his accident furnished occurred when Dr. Mansur put a few stitches in his wounds despite Granny's vigorous protests. Afterward, when the worthy doctor tried to pet one of Granny's cats and it scratched him, Granny was satisfied that he had come by his just deserts.

Hiram Kale wanted to arrest the Dances, one and all; but Eleanor, who said that they were all right at heart, but had not been raised right, begged so hard that they be allowed to go free, that Hiram acquiesced. He always hated to arrest anybody, anyway.

In fact, the only individual of the whole trolley fiasco who continued to feel injured twenty-four hours after it was all over, was Elmer, whom Sam flogged after the poor boy returned all torn, dirty, and stepped-on, to Granny Mull's following on his hair-raising adventures with the lynchers. This, Elmer thought, was unjust, as it was.

"I always git the worst of everything," he declared.

THE END.

THE DEPTH OF SILENCE.

SMALL griefs find tongues: full casks are ever found
To give, if any, yet but little sound.
Deep waters noiseless are; and this we know,
That chiding streams betray small depth below.

Herrick.

Those Guns for Caritas.

BY NEVIL G. HENSHAW.

What Happened When Push Evans and His Pal Were Confronted by the Cobblestone Reminder of the South American General.

LAST winter I ran across my friend Jim Wiley in the rathskeller of a small hotel where he occasionally goes for a stein of beer. He looked hale and hearty, and about him there was that unmistakable air of pleased prosperity which comes only with a sudden accession of wealth.

"Well, Jim," I suggested, when he had given the orders, "you look exceptionally prosperous this time."

The old grafter smiled, as pleased as a boy at my observation.

"I am," said he. "Like King Midas, every one I've touched has turned to gold. Now it's rest and good cheer till the money gives out. I tried to get my partner, Push Evans, to come on with me, but he reneged at the last minute. He said that, considering his winnings, and the special advantages for spending 'em offered by the Crescent City, he thought he'd stay where he was so he could hurry and get back to work."

"And what have you two been doing this time?" I inquired.

"Saving Caritas," replied Wiley promptly. "We've lately been appointed the only and original saviors of that benighted country. It happened last month, and it came about something like this:

"One morning me and Push Evans blew into New Orleans on one of them Mississippi locals that back into each hamlet and then take a whirl on the turntable—like a dog that's getting ready to lay down. We'd been trying the top and bottom graft on the webfoot inhabitants of the coast, and business had been poor.

"What's the top and bottom graft? Why, it's where you bet your partner you can throw any number of dice, and can then guess the tops and bottoms added together. You can't miss, 'cause it's bound to run in sevens—seven to one, fourteen to two, and so on. Try it, and you'll see.

"After I'd shown the sucker and got him interested, I'd get him to put up his pile with me. Then I'd introduce a pair of dice that didn't belong to the union. It's a good graft when it isn't known, but not on the Mississippi coast. About the only suckers we caught there was in the bay, and they turned out to be catfish when we got back.

"Being low in finances when we got to New Orleans, we didn't put up at the St. Charles. We chose a little dago café in the French quarter where they feed you and sleep you for fifty cents a day. The meals was mostly paper napkins and garlic, and the rooms was like the meals—without the garlic.

"We stayed three days, and even Push begun to kick.

"'I can put up with most things,' says he, 'but not this. It's like what Shakespeare says about "He who sleeps dines"—all except the sleep.'

"'Right,' says I, 'but we've got a mighty small capital and no plans. Can't you find an inspiration?'

"'After I've had breakfast,' says Push, 'I'll find something to eat, if I have to sell town lots in Jackson Square.'

"We went down to our table, and there was a stranger sitting in Push's seat. He was four foot three, with two-foot mustaches, and his complexion was about the color of the make-up that the middleman uses in a refined minstrel show. Push gave him one look and turned red about the ears.

"'This is too much,' says he. 'I can eat crow on occasion, but not Jim Crow. After I get through with this Afro-American his race'll be building monuments to Simon Legree.'

"So saying, Push grabbed the stranger by the seat of his trousers, and dumped him, face down, in a plate of crawfish bisque. Then he run him to the door and punted him half-way across the street.

"'Goal,' says I, and we sat down and rung for a clean table-cloth.

"We'd just given our order when the stranger come back. He come slow on account of the shock of Push's number tens,

and he was the fiercest sight I've ever seen. He was plastered all over with mud and bisque, and he looked like one of them Louisiana crawfish-nests after it's been hit by a six-days' rain.

"When he got to our table he was so mad he could only do the deaf and dumb alphabet, and make sounds like a man gargling his throat.

"'What's the matter?' asks Push. 'Ain't you got enough? If you're looking for trouble in half-portions, I reckon you're about due for the second course.'

"The stranger stuck his hand is the bosom of his coat and bowed so low he come near tripping over his mustaches.

"'Villains,' says he, 'if you have chosen this means for defeating my objects, should I forget that I am a soldier and a gentleman? Ah! I know who you are. As you say in this country—I am on top of you. But you shall answer to me for this, and be not deceived. If I fall, another shall take my place.'

"I seen a look of surprise come over Push's face, but I didn't have time to say anything. The stranger was going after his hip-pocket, and I was the nearest to him. I made one grab at his arm and missed it, and then dived under the table. Push come in from the other side at the same moment, and we done a head-on collision that any railroad would be proud of.

"'Where am I shot?' I asks as soon as I come to.

"'It ain't you; it's me,' says Push. 'There wasn't but one explosion.'

"'Right,' says I; 'and, from the shock, it come from a pocket cannon. Such weapons shooting only once, and our friend not having time to reload, I think I'll peep out and see what's doing.'

"I crawled to the edge of the table and looked up, and there was the stranger still pulling at his pocket. I reached out and got a chair.

"'He's got two of 'em,' says I to Push; 'but this time I'm going to try and beat him to it. If I have to be shot, let it be in front, so I can lay down comfortable.'

"Just as I got to my feet the stranger got his hand clear. I ducked and swung my chair, and then stood still, 'cause I seen he hadn't pulled anything more dangerous than a wallet. It was about as big as one of the Teddy from Paris bags that the girls carry, and it had enough papers in it to fit out two newsboys and a train butcher.

"The stranger fumbled round inside for a minute, and then handed me a card about the size of a 'For Rent' sign. It said:

DON SEÑOR EL ESTABAN
SAN MIGUEL DE MOREDA.

"'Come out,' says I to Push. 'It's only a cigar drummer.'

"I thought the stranger'd explode.

"'Drummer?' he yells. 'Drummer? But you cannot escape by any such cowardly excuse. I am worthy of fighting the *presidente* himself. Know that I am a general of the revolutionary forces of my beloved Caritas.'

"'Then you still want to fight?' I asks.

"'Of a certainty,' says he. 'Why else should I give you my card?'

"I seen it all in a flash, and I'd have seen it sooner if I hadn't had the senses knocked out of me under the table. I stuck the card in my pocket and motioned Push to lay low.

"'General,' says I, 'we owe you a thousand apologies. The fact is, you was sitting in this gentleman's chair, and as he's a little hot-headed about such matters, he acted without waiting to find out who you really was.'

"The general stamped like the trained horse in a farmyard drama.

"'That makes no difference,' says he. 'The gentleman must fight with me just the same.'

"'All right,' says I; 'but, being the challenged parties, we have the choice of weapons. I'm going to make it bottles across three foot of table. As I'm going to use the wine here, the one who drinks the other to death first ain't going to have anything on the corpse.'

"The general done another bow, and then took a seat opposite Push.

"'Very well,' says he. 'It is a strange way in which to settle such an affair, but I do not care so long as my honor is satisfied.'

"'If this don't satisfy your honor, you'd better have it changed,' says I; and I ordered two bottles, and charged 'em to the general.

"At the end of the third bottle the general had what you might call a genteel parcel. Half-way through the fourth he had a package. At the beginning of the fifth he had a genuine bundle, and the duel turned into a love-feast.

"'My—my—friends,' says he, 'honor is completely satisfied. Never in my life have I figured in so pleasant an affair. I thank you for the privilege. Nay—even more, I embrace you.'

"Having said which, he come crawling across the table, and upset the whole business just as he got half-way. Push grabbed at his feet to save him, but he went down head first and shed enough stuff out of his pockets to stock a junk-shop. The wallet come out with the rest and broke open, scattering the papers all over the floor.

"Push went to the rescue. Having discovered the general's silk hat just behind his chair, and having dumped most of his drinks into it while the general wasn't looking, he was mighty near as fresh as I was.

"Of course, I went after the wallet. It was the least I could do after having it first pulled on me and then thrown in my face. I will remark, in passing, that, although I have been after similar articles all my life, it was the first time I'd ever had one forced on me in such a way.

"The wallet was pretty well lined with tens and twenties, and, figuring 'em up roughly, I judged that there was about five hundred dollars in all.

"The papers, being heavier, had fallen out and scattered, as I've said. They was mostly in Spanish, and they seemed to run all the way from love-letters to laundry bills. I put 'em back, one by one, till I come to a long, white slip that looked familiar. I opened it up, and it was a draft on a New Orleans bank for six thousand dollars.

"'Welcome, little stranger,' says I to myself. 'You're going to be mine so soon, it's hardly worth while returning you to your friends.'

"When I got back to the table the general was embracing Push and calling him his deliverer, which, in view of what I had in mind, wasn't as wrong as it might have been. I handed over the wallet, and ordered another bottle of wine.

"'Here's hoping you run those arms to Caritas all right,' says I, when the glasses had been filled.

"The general jumped to his feet and looked all round the room, like the villain does when he hides the papers in a play.

"'Discovered,' says he with a groan. 'All the discomforts that I have endured in this place have not served to hide me. Ah, the very walls have ears!'

"'It was the floor,' says I. 'Likewise, being something of a detective, I was able to deduce who you was after you'd handed me your card. But, cheer up, general. Unless I'm a whole lot mistaken, we're the very people you're looking for.'

"'How so?' asks the general. 'Can it be possible that your friend and yourself are also patriots of my beloved country?"

"'Hardly,' says I; 'but we happen to be the largest manufacturers of firearms in the United States. I am Wesson Smith, and this is my brother Savage. Did I understand you to say that you wanted rifles, or is it machine-guns?'

"'It is rifles,' says the general. 'I am here with a commission to purchase one thousand of them for the downtrodden patriots of my beloved Caritas. Therefore, behold me, their general, hiding in this hovel until my mission is accomplished. But what, may I ask, are *you* doing here?'

"I got up and looked round the room like the general had done, and then said 'Hist!' five or six times, like a bum pack of firecrackers.

"'General,' says I, 'I'll be frank with you. We have an order for the same amount of rifles from your government, and as they want 'em quick, and Uncle Sam is always curious about such matters, we thought we'd be a little careful. We've been waiting three days now for the representative of your president, and, to tell the truth, we're beginning to get tired.'

"The general's eyes begun to sparkle like the lights on a Broadway theater.

"'And suppose I were to make you an offer for those rifles?' he asks.

"'If satisfactory, I'd accept it,' says I. 'We've held on just about as long as we care to. Say the word and we'll show you our stock this afternoon.'

"It took two hours and five more bottles before we come to terms. The general had to give us the names and birthplaces of all his officers, and he used enough Santas in doing it to write 'The Night Before Christmas.' After I'd finally got him to understand that in dealing with us he'd practically get two thousand rifles, as his government couldn't buy what they wanted anywheres else, he agreed that he'd examine our stock that afternoon, and take it if it was satisfactory. Then he went to sleep with his head on my shoulder.

"'Well,' says I to Push, after we put the general to bed, 'what do you think of it?'

"'It's so easy,' says he, 'that it's hardly worth while buying the rifle-cases. I don't see why he didn't sign the draft. Then he could give us the money without the trouble of being waked up.'

"'I don't know,' says I. 'Something tells me it isn't going to be as easy as it looks. When people force things on you it's generally bait. You run up to the armory and see the janitor, and I'll attend to the other details.'

"I went down-town and looked up a man I knew, and made a touch for the necessary money. He held back at first, but after I'd explained the situation, and had promised him ten per cent, he come across so quick he broke the rubber on his roll.

"Ten minutes later I was at a box-factory, ordering the cases. They was to be made big enough to hold a dozen rifles, and was to be delivered at a storeroom the following morning. Then I looked up a house-wrecking outfit, and contracted for enough broken bricks to fill 'em. I couldn't see any advantage in whole bricks, as the general had told me that they only used frame buildings in his country. Likewise, the broken ones was cheaper and more handy for throwing at the enemy.

"When I got back to the café I found Push waiting for me.

"'Jim,' says he, 'I hope you haven't been foolish enough to order a sample layer of actual rifles? In view of the circumstances, it'd be a shameful waste of money.'

"'I haven't,' says I; 'but I still have my doubts. Did you fix the janitor?'

"'I did,' says Push. 'The door's unlocked, and, unless the corner saloon burns down, he'll be there till morning.'

"The general didn't show up till dinner-time. He come down with one hand on his head, and he looked about as brisk and happy as a piece of string. After he'd had something to eat, though, he felt better, and by the time we started out he'd begun on the officers again.

"'Haven't you got any privates?' I asks him, after he'd finished six majors and a captain.

"'Not yet,' says he. 'To have privates one must first find the arms.'

"When we got to the armory I come mighty near believing that Push was right. I've seen some pretty enthusiastic suckers in my time, but none like the general. He just run up and down the racks of rifles, smiling at 'em and patting 'em like they was a millionaire widow afflicted with heart disease.

"'This is a part of the stock we brought down with us,' says I. 'Likewise, there's two machine-guns if you want 'em.'

"'Ah, if only I had the money,' says the general. 'But these rifles — these dear, bright, deadly rifles—will do. At last my dream will be realized.'

"'If you don't wake up while you're shipping 'em,' says I. 'Have you figured on that part of the dream?'

"'Everything is arranged,' says he. 'Strictly in confidence, the fruit company is in sympathy with the revolutionists. The rifles will go out upon one of their boats billed as general merchandise. Can you not have them packed at once, and so catch the steamer of day after to-morrow? Otherwise I will have to wait a week.'

"'I can,' says I. 'Then, we'll consider it a deal?'

"'Assuredly,' says he. 'You will receive the money the moment the last case is on board.'

"'Well,' says Push, when we got back to our room, 'what do you say now?'

"'Nothin',' says I. 'According to present appearances you're right, but it still looks too good to be true.'

"The next morning me and Push got up early and packed the bricks into the cases. After we'd marked 'em as per instructions, and seen about engaging some wagons, it was dinner-time. The general met us at the table, smiling and bowing, and looking about as easy as a married man in a department-store.

"'Welcome, my brave friends,' says he in a whisper. 'Is everything arranged?'

"'Almost,' says I. 'We've been pretty busy all morning.'

"'And so have I,' says he. 'It has taken me four hours upon the levee in which to engage a place for the examination of your shipment.'

"I reached down and brushed some brick-dust off my knee.

"'Meaning that you doubt our honesty?' I asks as sarcastic as I could.

"The general got up and made a bow that was like winding a ball of twine.

"'My dear Señor Smith,' says he, 'I would not insinuate against your honor for worlds. I am only following the instructions of my chief. But I will explain.

"'Last year General Valdez, of our party, came to this city upon a mission similar

to my own. Although he had not my knowledge of English, he got his rifles for half price, and we were transported with joy. A special delegation met the cases at the quay. When they were opened they were found to contain nothing but cobblestones.

"'At first we thought it some mistake. After investigation it proved that our beloved general had been swindled. The cobblestones were built into a monument to commemorate the infamy of the deed. Upon my departure my chief took me before this monument and gave me my final instructions.

"'"Examine each case before it is put aboard," he commanded. "Also place a cobblestone in your valise, so that you will keep the matter in mind."

"'Therefore I have secured a room in a warehouse within easy distance of the ship, where I can examine each case before it is put aboard. I have also arranged with the captain, so that he will check and stow each load as it is sent to him. Surely, after my explanation, you cannot object to such an arrangement?'

"I give Push one look, and then made some remark about the toughness of the meat.

"'Do I understand you to say that you do not object?' asks the general again.

"'Of course not,' says I. 'It'll make us both feel better. Give me the address of your warehouse, and I'll attend to the matter this afternoon.'

"When we got up to our room Push slammed the door and begun to make remarks about the general. Most of 'em was uncomplimentary, and if I was to print 'em with stars and dashes, like they do in the polite magazines, they'd look something like the American flag.

"'Don't say—I told you so,' he finished with. 'Tell me what we can do.'

"'We can do the general,' says I. 'I've been expecting something like this all along, and I've only waited to find out what his game was before changing my plans. Give me an hour of meditation, and, unless I'm mightily mistaken, I'll find a way. Anyhow, we're not using cobblestones.'

"'And where do I come in?' asks Push.

"'For the present you can amuse the general,' says I. 'Take him out and show him those lots in Jackson Square, but don't let him buy. He's liable to need what he has left more than we do.'

"I sat down and lit a cigar, and before I'd half finished it I seen my way clear. Five minutes later I was in a taxi, beating it down-town. That night I told the general that everything was O.K., and that if he'd come round with the money at eight the next morning we'd have the rifles examined and loaded before the ship sailed at noon.

"'How can I ever thank you?' says he. 'And your brother, also. From him I have obtained, for nothing, what is called an option upon the most beautiful spot in the city. If the revolution is successful I will purchase it and build a home.'

"The next morning at seven-fifty I showed up at the warehouse. It was only about half a block from the ship, and the general was standing in the doorway watching the last of the cargo go on board.

"'Where is your brother?' he asks as we shook hands.

"'He's attending to the business at the other end,' says I. 'He'll probably be in with the last load.'

"As I spoke a delivery-wagon came through the back way. It had four cases in it, and after we'd lifted them out I unscrewed the tops and showed the general that each one had a dozen rifles inside.

"'Forty-eight,' says he, checking it off in a note-book.

"'Forty-eight it is,' says I. 'They'll come a little slow, as a string of wagons might excite suspicion.'

"The cart drove out the front way, and while we was waiting for the next load I got the general to teach me how to roll a corn-shuck cigarette. By the time he'd finished the second load rolled in. After the general had examined it we followed the wagon out, and watched 'em swing the first load aboard the ship.

"Things went as smooth as a political speech. When we wasn't examining cases we was rolling cigarettes, and when we wasn't doing that we was watching the rifles go aboard.

"Push come in with the last load at eleven-thirty, and we checked up and had a fifteen-minute celebration with some wine he'd brought along.

"'Bravo, my noble companions,' says the general. 'All is as it should be. After I have compared my list with that of the captain I will give you the money that is due. As for the gratitude—it will remain the debt of a lifetime.'

"When we got to the ship everything was aboard, and she was ready to sail. They'd put the rifles in the first hold, so they could get at 'em easy, and, as we stepped on deck, they was fastening the hatches down.

"While the general was conferring with the captain I wrote him a note telling him what he'd bought, and advising him that he should get off at some port before he reached home. I give it to a steward, and told him not to deliver it till they was out in the Gulf.

"It was the least I could do, and, on the whole, the general hadn't been so bad. Likewise I figured that, if they built a monument out of his purchase, they'd probably use him as the base.

"Then the general come back and give us the money and enough embraces to make a French novel. He likewise dug a cobblestone out of his grip and dropped it over the side.

"'It is a weight that has been both on my mind and body,' says he. 'How can I ever thank you, my friends? You are the saviors of my country. The patriots of Caritas will never forget you.'

"'They won't,' says I, and just then the gong rang and we went ashore."

The old grafter paused and rapped on the table for a fresh relay of steins.

"But how did you do it, Jim?" I asked.

Wiley smiled.

"Easy enough," he replied. "There was only one load, and each time it drove out and round the block Push changed it to a fresh wagon. The rifles come from a wholesale hardware man on lower Canal.

"They was supposed to be used in an amateur war drama given by the Algiers Y. M. C. A., and I got 'em rent free. The only trouble was in keeping the general busy till they started loading the other cases aboard the ship. After that it was a cinch."

"And the other cases, of course—" I began.

"Of course," interrupted Wiley, "they was the ones me and Push had loaded the day before."

Vengeance Burned Away.

BY SEWARD W. HOPKINS,

Author of "Spar-Mates," "The Hoodoo Ranch," "Fencing with Villainy," etc.

The Strange Thing That Happened to Walter Carson After His Horse Bolted and Another Drifted Along To Take Its Place.

CHAPTER I.

AN UNCANNY DRIVER.

I HAD been on Old Dopehead Mountain four hours before I saw him. And then my heart beat rapidly, for he well repaid all my patient waiting and difficult battling through scrub and wildwood.

He certainly was a patriarch. His great white whiskers reached almost to his front knees. His small but keen and wary eyes were almost hidden by shaggy brows. His crowning glory was his great pair of curved horns. And it was the horns more than the old mountain-sheep himself that I was after.

The old man of the mountain had been seen frequently on the high hill they called, in Alvedo County, Old Dopehead, but nobody had as yet been able to shoot him. He could outrun and outjump any of the local hunters, and seemed to bear a charmed life. At any rate, he had hidden nooks among the crags where he could stow himself away with little danger of being found.

When I had heard the various stories of failure on the part of so many valorous and sure-eyed Arizona sportsmen it was characteristic to let my New York blood get the better of me, and so, armed with my own rifle, mounted on one of Jim's best horses, and submitting to Jim's worst jeers, I had set out that morning with the avowed purpose of bringing back the "old man of the mountain" or not coming back at all.

I had been somewhat run down from excess of work in New York, and my physician had advised a trip to Europe for a rest. I had gone to Europe once acting upon his advice, and came back to New

York a nervous and almost a financial wreck. It wasn't Europe I wanted this time, and I made it clear in good, plain Americanese.

The result was that my doctor went off in a huff, and I accepted Jim's invitation to visit him.

An invitation to visit Jim means something. We are cousins, with the same family name, Carson. Jim Carson had married a girl all our family knew and liked.

Julie was just the kind of wife for Jim. Tender and true, full of life and vim, eager to help, a good shot with a rifle, and a heart big enough to call all the world her children.

Jim had a big ranch in Alvedo County, and the incidents I am about to relate took place while I was making him the visit during which I was supposed to be enjoying a much-needed rest.

To return to the big sheep. My blood was up. The old rascal stood on a rock and gazed at me much as though he was asking what business I had in his domain.

I raised my rifle and fired. Before the echo of the shot had died away, he had disappeared. I did not know whether I had hit him or not.

I knew I was taking considerable risk in following the creature. Not that there was any personal danger on Old Dopehead. There were no outlaws there that I had heard of, nor wild animals that were fierce enough to intimidate a man armed with a magazine rifle. But it was growing late and a storm seemed imminent.

I had been in Arizona before, but not at this big ranch of Jim's. I knew but little of the region. But I knew that while storms seldom came to that portion of the Southwest, when they did come they were generally worth noticing. I had no wish to get caught in a storm on Dopehead.

I don't know where the mountain got that name. It was what Jim called it, and Jim was my guide, philosopher, and friend in Arizona, except when Julie was the better equipped with the knowledge of which I stood in need.

Moreover, I had left my horse tethered at the foot of the mountain, and feared he would not remain quiet if there was thunder and lightning. He was not a pony of the region, but a mettlesome young horse Jim had brought to the ranch for riding purposes.

Nevertheless, with all sorts of things that were unpleasant staring me in the face, I started after the big, old sheep. The chase occupied upward of an hour, but at last I got him where I wanted him, and brought him down with a quick and fortunately directed shot.

By this time it was almost dark. Although the big horns were all I really wanted, I did not think it advisable to take the time then to get them off. Moreover, I knew Jim was waiting to have a good laugh at me for failing to get the sheep, so it occurred to me as a good idea to carry the entire carcass back to the ranch to let my skeptical cousin see that I had really shot the fellow and had not merely purchased a pair of big horns to uphold a false claim.

As I was staggering down the mountainside with the old sheep slung across my shoulder, there came a tremendous peal of thunder. The lightning-flash that preceded it had not seemed so very vivid to me because I was deep in a forest of scrubby pine.

There were two more of these booms of the sky artillery before I reached the foot of the mountain, where all I found of my horse was a portion of the leather strap with which I had fastened him to a tree.

It had grown dark, and the clouds obscured sky and stars and moon. I was a little bewildered as to what I should do, for Jim's ranch was a long distance away, and I was not sure I could find it in the night. The horse I knew could make his way home, and undoubtedly he was doing that very thing while I stood there helpless and perplexed. Jim's ranch was not on the main road that ran past the mountain, but between me and it there were cross-road and forks that would puzzle a man who had been in Alvedo County longer than I had.

While I stood debating I heard the slow crunch of hoofs, and soon made out the form of a horse and ordinary farm buggy coming along in leisurely fashion.

"Whoever that is doesn't seem to be in a hurry to get home before it storms," I said. "But he'll give me a lift, perhaps."

As the plodding horse drew close to me I hailed.

"Hie, stranger," I said politely, "can you accommodate me as far as you are going toward Jim Carson's ranch?"

There was no reply. I peered into the buggy thinking there was nobody there. I was mistaken. Huddled against the side

of the raised leather top sat the figure of a man in the attitude of sound sleep.

I stopped the horse and got into the buggy, putting the old mountain-sheep in the projecting body behind the seat. I shook the man. He made no effort to move nor did he make any sound.

"Say, Mr. Man!" I shouted in his ear. "What kind of liquor did you have in Winston? Wake up! Where are you going?"

I shook him again, and again there was no response or voluntary movement on his part.

"By Heavens!" I said. "He's a dead man!"

CHAPTER II.

A RETURN TO LIFE.

THE thought actually appalled me. There is something uncanny in the discovery that you have been shaking and yelling at a dead man.

I lit a match and examined his features. He was, so far as I could judge in that fitful and feeble light, a good-looking man of perhaps twenty-five or thirty.

His face seemed ghastly, for though it was bronzed from exposure to the sun and weather, yet the pallor of death seemed trying to show through.

But even as the little match-stick was burning to the end, I saw his lips move.

"Glory Hallelujah!" I cried. "He isn't dead, after all. Now we'll see what we can do."

I had a small flask of whisky in my pocket that I always carried with me on hunting trips for use in emergencies, but had seldom used. I unscrewed the cover, and put the nozzle to his lips.

There was a guzzling sound as if the muscles of the throat were acting involuntarily to swallow the liquor, and then, with my head bent close to his, I found he was breathing, but he was still unconscious.

"Well," I said to myself, "there is only one thing for me to do. That is to get this poor fellow home as soon as possible. I wonder where he lives? Anyway, the horse was doing well enough when he came along. I'll leave it to his judgment."

The reins were sagging, having fallen from the inert hands of the unconscious man. I picked them up, leaving them loose, however, for the horse to exercise his own will in where he took us.

In the darkness the faithful animal plodded along as though weary. By that time I was desperately hungry. I had carried with me only a very light lunch, thinking I would have game enough to get up a good dinner for myself, whereas I had shot nothing all day except the big sheep, which had come too late for me to stop to cook a meal.

I am not sure now whether we passed houses or not, for there were no lights, and houses were being built rapidly along that portion of the road. So the fact that there are houses now where I journeyed with the unconscious man is no proof that there were houses there then.

I suppose we traveled at the plodding pace of the tired horse about half an hour. Then he turned to the left. Even though it was dark I could see the shadowy form of a house.

"Well, the old fellow does know where his bed and board are to be found," I told myself. "Good old chap! We'll soon have the master in bed and see what's wrong with him."

The sedate horse strode around to the side of the house, and came to a stop in the rear. Getting out of the buggy I lit a match again to get my bearings.

I was at a door. It was either the door leading into the kitchen or to a shed off the latter used for storing bacon and flour and other foodstuffs bought in quantities.

I knocked on the door with my fist. I heard a dog bark, but there was no other response. I knocked again, louder, but with no better result.

I walked around the house and tapped on the windows. But with the exception of the barking of the dog inside there was no sign of life. There was no light.

"This is great," I muttered. "A sick man comes home to a mighty inhospitable welcome. But I've got to get him to bed."

I wondered that there were no servants around to answer my summons. I knew the farmers of Alvedo County, as a rule, were well-to-do, and most of them kept at least one servant, and hired hands according to the number of cattle they had or the amount of land they tilled.

But no sign of the existence of anybody could I get by knocking, and I went back to the buggy.

I knew from what Julie had told me that

house-thieves and tramps were almost unknown in Alvedo County since Jack Boreel had become sheriff.

"As long as Jack Boreel is sheriff," Julie had said to me, "you can leave your front door wide open and go to Winston shopping. The neighbors won't enter and steal, and there's nobody else to do it. You can go to any house in Alvedo County, and if the folks are not at home, I'll bet you'll find a key to some door hanging on a nail or under a mat."

This came to my mind as I stood helplessly blinking in the darkness at the figure in the buggy.

I began a search for a key. Match after match I lit, and after much hunting I found, under a flat stone near the door at which the horse had stopped, a key.

This proved to be the key to the above-mentioned door, and, as I had supposed, it let me into a shed. Having come thus far, my way was clear enough.

Lighting another match and thanking my good fortune that I was a smoker and always had a good supply of them, I hunted for and found a lantern. I lit this, and then began another search for the key that belonged to the door from the shed to the kitchen.

It did not take me long to find it, and when I opened the door a great sheep-dog leaped at me.

"Down, good fellow," I said soothingly.

Naturally, I was averse to being bitten, and had my motive been merely to seek shelter for myself, I fancy I should have beaten a retreat. But that man outside needed care, and it was my duty to give it to him. His horse had shown sense enough to bring him home, and it was as little as I could do in the absence of his family to give him the best attention I could.

I had always found it an easy matter to make friends with dogs. Some people have that faculty, others have not. I know it is often said by those who love dogs that a man who cannot make a dog his friend is not to be trusted.

I don't know as to the truth of that, as I am not much of a student of such things. But at any rate, I had the good luck to make that sheep-dog my friend, and this was as far as my interest in the matter went just then.

I made a hasty examination of the interior. The rooms were furnished well and tastefully. There was every evidence that the family had enough money to do pretty much as they liked.

Off the large living-room were two bedrooms. I selected the one I believed to be the man's room, the other manifestly being a young girl's; and then, going out to the buggy, gathered the unconscious man in my arms and lifted him down.

Immediately the wise old horse started off to the rear of the house, evidently for his stable.

"Good old fellow," I said. "I'll come and feed and bed you as soon as I get the master fixed up a little."

The man was heavy, and I had some difficulty in carrying him. But I managed to get him to the bedroom and laid him down on the sheet, after turning down the coverlet.

I gave him another drink of the whisky, and then began an examination to determine if I could what the trouble was. I found a large argand lamp, and, lighting that, set it on a bureau near the bed.

It was not a difficult matter to discover why the man was unconscious. He had a bullet-wound in his side. The blood had streamed from it remorselessly, and was gummed to the wound and undershirt.

I went to the kitchen for water. As another evidence of the prosperity and progressiveness of the occupants of the house, the kitchen stove was a huge range with a copper water-tank in the rear. I got a basin of hot water, found a clean sheet, which I ruthlessly tore into bandages, and then undressed my patient.

I bathed his side, found some vaseline on the bureau, and some carbolic acid in the shed, and after washing the wound with carbolized water, and putting on a dressing of carbolized vaseline, I bandaged him up, and gave him some more whisky.

I stood looking down at him, wondering if he would ever recover consciousness, and also wondering where his family could be, when he opened his eyes. They were, even in his wounded condition, cold and fearless.

"Who the deuce are you?" he asked.

CHAPTER III.

SOMETHING WRONG.

"THAT, my friend," I said, "is not quite a gracious greeting to a man who has

brought you home, bathed and dressed your wounds, and is now about to get some supper for you and himself. Still, owing to your wounded condition and the fact that you have recovered consciousness after copious drinks of whisky, I will overlook it. Is there anything you want before I go to the kitchen to prepare supper?"

"No."

"Have you any idea where your family can be?"

The keen gray eyes looked at me steadily for a full minute before the lips moved. There was almost no expression on the good-looking face, but the eyes seemed to be searching—searching as though the man was trying to solve a difficult problem.

"No," he said finally, "I don't know."

I left him and went to the kitchen. I found plenty there to eat. There was bacon and there was coffee and potatoes and white bread. There were eggs. In fact, the larder was so well filled that I did not want all the variety before me. I got out a frying-pan, and fried some bacon and potatoes together, made some coffee, and considered this, with good wheat bread and home-made butter, a fit meal for anybody.

I gave the master of the house some coffee and some bread, but he wanted nothing more. The dog kept with me, never going near the bedside to sniff at the prostrate man.

This struck me as queer.

I took a peep inside, and the man was asleep or had again become unconscious. I did not make any examination to see.

I scarcely knew what to do. I wanted to get to Jim's ranch, because I knew Jim and Julie would be anxious about me. I had not been away all night since I had been with them; and if the horse had gone home alone, naturally, my failure to put in appearance would alarm my cousins.

On the other hand, I could not forsake a wounded man and leave him there by himself. If his family would only come home! I knew it was useless to think of riding to Winston that night for a doctor. It was the largest town in the county, and the county seat.

I was just finishing my repast when I heard voices laughing and joking, and heard a key in the lock of the front door.

I rose from my chair, and in through the hall came two women.

"Yes," called a girlish voice before I saw them, "papa's home."

Then she burst from the hall into the dining-room, and stopped in sudden alarm.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and bringing them up against her cheek. "Mama, there is a stranger here."

"A stranger? A friend of your father's, perhaps."

The girl had struck me as being very good-looking, and so was the older woman, who now joined her.

Both stood looking at me in amazement and some alarm.

"Ladies," I said, "I certainly owe you an explanation; but I wish it might be of a different kind. I am, of course, a total stranger to you both. It might serve to give you some confidence in me, however, for you to know that I am Jim Carson's cousin and his guest on his ranch. To-day I went hunting on Dopehead Mountain, and through chasing a big mountain-sheep I remained there longer than I should, and my horse, undoubtedly frightened by the thunder, ran away.

"I saw a horse plodding along in this direction, and discovered an unconscious man in the buggy. I did not know who he was, but realized that he must be taken to his home and cared for. The horse seemed to know the way, so I let him have his head.

"We arrived here. I have put the man in that bedroom. I have bathed and bandaged a bullet wound in his side, and just now he is asleep. I made free to get myself some supper. My name is Walter Carson."

As I had proceeded with my little speech the faces of the woman and girl had at first expressed amusement, then alarm, and, as I drew near the close, both became white. When I had finished the girl turned convulsively to her mother.

"What could have happened to papa? Who would have shot him? He has no enemies."

The mother sank down on a chair almost in a condition of collapse.

"Except—well, you know what he told Bill Boreel."

The girl became even whiter, and leaned back in her chair as if she were going to faint.

"I must see him at once," said the woman, but, as she rose to her feet, she rocked and reeled so that I was compelled to steady her as she stepped quickly to the bedroom door.

The girl followed, but halted at the threshold.

I heard a slight exclamation inside the bedroom, but none of the outbreak that is usually to be expected when a woman sees her husband wounded. And then she reappeared.

Her face was whiter than it had been before, and she stared at her daughter and at me in a peculiar and frightened way.

"There—there is some terrible mistake. Something terrible has happened," she gasped, sinking again to a chair.

"Mama! What is the matter?" cried the girl, dropping on her knees and grasping her mother's hands.

"Why—that man in there—isn't your father at all," she answered. "I have never seen him before."

I felt a queer, creepy sensation. What, then, was the explanation?

I stood a moment as confused and excited as either of the women.

"Are you sure you do not know that man?" I asked.

"Positive."

"Then, why was he in your buggy?"

"How do I know it was our buggy?"

"Well, the horse seemed to belong here—appeared to know the place. He came in through the gate without any guiding and around the house to the shed door. He stood there until I had found the keys and got in here, and when I had taken the man from the vehicle he went off toward the rear."

"That's just like old Tom," commented the girl.

"Something terrible has happened to Mr. Kedlar, I am sure," said the woman, breaking into tears. "Either this was a friend who was coming this way with him, or an enemy with whom he has had a fight. In either event my husband is now lying wounded, and perhaps dead, between here and Winston. I shall go at once and see if I can find him."

"Not to-night, mama."

"To-night."

"But first let us see whether the horse is really our old Tom," continued the girl. "Mr. Carson, did you see anything of a man here? Our hired man is new to this country, and rather timorous of Indians, bears, and things we seldom see in Alvedo County in a wild state."

"I saw nobody, Miss Kedlar."

"Will you accompany me to the barn? I'd like to make sure that the horse is really ours."

"Minnie!" exclaimed her mother.

"I am surely safe with Jim Carson's cousin," rejoined the girl.

"I am a gentleman, madam," I said, "and will be responsible for Miss Kedlar's safe return."

The girl had completely recovered her composure, and we left the house together, I carrying the lantern.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERY STILL.

THE path to the barn was simply a continuation of that which ran from the gate around the house to the kitchen door, albeit with a sharp turn to the right at the corner of the house.

With Miss Kedlar as guide and myself as lantern-bearer, we were soon at the barn. The door was open, and there was a light inside.

As we reached the door I saw a man moving about with a wooden stable-fork in his hand.

"It must be old Tom," said Miss Kedlar, referring to the horse. "Sam is bedding him down for the night."

The hired man, a tawny-haired fellow of seemingly great strength, looked up in surprise as we entered the barn.

"Sam," said Miss Kedlar, "a strange man came to the house a short time ago in a buggy supposed to be ours. Was it?"

"A strange mans?" repeated the farmhand.

"Yes. He is wounded, and is now in papa's bed. Did old Tom come here alone a short time ago?"

"Short tam, yes, miss. An' a big sheep in wagons. Very big sheep."

"That is true, Miss Kedlar," I put in. "It was the mountain-sheep I shot."

Musingly she started again toward the house, and I walked by her side with the lantern.

"This is terrible suspense, Mr. Carson," she said after we had traversed perhaps half the distance, "an awful suspense. What do you think? How would you explain this matter?"

"Under the circumstances, Miss Kedlar," I said, "it is impossible for me even to venture on a speculation. I have never met your father. I have no knowledge of his

character or habits on which I could base a theory. If we could get any information from the wounded man it would go far toward helping to solve the riddle. But he seems disinclined to take anybody into his confidence."

"Have you tried to sound him?"

"He asked me who I was. That ended our conversation."

"It is strange. There is little hope that my father has not been either wounded or killed. Yet—I cannot believe—"

"Has your father any enemies?"

"No. That is—"

"There is one, perhaps."

"There is one who made a demand which my father rejected. It may be—it may be—"

The faltering voice indicated to me that the demand had something to do with the girl herself. I said no more, and we reached the house in silence.

Mrs. Kedlar sat in the room from which the bedroom opened.

"Has he spoken?" asked Miss Kedlar.

"Not a word. I tried to get some information out of him, but he seemed not to hear or understand."

Just then there came the sound of a galloping horse. The rider was evidently in a hurry, for he passed the house, and we could tell by the sound that he had ridden direct to the barn.

Both Mrs. Kedlar and Minnie turned white again.

"Who can that be?" asked Mrs. Kedlar in a whisper. "Mysteries are thick tonight."

The suspense was ended when in through the kitchen strode a tall, bent-shouldered man.

"Papa! We thought you were killed!" cried Miss Kedlar, rushing to him and kissing him eagerly.

Mrs. Kedlar went and put her arms around his neck.

"What happened, Thomas?" she asked. "We have been almost crazy with anxiety."

The man glanced at me curiously.

"This is Mr. Carson, a cousin of the big ranch owner," explained Miss Kedlar. "He had his own part to play in the night's troubles. He brought old Tom home."

"Brought him home!" exclaimed the man, turning to me in an angry way. "Why did you unhitch him in the first place?"

"I didn't. I caught him at Dopehead Mountain."

"Well!" he said. "It's queer."

"Have you had supper? Will you have some coffee?" asked his wife.

"No. I had all I want in Winston. Now, here is something I'd like explained. Somebody stole old Tom—old Tom, who would not be any good to anybody except us. You see, it was like this:

"I got to Winston before Banny and Smith were ready to pay. They were expecting remittances from the East, and until they came and were deposited in the bank Banny said he couldn't draw a check as big as my bill against them. So I had to wait.

"Well, you know that confounded tooth that has been aching me off and on for a month. It got sassy while I was in Winston, and I tied old Tom to a hitching-post in front of the big building on the square, and went up-stairs to Dentist Diswell's office to have it extracted. There were others before me, and I was there quite a long time.

"Of course, I never thought of looking out of the window to see if Tom was all right. Who ever heard of Tom running away? Well, when Diswell had about yanked the jaw off me, and I had sat there a while to get over it, I started again, and —Tom was gone.

"I went into Jones's drug-store in the same building, and a clerk there said he had seen a well-dressed, good-looking man untie the horse from the post and drive off. You bet I was mad, but what could I do?

"I went to Banny again, and the mail from the East had brought his remittances. He and I went to the bank together, and he paid me. I left the check on deposit."

"And we thought you had been held up and robbed — perhaps killed," said Miss Kedlar.

"No. Nobody has offered to molest me. I got a horse from Banny and rode home. So, Tom came back, did he? Well, young man, you—did you say you were a cousin of Jim Carson?"

"A cousin of the same name. My name is Walter Carson."

"Well, under what conditions and circumstances did you find my horse at Dopehead Mountain?"

"Plodding home with a wounded and unconscious man in the buggy. I let the horse have his way, and he brought us here. I thought the man was you, and brought him in and put him to bed. He's in there now."

Mr. Kedlar started, and rose to his feet spasmodically. He strode to the bedroom door, and I followed him. The stranger lay perfectly still, but whether he was asleep or unconscious I could not tell.

"Here, you!" said Mr. Kedlar, shaking him, "wake up and give an explanation of yourself."

The man did not move.

"See here!" exclaimed Kedlar, waxing angry. "You wake up. I want to understand this thing before I sleep to-night. Are you a horse-thief, or are you an honest man who has been the victim of highwaymen? Tell me."

But as we stood there waiting there came no response, not even the fluttering of an eyelash, from the stranger. Dead to the world he lay, and had it not been for the long, slow breaths he was taking we would have believed him to be a corpse.

"Well," said Mr. Kedlar, as we went outside again, "one thing is certain. We can't put him out to-night. And I'm not sure I want to do so. I want to know something about him. If he has been in a fight, I'd like to know what about."

"Do you know him?" asked his wife.

"No. I am certain I never saw the man before."

"It is strange."

"I am weary. Now, Carson, I know your Cousin Jim very well. It is too late for you to ride to the ranch to-night, especially if there are men abroad who do such things as—that." He pointed toward the bedroom.

"You will bunk with us. Let's see how to plan this. This fellow has my room. It won't do to leave the women folks downstairs with *him*. Now, Carson, you take the other room, and we will occupy the two spare rooms up-stairs."

"Very well," I answered. "I accept your hospitality, and will give your other guest what attention he needs in the night."

"Thank you. Then, come, Caroline—come, Minnie. Good night, Carson."

"Good night, all," I said.

And in a moment I was alone.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE DEPARTURE.

It is almost a waste of time for me to make the statement that my rest that night was scarcely rest at all. I undressed by the light of a small lamp the Kedlars had left me, and betook me to the room next that of the wounded stranger. Here I lay wide awake, thinking of a great many things.

I knew Jim and Julie would spend a night of anxiety concerning me. If the horse had found its way home their worry would be greater than if both horse and rider were absent. For, overtaken by the storm, I might have well have applied at a farmhouse for shelter for myself and horse; but if the horse went home alone there would be great speculation as to what could have happened to me.

But Jim and Julie were two philosophical souls, not given to hysterical fears, and perhaps were at that moment sound asleep, ignorant of the fact that I had not returned.

Then I thought of the sudden shock to Mrs. Kedlar and Minnie upon returning from a pleasant evening spent at a neighbor's and receiving the information I had given them. I even laughed alone as I thought of it. I could afford to laugh, now that everything had proved all right as far as Mr. Kedlar was concerned.

It must have been about one o'clock, or even nearer two, when, as I lay there awake, I was startled at seeing a ray of light cross the wall of the room at the foot of the bed. It was not exactly a ray of light, but in through the window came a certain gleam that illumined the room and the wall at the foot of the bed.

It was not a stationary light, but traveled from the direction of the right side to the left.

This startled me, and I leaped over to peer through the open window.

I saw a moving lantern not far from the house, and it seemed to be carried by a man on horseback.

Naturally, I felt alarmed. Not for myself, for there was no one in Arizona who had any reason to wish me harm—at that time—but for Kedlar and his wife and daughter. I surmised at once that robbery was in the air, and a connected theory at once came to my mind.

The robbers knew that Kedlar had gone to Winston to get a lot of money. They did not know he intended to leave the check on deposit. Their supposition would be that he would return home with a pocketful of cash.

They had seen the stranger in Kedlar's

buggy, and shot him in mistake for Kedlar. They had learned their mistake, and now had come to Kedlar's home to make a successful job of it.

While I was studying what I ought to do, I heard a sound from the next room. I went in there.

To my surprise, the wounded man was up and fully dressed. As I entered he put his finger to his lips to warn me against loud talking, and pointed up-stairs.

"Have you got any more of that whisky?" he asked.

I handed him the flask. There was just a drink left.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Walter Carson."

"Any relation to Jim, the big rancher?"

"His cousin. I am visiting him."

A spasm that did not seem to be of pain crossed his good-looking face.

"Look here, Carson," he said, "Kedlar must have some whisky somewhere. I'm going now, and must ride like the deuce, if I can get anything to ride. See if you can find me some whisky to take along. This puncture in my side hurts a little, and you never can tell what tricks a bullet-wound will play."

"Tell me who you are, and how you were shot," I asked, "and why you are going at this strange hour? There are men about the house."

"I know there are. And that is why I am going. Now, look here, Carson. You seem to be a blamed good fellow. You brought me here, and took good care of me —probably saved my life. I won't forget it, and there may come a time when I can pay you back. But not now. Don't ask any questions. You have been a good fellow so far. Continue to be a good fellow till I get away. I'll tell you the truth—those men outside are after me."

I looked at him, astonished.

"Did they shoot you?"

"Yes, and I borrowed the first horse and buggy I saw to get away. Now, don't ask any more, but help me."

"What help do you want?"

"First, get me some whisky to take with me. Then put on this sombrero of mine, and pose here between the light and the window, with the curtain down, so your silhouette can be seen on the shade. I'll go. In an hour do as you please. I'll be out of their reach or dead with another bullet in me. Will you help me?"

"It would seem," I said, "to be my duty to ascertain if you are a lawbreaker; and to that end, perhaps, I should call in the men outside. On the other hand, it doesn't seem to be my affair, except to this extent. Apparently, I have unwittingly brought you into a trap. And it seems to be up to me to get you out. You certainly have done me no harm, and Mr. Kedlar's horse is in the barn where he belongs. Will you promise me not to touch anything belonging to Mr. Kedlar?"

"I promise you that, Carson."

I went to the kitchen cupboard and, after a hunt, I found some whisky. I filled my flask and gave it to him.

"You can't spare a gun of any kind, I suppose," he said.

"I don't like to lose my rifle. I've got a revolver."

"Let's have that. It's handier at close range than a rifle. Now, remember what I say, Carson. If you, or anybody close to you, ever needs a fighting arm, I'll be there. You needn't send for me — you wouldn't know where to send. Shake hands. I'm off."

I shook his hand; and without giving me any further information about himself, not even his name, he was off. I heard him go out by the kitchen door.

I had on his sombrero, and busied myself in various useless ways, keeping my shadow always on the window-shade. Once or twice I stepped into the other room to take a look outside, and always saw the moving lanterns of the men on guard.

When the hour had passed I grew weary of my task and lay down again on the bed.

It was about five o'clock in the morning when I heard Kedlar moving on the stairs. I got up, dressed, and met him.

"Have you heard anything strange during the night?" I asked.

"No. I slept like a log."

"Well, the house seems to be surrounded by strange men, and the guest we know nothing of is gone."

"Gone! Did he sneak away, saying nothing?"

"No. I was in his room when he went. I feared at first the men outside were robbers come to get the money you received in Winston. But the stranger said they were after him. I let him go. I did not feel sure just what my duty was."

"Oh, you did well! Let him go, by all means. If he is a desperado, let them find

him and take him somewhere else. We want no gun-play here. But, listen! By Heaven! the tramp of horses. They are coming, after all. Be ready. If we must fight, stand by me."

Just then there came a loud, imperative banging on the door.

CHAPTER VI.

A GRUFF SHERIFF.

Mr. Kedlar turned pale as the rattle of a riding-whip against the outer door continued.

"Why should you be afraid?" I asked. "Surely they are not after you!"

"Who knows who or what they are after?" asked Kedlar in a tremulous voice. He was not, so far as I could see, a remarkably courageous man. "You see, there must be robbers about or that stranger would never have been shot. And they may think I have the money with me."

"Well, they won't bother me. You remain in the background, and I will open the door."

He was about to retire to the dining-room. I had opened the door leading from the kitchen to the shed, and could hear more distinctly what was said outside.

"Open this door!" came an authoritative command. "I am the sheriff!"

"The sheriff! Jack Boreel!" gasped Mr. Kedlar, and he seemed actually to shrink in size.

"Well," I said angrily and impatiently, "have you committed a crime, that you are afraid of the sheriff?"

"No, but—that other one."

"What have we to do with that? Of course, he may be a murderer, for all we know. But we had nothing to do with it."

Just then there was the rustling of a woman's skirts in the kitchen doorway, and Minnie Kedlar entered the room.

"What is the trouble?" she asked calmly.

"A man outside demands admittance, and says he is the sheriff," I answered. "Shall I open the door?"

"I suppose the door must be opened, though I don't like either Sheriff Jack Boreel or his brother William. However, he represents the law, and must be obeyed. If you please."

I stepped to the shed door and threw it open. Outside, mounted on two fine horses, were two men who looked much alike. One of these was dressed in a serviceable riding-suit of khaki cloth, while the other wore a picturesque and dandified rig of velveteen.

On the breast of the one in khaki was a badge—the badge of the sheriff of Alvedo County; and on the breast of the other a deputy sheriff's badge. A quick glance beyond them showed me other horsemen in the background.

"Who are you?" demanded the sheriff, dismounting and striding inside the house.

He was a tall, powerful man, and his countenance denoted courage even to recklessness, but the lines of his mouth were hard and cruel.

"If it will do you any good to know," I answered, nettled by his manner, "my name is Walter Carson."

"Carson? Walter Carson? Any relation to Jim?"

"His cousin."

"What are you doing here?"

"That is a matter between my host, Mr. Kedlar, and myself, and does not concern you in the least."

"Does it not!" he exclaimed angrily. "Then perhaps, Mr. Walter Carson, cousin of Jim, you will explain to me where the Hon. Dick Carboy has hidden himself."

"Carboy! Dick Carboy!" I heard Kedlar gasp.

"Dick Carboy!" came in a hoarse whisper from Minnie.

"Yes," said the sheriff, with a sneer, "Dick Carboy. Do you deny that he is here?"

"There is nobody here," I said, "except Mr. Kedlar, his family, and myself."

"You lie! I say Dick Carboy is somewhere in this house."

"I am but a guest here," I explained, my blood boiling. "I have neither the right to request that you search the house, nor to kick you out of it. Were it my house, I would assuredly do the latter."

An angry flash passed over the sheriff's face. He stepped to the door.

"Bill, call one of the boys to hold the horses. Come in here. I want you."

The fellow called Bill, the one who wore the velveteen riding-suit, dismounted and, giving the reins of the two horses to one of the posse who had answered his call, entered the house.

I saw Minnie shrink when he came in as though he contaminated the very air she breathed and stifled her. I recalled the

few words I had heard, and surmised at once that this was Bill Boreel, the brother of the sheriff, who for some reason had a grudge against Mr. Kedlar.

"Bill, watch Kedlar and this fellow who claims to be a cousin of Jim Carson. I am going to search the house for Dick."

"All right," said the one called Bill.

We could hear the heavy boots of the sheriff as he tramped through the upper floor.

"I trust he will not alarm my wife," said Kedlar. "She is not quite herself after the events of last night."

"What happened last night?" asked Bill Boreel quickly.

"Why—nothing much."

"Here, you!" Bill went on, turning to me. "What happened? What brought you here for the night?"

"None of your business."

A black frown came over his face. Minnie Kedlar, who had been standing near, now brushed closer to me.

"Please don't anger him—for my sake," she whispered.

Here was the situation suddenly spread before me as clearly as a lawyer could make it in a brief.

Bill Boreel, I realized in that moment, had taken offense because his attentions to Minnie Kedlar had not been gracefully received. Perhaps he had gone so far as to demand her hand in marriage. In fact, the word demand had distinctly been used the night before by Minnie herself in speaking of the strained relations existing between Boreel and her father. I understood.

And now, instead of being insolent and independent, I found myself wondering in what way I could explain matters so that all blame, should there be any, would fall on my shoulders, and exonerate Kedlar, his wife, and Minnie. And after studying it over, it struck me that absolutely the best way to do this was to tell the exact truth.

But there was a sheriff to be dealt with, the superior officer of the deputy now watching Kedlar and me. I waited till he came thumping down the stairs.

"I can't find him in the house," reported the sheriff. "Yet, I am sure he was here last night."

"He was here," I said. "And now he is miles away from here."

"What! Who brought him here? Who helped him to escape?"

"I did both," I answered as calmly as I could, yet not able to keep a note of exultation from my voice.

"You! And a cousin of the biggest ranchman and cattle-raiser in Alvedo County? Did you know who you assisted to escape the law?"

"No. I never saw the man before."

"Why—why—it was Dick Carboy, the greatest cattle-thief in Arizona, with a reward of five thousand dollars on his head."

"I never heard of him," I said.

"I think you lie. At any rate, you will have a chance to make it clear before Judge McKinnon. I arrest you in the name of the law for aiding a criminal to escape. Bill, take him."

CHAPTER VII.

"WE'LL GET YOU YET!"

"OH!" I heard Minnie Kedlar gasp.

"Bill, put the irons on him," directed the sheriff.

Bill Boreel looked at his brother with a curious expression on his face.

"Don't you think, Jack," he said, "that if this fellow is really a cousin of Jim Carson, it would be just as well to cut out the wristlets?"

"I'm not afraid of Jim Carson. If his cousin sees fit to be a partner of the worst cattle-thief in Arizona, he takes his medicine the same as anybody else."

"I am not a partner of any cattle-thief," I said. "It is your own stupidity and hate that formulate such charges."

The sheriff turned red with anger.

"Then explain what you are doing here, and why you helped Dick Carboy escape."

"I refuse to explain anything to you. You have placed me under arrest. I am not, under the law, compelled to say anything to an arresting officer. You spoke of Judge McKinnon. Take me before him, and I will make my statement."

"But while we are taking you to Winston, Dick Carboy is getting farther away."

"That's your lookout, not mine. I am a prisoner. I refuse to speak until I am before the judge."

"Which way did he go? You can tell me that, and I will send my men after him."

"I refuse to say anything until I am before the judge."

"But you only make your own case worse. If you will tell me which way Car-

boy went, I will use my influence with the judge in your behalf."

"You and your influence may go to the deuce! I have no knowledge that the man who was here *was* Dick Carboy. You have placed me under arrest. I take advantage of the law."

"Then you will tell us nothing."

"I will tell you nothing—here."

A muttered curse came from the sheriff.

"Bring him along, then, Bill. We'll make him sweat for his obstinacy," he said.

I turned to Mr. Kedlar.

"This is not your fight, but mine," I told him. "But you may do me a favor, if you will. Ride to Jim's ranch and tell him I am under arrest, and ask him to come to Judge McKinnon's court in Winston as soon as possible."

Then I turned to the sheriff.

"I am ready."

The fact that I had sent for Jim seemed to make the sheriff feel uncomfortable. It was natural that the owner of the largest ranch in the county should wield considerable influence. But as I made no resistance to the arrest, rather insisting on it, as the best method of drawing the attention of the posse away from Kedlar and his family, he had nothing to do but continue as he had begun, although I could see that most of his roughness was brag and bluster.

I had never seen Judge McKinnon. I had seen justices of the peace in other parts of Arizona, most of them elderly, rough, but honest and fearless men; and, having seen them, I was not prepared for the surprise the sight of Judge McKinnon gave me.

He was a small man, not only in stature, but in every way except mentally. He was even delicate. His hair was white, as was his small mustache. His eyes were clear, keen, a dark blue. There was nothing stern about him. His whole appearance was one of kindliness.

It was three hours after we reached Winston that Judge McKinnon, after disposing of a few minor cases, was ready to hear ours.

"Well, sheriff," he said, "what is the charge against this prisoner?"

"Your honor well knows," began the sheriff, "the amount of trouble that your honor, I, and my posse have been put to in order to capture Dick Carboy, the notorious cattle-thief. We have been out a week at a time, but have never found where he and his followers have their hiding-place.

"It so happened yesterday that I was going down James Street, when at the corner of San Jose Street I met my brother. We stood talking a few minutes when we saw Dick Carboy come out of Babbit Brothers' banking house and go up James Street afoot. We followed, and he, looking around, started to run. We fired at him.

"He ran to the square and disappeared. We looked all over, but could find no trace of him. I got out several deputies, and they scoured Winston, but there was no sign of Carboy.

"Toward night I learned that Mr. Thomas Kedlar, the farmer on the Dopehead Mountain road, had lost a horse and buggy that had been hitched in front of the Winston Square Building, and he was getting a horse from Jake Banny to get home. I gathered a posse and we followed.

"There was every evidence that Carboy was in Kedlar's house. We roused Kedlar's hired man, a stupid sort of fellow, an immigrant, and he showed us Kedlar's horse, and the horse he got from Banny to ride home.

"We were sure then that Carboy was at Kedlar's, but also certain that Kedlar had had nothing to do with it.

"This morning we went to the house and found this man there. He refuses to give any account of himself further than to say that he is cousin to Jim Carson, the big ranchman."

The little judge turned his calm blue eyes on me.

"Is this so?" he asked mildly.

"So far as I know, everything the sheriff says is true."

"And are you really the cousin of Jim Carson?"

"I am, your honor. My name is Walter Carson. I am from New York, and am visiting my cousin on his ranch."

"Yet you spent the night, it seems, in Kedlar's house."

"I did, your honor."

"And you refuse to explain your presence there?"

"Not to your honor. Before I gave any explanation I was placed under arrest by the sheriff. Then I was not bound to make any statement to him."

"That is true. But you intimate that you have no objection to making such a statement."

"None whatever, your honor. The case is simple enough."

I then told him the entire story of my trip after sighting the "old man of the mountain," as the old sheep had been called, and my success in shooting him, my discovery of the horse and buggy, and the unconscious man in the buggy.

"Your honor," I continued, "I am a stranger here. I never had heard of Dick Carboy, and the man in the buggy to me was merely an unfortunate individual who needed home-care immediately. I did not know where he lived. The horse, like all old horses, knew the road. I let him have his way. He took us to Kedlar's farm.

"I had never even heard of Kedlar. I supposed the man in the buggy *was* Kedlar. I even put him to bed in Kedlar's room and dressed a bullet-wound in his side. This is explained now by the statement of the sheriff that he fired at Carboy in Winston. But Kedlar returned later, and even he did not know the man was Carboy.

"During the night we saw lights and men around the house. The man I had brought there unconscious wanted to leave. I had no authority or knowledge on which to stop him. I supposed the men surrounding the house were robbers after the money that Kedlar had received from Banny. I helped the stranger off. I was glad to see him go. I had brought him there without his acquiescence. I knew no reason why I should establish myself his jailer."

"Um! Your statement is clear and I believe it. I shall—"

"Your honor, Mr. James Carson," said an attendant.

My cousin was an imposing sort. He had ridden into Winston in the saddle. He wore a riding-suit that fitted him like a glove. He was well made, well knit together, and his handsome face surmounted a frame of which anybody might be proud. He was not tall, but there were evidences of iron muscles and an indomitable will that nobody could mistake.

"Ah!" said Judge McKinnon. "Mr. Carson, is the prisoner your cousin?"

"He is, your honor, and the best fellow in the world."

"I believe it. You don't think he would knowingly and willingly assist a cattle-thief to escape justice?"

"Your honor," laughed Jim, "my cousin Walter is from New York. He doesn't know what a cattle-thief is."

"I believe that also. Mr. Carson, you are free."

I passed close to the brother of the sheriff, after thanking the judge. Bill Boreel bent toward me and whispered:

"Don't get fresh. We'll get you yet."

CHAPTER VIII.

AN APPEAL FOR HELP.

With Jim's assistance I obtained a horse from the same Mr. Banny who had paid the money to Kedlar, and we two cousins rode to the ranch side by side.

"For a tenderfoot, Walt," said Jim, "you are doing fairly well—yes, fairly well. After a stay in Alvedo County of two weeks, to get tangled up with the sheriff for assisting the greatest cattle-thief in the county to escape, you are doing, as I say, fairly well. It seems to me the only thing for me to do is to tie you to Julie's apron-strings and let her teach you a few things about Arizona."

"I know enough about Arizona," I replied rather hotly. "I know I've got the old man of the mountain at Kedlar's, and I want his horns."

"Do you mean the old he-goat or sheep, or whatever he is?"

"Oh, there's no 'whatever he is' about it to me. I know I shot the big old grandfather mountain-sheep, and he is in Kedlar's barn. As I remarked before, I want his horns. I'm going to stop at the farm and get him. I brought the whole carcass along so there could be no doubt."

"Are you going to Kedlar's simply for the horns or to see—"

"Well, go on," I said, as he hesitated.

"Kedlar's girl is mighty pretty."

"Is she? Well, inasmuch as I saw her only under stress of great excitement, I did not have a chance to notice much. So, if you are not in a tremendous hurry we'll stop at Kedlar's and get the sheep, and I will take the opportunity to verify your statement."

Jim's face took on a troubled look.

"See here, Walt," he said, "don't get rash. Kedlar's girl Minnie is all right, but —she's mortgaged, so I understand."

"I don't say I understand your Arizona terms. Do men mortgage their daughters down here?"

"Oh, not the way you take it. But I have understood that Bill Boreel, the sheriff's brother, is to marry her."

"I don't think I admire William. What

is he? Anything more than deputy to his brother?"

"Rather. He acts as deputy sheriff only when there is something big and desperate on the carpet. Bill Boreel is by profession a gambler. And he has a certain political power that is not to be despised."

"Didn't seem to worry Judge McKinnon any."

"Nothing worries him. He was elected by the people. And he is rich enough to be independent. But—you've seen little of this girl. Leave her alone for your own safety and—ours."

"Huh! Is the biggest ranch-owner in Alvedo County afraid of Bill Boreel?"

"Well—physically I am not, as you well know. But the sheriff has a great deal of power. You see, we ranchmen and cattle-raisers depend on him for our authority to fight for what is our own. Now, we have tried a dozen times to shoot or capture this same Dick Carboy."

"Well?"

"You go to work and set him free when Boreel almost has him dead to rights. Oh, I'll admit that you did it innocently enough. But let the matter rest where it is. This is part of a free country, and about the freest part of it. There is nothing to compel Minnie Kedlar to marry Bill Boreel unless she wants to do so. But you have already won the ill will of both brothers. Call it off."

"Now, Jim," I said solemnly, "I didn't come out here from New York to make any trouble for you and Julie. But by the same token I didn't come here to be afraid of any domineering gambler named Bill Boreel. I propose to get that mountain-sheep. If you don't want to go to Kedlar's with me I'll go alone."

"Oh, it isn't that. I'll go with you. Julie will be pleased and surprised to know you got the beast when the best hunters in Arizona have failed. I'm not afraid for myself. I have ridden and fought by the side of Sheriff Boreel too often for him to doubt me. I am thinking only of you."

"Don't do it. I've done quite a lot of thinking for myself since I was a boy. But we are nearing Kedlar's now. I suppose they are still in something of a panic."

And they were. As we rode in through the same gateway through which old Tom had dragged Dick Carboy and myself, the sheep-dog came to meet us, and his appearance was neither frisky nor fierce. He had a wobegone look that gave me warning of gloom in the house.

"I'll wait," said Jim. "Get your old sheep and hurry up."

I dismounted at the shed door, and knocking merely as a preliminary warning, strode inside the kitchen. Minnie Kedlar was there, and her eyes looked as though she had been weeping.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "They did not put you in jail! I am so glad! So glad."

"But why should they put me in jail?" I queried. "I did nothing against the law knowingly. Judge McKinnon is a mighty fair judge and dismissed the sheriff's complaint. Is your mother well, after all the excitement?"

"No, she is not well. I am worried. You know, Mr. Carson, my mother is not a well woman at any time. She is inclined to be nervous, even hysterical. And now she is confined to her room—her bed."

"I am sorry to hear this. And your father?"

"He is out on the farm somewhere."

"Then he is well. Now, I don't want to disturb you, but I am going to the barn after that old sheep. I want the horns. It is a source of pride that I got him when your hunters could not."

She smiled.

"It speaks well for your marksmanship. But—"

Here her face grew sober.

"Well?" I said

"Keep that clear eye and steady hand. You may need both if you remain in Arizona long."

"Why?" I asked.

"You little know the two men you have defeated to-day. I grant that Sheriff Boreel is a good sheriff. He is a terror to evil-doers. But he holds his place largely through his brother's power, and that power is not always exerted for the best purposes."

"I am not afraid of Bill Boreel."

She sighed.

"But you are," I added.

"Yes—to speak the truth—I am."

"Well, don't be any more. I am going to stay in Arizona quite a while yet. And I want you to promise me that you will let me know the moment you see danger ahead for you."

"Or for you," she said quickly.

"Oh, there is not likely to be any danger to me. Now, I'll get the sheep. Jim will be impatient."

I rode to the barn, flung the old carcass across the back of my horse, and joined Jim. We reached the ranch about four o'clock. Our arrival and the big sheep caused a sensation that lasted two days.

I had been out taking a stroll after dinner. So far as I knew, everything was quiet, and likely to stay so. I went to the dining-room.

Jim stood at the mantelpiece reading a letter that evidently did not please him.

"Your friend Carboy is making good time," he said. "A mere bullet-wound in the side doesn't seem to interfere with his activities. Read this."

He handed me the letter. I read as follows:

CARSON:

Dick Carboy is at it again in the Green River Valley. One hundred head from Horton's ranch. Get your men together for tomorrow. We ride a hundred strong. I will pick you up on the way.

JACK BOREEL, Sheriff.

"Well?" said Jim, as I handed back the letter.

"This came by messenger," I remarked. "Anything further known?"

Nothing."

"Well, I'll have a good night's sleep before you start. If I did wrong once I can right it. I'll go with you."

"Good. You are an addition with that aim of yours. By the way, here is a note left by a messenger for you."

I took the note. It read as follows:

MR. WALTER CARSON:

You are the only person to whom I can appeal in my helplessness. William Boreel has been here and has made a threat that unless Minnie marries him at once, he will bring charges against my husband for harboring the cattle thief. Will you help me? I do not know what to do. My husband looks strong but he is no fighter. I depend on you. Minnie's life would be ruined if she was married to a gambler. Can you come to me at once?

CAROLINE KEDLAR.

CHAPTER IX.

PERPLEXITY.

THIS note, with its strong appeal for help, almost struck me with panic. I stood with my elbow on the mantelpiece, the letter in my hand, and something of my feelings must have exhibited itself in my face.

"Your news seems unpleasant," said Jim. "Is there anything wrong? I knew it was from a woman. Are you involved in any way?"

"Why—not as you probably mean, Jim," I answered. "But read the letter for yourself. It puts me, as you will readily understand, in something of a quandary."

My hand was rather unsteady as I reached it toward Jim with the note. He looked at me quizzically as he took it. When he had read it he gave me a long, steady, searching look.

"Walter," he said, in his usually quiet voice, "has anything like love passed between you and this Kedlar girl?"

"Nothing, Jim, I do assure you. I have seen her only twice, and that on the night I was there with Dick Carboy, and when I stopped to get the sheep."

He grunted.

"Then, forsooth, because you take a wounded and unconscious man to a farmhouse, and he turns out to be a notorious cattle-thief, you must burden yourself with the affairs of the farmer's family."

I felt that my cheeks were flushed.

"You must remember, Jim," I said, "*I* have not taken any such burden on my shoulders, nor have you heard me speak in any way to warrant such an idea on your part."

"True enough, Walt, old fellow. Forgive me. The absurdity of the thing led me to speak hastily. We have time for a fresh cigar. Sit down again."

I lit another cigar, and took a willow-chair.

"And yet," I said, resuming the conversation, "the appeal does make a strong impression on me. You will acknowledge that I am at least in a peculiar and difficult position."

"I fail to see that you are in any particular position as regarding these Kedlars. What do you mean?"

"Why—I don't know that I can explain just what I do mean. But as you must know, I have no very warm feeling for either William Boreel or his brother, the sheriff."

"Personally, as I told you a short time ago, I have no love for either of them," rejoined my cousin. "Yet the fact remains that Jack Boreel does make a good sheriff."

"Granted. But the excellence of Jack Boreel as sheriff does not, it seems to me, warrant his brother Bill, a notorious gambler, annoying a girl with his attentions."

"Well, if he asks for her hand in marriage all she has to do is to say no."

"He has asked, and she has said no. Didn't you read carefully the threat he has made?"

"As to that, there is a law in Arizona as well as in New York. We do not persecute girls down here."

"You mean you don't persecute them here any more than in other places. A man in the position of Bill Boreel can accomplish a great deal in the way of persecution if he sets himself about it."

"True enough. But you are a stranger here. Kedlar is an old settler. He is no weak man, or he would never have made a small farm pay, and I suppose he has done that."

"I confess," I answered, "that I don't know just what would be expected of me. I never heard myself rated very high as a duelist, and I certainly could not be expected to shoot Boreel from ambush in cold blood."

"Scarcely your line. Let me think of this a minute. It is possible that they are playing on your reasons for disliking Boreel, and would expect you to involve yourself with him in a quarrel and kill him."

"The probabilities all being in favor of being killed myself."

"Sure—if not by Boreel, by law. No, there is something else. Did you say anything to them about your fortune? The extent of it, I mean."

"Nothing was said about money."

"But they know I am rich, and you presumably so. Now, to me this looks like a scheme to hasten you into a trap—to get you, a rich man, to marry Minnie, a comparatively poor girl. It has been done before, I believe."

"A good many times, Jim. But I can't believe that of Mrs. Kedlar. The woman was probably panic-stricken when she wrote. And you know I have a certain responsibility in the matter, after all."

"What—as to who shall marry Minnie?" queried Jim.

"No, not in regard to Minnie exactly. But, you see, I was the one who took Carboy to the house. I was the one who let him go. It seems to me that I *am* in a large measure responsible for the consequences of that act."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Jim. "You didn't take Carboy there. He took himself. He stole Kedlar's horse. The horse went to Kedlar's farm. It seems to me that, instead of you, the entire responsibility for consequences rests on Carboy."

"There is something in what you say, Jim. Still, I was conscious, and Carboy was not. I made myself quite at home at Kedlar's."

"Quite a common thing in Arizona."

I felt that I was losing ground against him, yet there remained a sense of duty I could neither get rid of nor explain. The idea of knight errantry did not enter into my considerations.

Minnie Kedlar was a very pretty girl. Still, having seen her but twice, I could form no idea of her character. I was not a heady youth to fall in love at first sight, and was no more in love with Minnie Kedlar than I was with her mother. But there clung to me the thought, and the thought gradually assumed the proportions of a conviction, that, having brought about the possibility of the threat made by Boreel, I was in duty bound in some way to make that threat inoperative.

"What's in your noddle now?" asked Jim, after a pause. "Any new idea?"

"Why—I am up a tree, that's all. And yet another thought does come to me, now that you demand one. Do you think it right for me to go out to shoot Carboy?"

(To be continued.)

HUMAN WEAKNESS.

We need not say that he is weak;
For aught that we may know,
His life is one long battle-field
Where armies come and go.

Frank H. Sweet.

All for a Black Mallard.

BY FREDERICK HEWITT.

A Hunting Story of Splitting Ice-Floes, Blinding Snow, and That Fatal Drowsiness Which in This Case Had a Strange Interruption.

WH-RRR! W-h-rr! W-h-rr! "They're coming! Keep low!" Taylor whispered tensely, the wind whistling in his teeth.

The two men crouched behind a blind made out of grubs and flecked with ice.

"All right," Faulkner breathed low. "You take the leader."

W-h-rrr! W-h-rrr! W-h-rrr! W-h-rrr! The wings whirred through the fast darkening gloom.

The two men sprang up.

Bang! Bang! went the shotguns.

"I nailed the leader!" Taylor cried. "There she goes swimming out toward the ice!" Bang! Bang! "Fixed her for good that time!"

"I guess I missed the whole bunch," Faulkner muttered disconsolately. "No other ducks down. They're powerful brutes, those mallards!"

"Great heavens, the way the wind's rising we're going to have a time to pull up the decoys!" Taylor muttered, still standing up in the piercing cold. "We better yank 'em up at once!"

The decoys were swinging jerkily to their anchors in the choppy waters of Gull Lake. Two of them had already broken loose and drifted to the ice, which circled round the free water, into which a stream swiftly flowed a little north of where the hunters had their blind.

"It's too bad we've got to pick up so early," Faulkner grumbled. "There'll be another bunch come in soon. It's just the time for these mallards. But you're right, Harry," he added slowly. "It's colder than the deuce, and we're like to freeze to death if we don't get a move on."

The men hurriedly pulled out a flimsily constructed wooden boat from behind some rushes, and launched her in the lake. Taylor took the oars, but there was nothing to do for a few seconds except to let the craft blow toward the decoys.

"I'll have to backwater while you lug 'em in, Joe," Taylor cried above the voice of the growing storm.

Night came down with a swoop, and with it a blizzard of snow, almost blinding the men in the shell of a boat. Though Taylor tried to hold back with all his might, the craft kept drifting rapidly toward the ice about twenty yards from where the decoys danced in the black water. Faulkner yanked up the decoys as fast as he could without coiling up the strings, and threw them into the bottom of the frail craft.

"By George, we're shipping too much water. Hurry, Joe!" Taylor urged uneasily.

"My hands are numb!" Joe called back. "I'm puttin' all the steam on I can! This is fierce!" he muttered, as another wave lapped over the boat.

"Now for the mallard!" Taylor exclaimed, as the last decoy was pulled up.

"You'll never find it in this gale!" Joe warned, starting hurriedly to bail.

"I wouldn't miss it for a ten-spot! It was a beaut!" Harry answered, as he let the boat be carried toward the ice. "You grab the mallard quick when I spot it! It'll be right near the edge of the ice. I'll put your end of the boat that way."

Though the wind was blowing a gale, and the snow falling in huge flakes, Taylor kept on his quest.

"There it is!" he cried excitedly, keeping the boat level with the waves. "Now! There! I'll hold her! Quick!"

Joe leaned forward and grabbed the mallard that had been washed on to the ice, but it was more than a man could do to hold the boat. It rose high on a wave! Crash! With a jarring shock the frail craft dropped on the ice, badly stove.

"Great Guns! We're in for it now!" Taylor cried, squaring his jaw. "Quick! There's nothing to do but to take our guns and walk along the ice and back to the shore!"

"You bet! And the quicker the better!"

Joe shouted, handing the mallard to Taylor. The latter shoved it inside his hunting-coat, and began cautiously walking toward the middle of the lake, in order to round a strip of clear water, after which he could turn shoreward.

He had not gone many steps, however, when there was a groaning and rending of the ice.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The wind had done its work! The ice was torn up into floes, and commenced slowly jamming its way out toward the farther shore two miles opposite. Joe was caught on one floe, Taylor on another.

"Keep up your courage!" Taylor shrieked, as he saw his companion disappear into the inky night.

"You bet, old man!" Joe yelled back.

"Let us make a good fight!" shouted Taylor in response. "If we don't see each other again— I'm sor—ry for goin' after that mallard! For—" His voice choked.

"All right, old scout!" He heard a distant cry. "Good—"

Taylor had played the game for many years, but he realized that he had never been so much up against it as now! Generally cautious, this time he had been reckless. All for a black mallard, too!

It had been madness! And it was his fault that Joe had been caught! And Joe had a wife and children! He gritted his teeth and began hitting his arms crosswise to keep up circulation. The cold gnawed into his thick neck, and pierced through his clothing!

"Not one chance in a hundred of being saved!" he muttered. "Not even one in a million!"

It was too dark for him to step anywhere except toward what he believed was the center of the floe he was on. One thing, however, that encouraged him was that the floe seemed large and solid.

Suddenly, Taylor pricked up his ears. Yes, there it was again!

A wailing, forlorn whine came across the boisterous, freezing wind. He turned round and put his mittened hands trumpet-shaped. "Back, Satan!" he shouted. "Back!"

He knew it would be of no use as the little spaniel would not hear him against the wind. In his excitement at the rending of the ice he had forgotten his dog that had doubtless been tracking a rabbit just when the guns were fired off at the mallards. He hoped the dog would not dare any of the floating ice, but that it might find shelter somewhere, though from Hickory Point, where the hunters had been shooting, it was several miles to any habitation.

Turning from thoughts of his pet, the horrible predicament he was in himself began to prey upon Taylor's mind. If the wind was taking him straight across the lake it would take a long time to get to the other side, at the rate his floe was traveling. Often it crunched on other floes ahead, but with the velocity of the wind would get free again and push on. There was a bare chance that he might reach the shore, but it was much more probable that his floe would get jammed out somewhere in the big lake, and if so, in the inky darkness it would be mere madness to try to pick his way forward, as at any time the ice might break under his weight, or he might drop into some fissure.

Gradually the cold began to nip his face and ears. He took off his hunting-cap and pulled the laps down. Then, though feeling that he might break through the ice at any moment, he started vigorously to slap his chest with his hands and stamp cautiously with his rubber boots.

His thoughts reverting to Joe, he picked up his pearl-sighted gun and fired off two cartridges. He listened eagerly, but no signal came back.

Where *was* Joe? Like a hideous dream he pictured him stark and stiff under the icy waters of the lake. One thing he thought in Joe's favor was, that as he had been blown to the southward, his floe might strike upon a little island about a fifth of a mile from the opposite shore.

While thus thinking, the wind became so strong that Taylor had to crouch down on his hands and knees, with the spume from the water back of him dashing over his snow-covered floe and trickling under his feet and hands. As soon as it touched him, however, it quickly froze, and every little while he was obliged to tear his mittens away from the ice.

The icy wind; the enveloping darkness; the boom of floe crashing upon floe, all helped to strike terror into his subconscious mind, though with his reason he tried bravely to keep calm and collected. Yet thoughts of impending death crept into his mind.

It would be an easy handing in of his checks, though. Just a plunge into the cavernous waters! A quick panoramic view of his past life! Then oblivion!

What good would it do thinking about it? He changed his posture, and stood up sideways to the wind so that it would not have so much purchase against him. The cold gimleted its way to his skin.

Why had not he thought of it before? He fumbled into an inner pocket and pulled out a pint bottle of whisky, kept for just such emergencies. He tossed down about half the contents, keeping the rest in case it was more necessary to take it later.

The wind instead of growing quieter began to get more demoniacal in its violence. Time seemed an eternity. Several times his floe swayed so that he thought he would be pitched off. Twice he was toppled backward, but cautiously picked himself up again.

Which way was he drifting? Where was his location on the lake? Where was Joe? What a fool he had been over that one mallard! He guessed his hunting days were over. The cold would finish him before long, anyhow. If he didn't get to shelter before the effects of the whisky wore off he would freeze to death.

Great heavens, he was getting chilled to the bone! He exercised his arms and feet again and again. But each time it got harder to do so. He was becoming numbed through and through. The blackness, the merciless wind, the unsafe ice, the treacherous lake, and his utter sense of desolation and fear for Joe, all combined to make him hopeless.

He could stand up no longer. He sprawled in the soppy, freezing snow. He guessed he was all in. For several minutes he lay there inert, hopeless.

Crash!

Taylor sprang up in the darkness only to find that the floe he had been sprawling on was split in half! Down he sank in the icy water! Terror stimulated him! He spread his arms out wide to grab at the ice on either side! What had happened? His feet were on a firm bottom! He must be near the shore! The water did not come over his hip-boots. He was saved!

Cautiously he crawled out on to the ice in front of him, and helped by the wind, in a few seconds gained the shore. He stumbled up an incline, and sought refuge from the wind behind the huge trunk of a tree.

Freezing water covered his coat and face. He must find warmth at once or he would be chilled to death! But he had struck a side of the big Michigan lake with which he was not familiar. Still he believed there was a farmhouse not far away. He pulled out his flask and drained the remainder of the liquor. Then he stamped on the ground and exercised his arms.

After several minutes he contrived to get up some circulation. He believed if he walked a few hundred yards straight on that he would find a road leading to a dwelling.

He scrambled forward stiffly. How good it was to be on land! Then a dull ache came over him as he thought of Joe. Was he saved?

He plunged on and on, sometimes tripping over brushwood, at others colliding with saplings or trees. Eventually he came to a clearing. He could see a little better now, as the woods at his back gave him shelter from the wind, and the snow was less blinding.

Starved for want of food, and weak with spent emotions, he dragged his way forward. It must have been hours since the accident happened.

Crack! Horrors! He was again on the ice! In terror he drew back to the land, trembling with fright. Where was he? Now he understood. He hadn't made the farther shore of the lake at all. He had simply struck the island!

Weak and hopeless, he sank down on a snow-covered log. His spirit was broken. Nothing, not even life itself, would make him dare to travel any farther on the ice. If he did so, he might come to open water any moment.

His physical courage had snapped. Still he tried to think coolly. He would at least fire off his gun. Ah! His gun was at the bottom of the lake. In his excitement he had let it drop when he slid in. To go back in the darkness and grope for it, with water more than up to his armpits, would be madness. He was cold enough as it was.

He could scramble around, though, and get enough stuff together to make a fire. He slowly fumbled in his pockets to find matches. There were none. He remembered he had lent his match-case to Joe just before the mallards came in. There might be some in the small outer pocket of his hunting-coat.

Yes, there were a few. He pulled them out with numbed fingers, and he examined them eagerly. A thin smear of red came off their tips as he tried them with his other hand. They were all wet!

He threw them down in abject hopelessness, and started to pace back and forth. But all his strength seemed to have gone from him. A time came when he could not lift his legs any longer.

He sat down again on the log, and beat his hands on the snow-covered wood. But the greedy chill had so bitten into them that exercise was of little use. Pound as he might, feeling was gone. They were apparently quite lifeless.

With hope blasted; the icy darkness of the night oppressing him, and his spirit crushed, a terrible feeling of somnolence came over him. He tried to shake it off. His head wabbled. His back gave out.

Sinking to the ground he stretched himself out by the log. At least he was sheltered from the wind. A thin blanket of snow gradually enveloped him. Pain ceased. He felt very numb and sleepy; that was all. Then he dozed off.

Then he came to with a start! He could not have been asleep over a few minutes, because he could still move his arms. What was it that had awakened him?

He was so sleepy that he shut his eyes again. There it was once more! Something hot touching his face! He was now wide awake. He tried to put out an arm and feel what was near him. Again that hot touch on his face! He felt some fur this time. It was Satan!

"Satan!" he gurgled. "Poor fellow! How did you—find me?"

It flashed into his mind that the little spaniel must have traveled right around the lake and cut across to the island from the mainland.

The ice would perhaps bear him to the shore. The instinct for self-preservation dominated him. He struggled up, and tried to lurch forward, but again sank down.

It was too late! He was too numb and weak to struggle across the frozen surface to the shore. Even if there were no air-holes, he figured that the ice might not bear his weight, even though it had that of the dog.

The latter set up a sharp series of barks. Its paws were ice-coated, and it was about worn out with its long journey.

What was that? Taylor strained his eyes. Was it a light? No. Yes! There it was again! It was moving. The dog again barked vigorously. The light was moving toward him!

A spasm of hysterics ran through the man. He almost laughed aloud. If only Joe could be saved as well! The flicker of light was coming steadily onward. Voices sounded. He again picked himself, but once more sprawled down in the snow.

The third time he struggled up. The light was quite close now. A gaunt figure came through the gloom. The dog leaped about as if mad. Taylor hobbled forward. He saw a hand reach out toward him.

By the light from the lantern he outlined a drawn face and a pair of eyes veiled with a mingling of horror and delight. The man looked ten years older than when he had last seen him. He put out his hand. The other took it in his clasp.

"Joe! Joey!" Taylor gurgled, with a half-sob.

"Harry, old boy," Joe whispered tensely.

"How did—" Taylor began jerkily.

"It's all like a wild dream," Joe replied. "I jumped from floe to floe. Then the unbroken ice bore me. Struck shore 'way down from here. Found Collins up at his place. Warmed up a bit. Thought we'd try to look for you. Met the dog. He must have smelled you. He dived right off. We followed his tracks. Come, we must get you to shelter. The ice will bear. If it don't Collins says there's not over four feet of water between here and shore. Hard bottom. Come!"

"Collins, take that out of my pocket, will yer?" Taylor asked, turning to Joe's companion.

The man stepped forward, and pulled out of the hunter's inner pocket one black mallard, and put it in his own coat.

"It was all for that feller we nearly lost our lives, Joey," Taylor muttered, as he tottered forward across the ice toward warmth and shelter.

THE WAY OF IT.

ONCE I met four philosophers
Who argued all day long;
And each one thought that he was right,
And all the others wrong!

W. Barclay Smith.

THE FIGHTING STREAK.

BY WILLIAM H. GREENE.

The Story of the Virginian Who Was Summoned Home from Paris in 1861, What He Was Expected To Do, and How He Did It in His Own Way.

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE.)

CHAPTER I.

A SUDDEN CALL HOME.

I WAS really very much annoyed when I got a letter from my father requesting me to come home at once. Of course the United States might be in an unsettled condition, and worse times coming, as he said, but I didn't see what I could do about it.

In fact, it seemed to me that it would be much better for me to stay on in Paris and finish my studies as soon as possible. I was in the midst of a most interesting course of reading on art history, was working in old Père Morquette's life class, and had just started a large canvas which I intended to call "Nymph and Satyr," and which I hoped would attract some attention at the next Academy exhibition.

I had been abroad for three years, part of the time at Heidelberg, and part of the time traveling about, but I had not yet done Italy at all thoroughly, and had not intended to return to America for several years. My father could not have found a more inopportune time to ask me to go back, but his letter left little room for argument.

He put it that he was in difficulties and needed my help, and though I did not really believe there was anything seriously wrong, I could hardly refuse his request.

Naturally I had read a good deal in the foreign papers about the political situation in the United States, but most of these articles appeared to be very sensational, and the whole subject was so far removed from matters in which I was interested that I paid little attention to it. I had never cared for politics, considering them scarcely an occupation for a gentleman. So, while I knew that the question of slavery was being agitated, my ideas on the subject were extremely vague.

I supposed it was a matter that the politicians could settle among themselves, and in the meantime, of course, the newspapers would make their profit out of it, but I had other things to think about, such as my studies and my work.

I was, therefore, very little prepared for the conditions which I found to exist when I landed in New York, about the middle of April, 1861. When I left the other side there had been considerable talk of a probable war between the North and the South, but I had put this down as more sensationalism. On my arrival I found that hostilities had already broken out.

Most of the Southern States had seceded from the Union, Fort Sumter had been fired upon, and war had been declared. Everywhere was the bustle of preparation; companies of soldiers marching in the streets, and the crowds cheering them, mounted officers galloping here and there, bands playing and flags flying.

I was obliged to remain in New York twenty-four hours, and I spent most of this time strolling about and listening to bits of conversation on the all-important topic. I found that a good many people considered that the Southerners were entirely within their rights in refusing to give up slavery, which was their means of livelihood, and without which they would be ruined, while others could not see this side of the question at all, and advocated the total abolition of slave-holding in all the States.

These were the ones who were most enthusiastic in cheering every time they saw a uniform, crying: "Down with tyranny! Freedom forever!" etc., sometimes causing disturbances in the streets, which the police were obliged to quell.

The soldiers themselves seemed to share none of this wild enthusiasm. They were the ones who had to do the actual fighting,

and they went about their duties with a businesslike air, cheerful enough, but quiet. There were many arguments on the streets and in the cafés, which sometimes ended in fights, but as a rule the crowds were good-natured.

The whole scene, though interesting in a way, was sufficiently distasteful to me, for I considered war a barbarous relic, handed down to us from barbarous times—a cruel, unnecessary, and absurdly childish way of settling a dispute between civilized people. And I could readily imagine that a civil war might be many times more horrible in its details and more disastrous in its effects than an ordinary war between two hostile governments.

I remember thinking, as I looked out of my window before retiring that night, and watched several companies of volunteer infantry march past, how many of these young men, who went into this thing so gaily, prompted either by the spirit of adventure or a mistaken idea of patriotism, would return crippled, broken in health, and incapacitated for the future, their whole lives ruined—and how many would not return at all.

And the men who had brought on the war—politicians on both sides—would sit quietly in their offices, reaping the profits and usurping the glory. I was very sure of myself in those days, and my thoughts on this subject were very bitter. Later I was to learn that this also, like the matter of freeing the slaves, and in fact all other questions, had many sides to be considered, and could be viewed from many standpoints.

Next morning I started for the South. I might as well begin now to explain a few facts in regard to myself, and get that part over with as soon as possible.

My name is Warren Berkley, and my family is one of the oldest and best in the State of Virginia. I do not mean to boast of this, for I consider that a man's personal merits are what count, rather than any connections he may lay claim to, though one naturally takes a certain pride in the quality of his ancestors. The Berkleys had always owned a lot of land, since Colonial times, and my father, Robert Berkley, now ran one of the largest and most profitable cotton and tobacco plantations in the State, and owned a large number of slaves.

He had been a very indulgent father to me, perhaps because I was an only child. My mother died when I was a very small boy, and my father had always made a point of taking a personal interest in my studies and recreations.

Seeing that my tastes lay in the direction of art and literature, he had sent me abroad to complete my education along these lines, though I think he would rather have seen me enter on a military or commercial career. We often had friendly arguments on many different topics, for my views and tastes were quite opposite to his on most points, and I had a young man's tendency to consider my ideas "advanced," and his "old-fashioned."

But he always showed an indulgent understanding and tolerance of my boyish "smartness," a trait in him on which I now look back with the utmost admiration and gratitude.

When I arrived at Berkley Hall I was affectionately greeted by my father, and ceremoniously presented to a beautiful young lady whom I could hardly believe was Julia Lorraine, the tomboy companion of my younger days. Three years had changed her from a wiry, tousle-headed girl, to a very beautiful woman—one of the loveliest I had ever seen.

When I told her something to this effect, she returned the compliment by saying that I had not changed a bit—though I flattered myself that I had brought back from Paris a certain foreign air of distinction.

Julia was my father's ward, and the daughter of one of his oldest friends, Major Frank Lorraine, who had been killed in the Mexican War. She was without near relatives, but had been left a comfortable fortune, which my father had managed for her, and, I think, considerably increased through investment at different times.

There had always been a sort of intangible, unspoken understanding at home that a marriage between Julia and myself would be distinctly the desirable thing, and very gratifying to my father. I think both Julia and I had always considered it as an ultimate, but remote, probability.

I had never given the matter much thought, but had rather sought to put it off indefinitely, as its prearrangement had somewhat detracted from any romance the affair might otherwise have possessed. But now, after my long absence, to return and find her so wonderfully changed, 'gave a different aspect to the case, and I felt a sudden dutiful inclination to accede to my father's wishes as soon as possible.

I had noticed his complacent smile of approval when I expressed my admiration in a rather neat compliment at our first meeting, and I made up my mind at once to do everything I could to please him in this matter.

Next morning, when he called me into his private office for a chat, I expected him to bring up the subject, but it was about other and graver matters he wished to talk, and our discussion turned toward the ever-present topic of the war.

CHAPTER II.

REFUSING A COMMISSION.

WHEN I went into the office, which was a large room built into the side of the house, I found my father apparently swamped in a litter of papers which were scattered about on the floor and piled high on the desk in front of him. His usually placid countenance was marred by a frown, and there was a worried look in his eyes which I had never seen before. Upon seeing me, however, he immediately assumed a more cheerful expression, motioned me to a chair, and offered me a cigar, which I took and lit.

"Sit down, son," he said, "and let's have a little talk."

His tone was that of a man about to indulge in a friendly chat, but I felt that serious matters were to be discussed. I knew he wanted to explain things in his own way, so I simply waited.

"You probably gathered from my letter," he continued, "that things are not going along quite as smoothly as I could wish."

I nodded, but still refrained from interrupting.

"Well, son," he said, the worried look returning to his face, "things are a heap worse now than they were when I wrote that letter. This war has been mighty bad for business."

"So I should expect," I remarked.

"Quite so. You see, practically all my cotton and tobacco was sent to the Philadelphia, New York, and Boston markets. The Southern ports are now blockaded, railroads tied up, and this antislavery movement has caused my rascally niggers to make a lot of trouble. Some of them have actually run away. Bales of cotton are lying in my warehouses awaiting shipment, and crops are spoiling in the fields. In fact, son, everything is at a standstill. Markets may open later in the South, but we are in a bad location. A lot of this war is going to be fought right in this neighborhood, I reckon."

"There's a lot of talk in the North about emancipating all the slaves," I said.

"They'll have to lick us first," he replied defiantly.

"Of course. But wouldn't it be a good plan, as long as business is being held up, and they are shirking and running away, to sell most of them off now? After the war, whenever business improves, you can easily buy more."

"I have been selling a good many, but they bring no kind of prices now," he replied. "I have also sold some land, to keep things going, but that brought less than half its real value. Julia's money is safely banked, I'm glad to say. She urges me to use it in any way I see fit, as if it were my own, but that, of course, is entirely out of the question."

"Certainly," I agreed.

Then came the part that was a bit of a surprise to me.

"Now, what I wanted to suggest to you, son, after explaining the condition our affairs are in," my father went on, "is that, though I have always hoped that you and Julia might some time be married, it would hardly do for you to propose to her now, as I suspect you have been intending to do, you rascal."

"But why not, sir?" I asked.

"Because you are in financial difficulties," he said quietly.

"I see," said I, though I could scarcely keep from smiling at his quixotic ideas, as compared with those in vogue on the other side. I secretly resolved at least to do what I could to prepare the way for a proposal later.

"And now," continued my father, with a pleased expression, "I wanted to tell you that I have an offer of a commission for you in a volunteer regiment under General Jackson."

This was the biggest surprise of all.

"A commission?" I gasped stupidly.

"Nothing less than a captaincy," he replied, apparently expecting me to be overcome with joy.

"But I don't want any commission," I said emphatically. "I don't believe in this, or any other war. It is a relic of savagery, totally opposed to all ideas of advancement and civilization. It is wholesale, legalized

murder, and I will have nothing to do with it."

It was my father's turn to be surprised. He listened to this burst of eloquence, and gazed at me for a moment in blank astonishment.

"War," I proceeded, warming to my subject, "is a disgrace to humanity and an insult to our intelligence. It is a ridiculous way of settling a difference between two nations or parties, and is generally brought on by scheming politicians, for their own personal gain. It is—"

"But," said my father, recovering himself and interrupting my flow of speech, "what else can we do? I am too old to enlist myself. There may be some truth in what you say, theoretically. But I'm sure that you can't refuse to fight for your country."

"I understood it was against my country you wanted me to fight," I put in.

"The South is your country, sir," he answered, flushing, "and it is being oppressed and humiliated. I repeat, sir, that you cannot refuse to fight, and if necessary to die, for the South."

"But I can refuse, sir," I said, "and I do—most decidedly. I have no taste for fighting, and no desire to die for a long time to come."

"Are you afraid to fight, sir?" he asked angrily.

"I am sure I don't know, sir," I replied. "I might be more or less afraid, when the time for actual fighting came. But I have no desire to take other people's lives or risk my own. The whole thing is barbarous and childish."

"Are those the kind of ideas you have picked up abroad?"

"I can't say exactly where I picked them up, sir," I answered, "but they are my honest opinions on the subject. I shall not change them."

Again my father sat and looked at me. Several times he seemed on the point of bursting forth in anger. Then the color gradually left his face, leaving it rather pale and haggard.

He seemed to regard me as a kind of curiosity—a species of creature he had never ran across before.

"Do you know that people will call you a coward?" he said at last. "You — a Berkley!"

"If they do," I replied, "I trust I shall have the moral courage to bear it."

"This seems to me a time for physical, as well as moral, courage, my son," he went on. "Your attitude, I must confess, is somewhat of a surprise to me. It is perhaps the first time a Berkley ever had to be urged to fight. But I must endeavor not to be hasty with you. You are a man, and entitled to your own opinions. I do not believe that you are a coward, and I am willing to believe that you are doing what you think is right, but—I am rather taken by surprise, as I said—and I would like to take a little time to think things out, before discussing the matter further."

He passed his hand across his forehead and looked at me doubtfully, as if a little dazed.

"We will have another talk this evening, son," he added kindly, and I left him sitting at his desk, staring blankly at the scattered papers, evidently unable fully to grasp the fact that a Berkley had actually refused to fight.

I could not help feeling sorry for him, as I could understand how he felt about the matter, but I certainly did not intend to participate in any war, and probably sacrifice my life, when the whole idea of warfare was utterly opposed to my principles. Nor was I at all sure that I believed in slavery.

Of course we had always owned a large number of negroes, but, considered in the abstract, I could not say that I believed we had any right to buy and sell our fellow men, and a black man is a human being, after all. In fact, the more I thought about it the more firmly I became convinced that the idea of my taking any sort of part in this war was absolutely out of the question altogether.

While I was thinking along these lines I strolled out into the garden, and all unpleasant subjects were quickly dismissed from my mind by the sight of Miss Julia, armed with thick gloves and an immense pair of shears, working over some rosebushes. I hastened forward.

"Julia," I said, "you probably think you are doing the roses some good, I suppose, but you are only making them look faded and drooping—by *contrast*," I added in explanation.

"Silly!" she retorted severely. And then, with much eagerness: "Oh, Warren, did Uncle Bob tell you about the commission he's got for you, under General Jackson? It must be just glorious to be a man,

and be able to fight and die for one's country!"

Really, every one seemed remarkably anxious to send me off to be shot at.

CHAPTER III.

"THE CARPET-KNIGHT."

JULIA was looking at me, her eyes shining with enthusiasm, her arms full of fresh-cut roses, a charming picture against a background of green leaves. Who would suppose this vision of youth and beauty could harbor such savage thoughts—to want a man to go and be blown up or slashed to bits?

She seemed so pleased at the idea that I hated to disillusion her. But it might as well be done now as later.

"My dear Julia," I said, "it may be, as you say, just glorious to fight and die for one's country. I am perfectly willing to take your word for it."

"To take my word? Why, what do you mean?" she asked, her eyes opening wide in surprise. (It may be noticed that I paid considerable attention to the different expressions of her eyes.)

"I simply mean," I replied, "that I have not the slightest idea of putting it to the test. I do not believe in wars, and therefore, as a matter of principle, I must deny myself the pleasure of getting myself shot to pieces. Strong as the temptation is, I cannot let duty yield to self-indulgence."

"You mean," she asked, in an awe-stricken voice, "that you are not going to enlist?"

"Exactly."

She regarded me as one might some queer freak of nature in a museum. Then, suddenly, she smiled.

"You're joking," she said, "but you can't fool me."

"No," I assured her, "I was never more serious in my life. I would not accept the position of commander-in-chief in any war. My modest disposition shrinks from the notoriety of a death at the cannon's mouth. It is all a matter of taste, I suppose, but I shall do nothing to encourage people to call me a hero—or to shoot at me."

"I don't think I quite understand," she said seriously. And then she asked the same question my father had: "Do you mean that you're afraid to fight?"

Coming from her it held more of a sting, though there was no suggestion of taunting in her voice, only a kind of wonder. I could feel my face growing red.

"It is not a question of fear," I answered stiffly, "but a matter of principle. As I told you, I do not believe in wars, and shall have nothing to do with this one."

With a bow, I stalked into the house and left her standing there, stricken dumb with astonishment.

My father did not offer to renew our conversation that night, as he had intended. Considerable time passed, and the subject was avoided by all of us, as if by mutual consent. Julia not only avoided the subject, but avoided me also, which was very annoying, as the more I saw of her the more certain I became that I was falling in love, and when a fellow admits he is "falling," the chances are that he has already dropped.

I would catch her sometimes, looking at me with that same puzzled expression, but she successfully foiled all my attempts to see her alone. I could never get a word with her, except when some one was around. Then she treated me pleasantly enough, so that no one could have noticed anything unusual in her manner.

My father was uniformly kind and considerate, and I did what I could to be of some assistance to him in a business way. We got along very well together, but I knew that my attitude in regard to the war was a keen disappointment to him.

Still, I could not see my way to changing my views, which were very decided on this point. I considered this conflict between people of the same nation a particularly cruel and unnecessary waste of human life, and I would not under any circumstances sacrifice myself in such a cause. So we came to a tacit understanding.

We agreed to disagree on this one topic, and as I look back on those days, I can see that he did everything in his power to make me feel that he believed in me, and that I was always welcome at home.

Miss Julia was sometimes not quite so careful of my feelings, and I heard rumors that some of the neighbors had favored me with such nicknames as, "The Home Guard," "The Carpet-Knight," etc., but I only laughed and went my own way. A little ridicule could not hurt me, though I cannot say I enjoyed it.

Nearly two years passed without anything happening in our own home circle

which is really worth recording in detail. I spent a good deal of my spare time painting and sketching, but it was a solitary occupation, as there was no one who took the slightest interest in my work.

I had been used to the friendly criticism of my fellow artists in Paris, and I missed the encouragement they had always given me. The nearest thing to praise that I ever received at home was to be told by Miss Julia that if I could handle a sword as well as I could a brush, I would be all right.

We were, of course, kept well informed of the progress of the war, considerable fighting having taken place in our immediate vicinity, as my father had predicted. I understood that the Southern army had been very successful in our State, though we heard of reverses in the West and on the lower Mississippi.

My father's business had been practically wiped out. He had lost most of his slaves, in one way or another, though a few faithful ones still stayed with him and worked a part of the plantation, which had now, of necessity, become more of a farm for our own maintenance.

During this time I still think that I managed to make myself more of a help than a burden, and that I was of much more use at home than I would have been away in the field fighting. But I knew that my father thought my place was at the front, and Miss Julia gave me to understand in many ways that I was far from a hero in her eyes, to put it mildly.

So, one day, being put somewhat on my mettle by her manner toward me, I cornered her and made a formal proposal of marriage. We were sitting on the big front porch, on a warm spring evening. My father had gone into the house, and Julia started to follow him, but I would not let her.

When I had spoken my little piece, she turned on me with a sudden burst of anger.

"Do you think I would marry a stay-at-home?" she cried. "Go and fight for your country, like a man—like the other young men of the South. Why, the poorest backwoodsman is a better Virginian than you — Warren Berkley. You should be ashamed to so disgrace that name. And you dare to ask me to marry you? I have no desire to become the lady of 'The Carpet-Knight.'"

It seems to me that a man who has faced a speech like that, delivered in tones of haughty scorn, by a beautiful girl, should have little fear of a whole army of mere men.

I will not deny that I felt very much abused. I had been doing only what I thought was right, and I was treated like an outcast. My honorable proposal of marriage was received as an insult. I was tagged with ridiculous nicknames and accused of cowardice, for merely showing the courage of my convictions.

My patience and philosophy were becoming exhausted. If my heart was not actually broken by Julia's scornful treatment, at least my pride was seriously damaged. I began to grow sullen and discontented.

I think my father noticed a change in my manner, and it encouraged him to approach me a few days later on the subject which had been tabooed for so long.

"Warren," he said (he had got out of the habit of calling me "son"), "there is going to be a draft, to go into effect in a few days, to increase the ranks of General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. I have some influence at Richmond. Shall I see that you are excused from military duty?"

It was the first reference he had made to this matter since our talk nearly two years ago, and, though I think he tried to make his words as inoffensive as possible, he could not conceal a slight tone of contempt in his voice as he put the question.

"Thank you, father," I replied, "but you need not trouble. I am going to enlist."

CHAPTER IV.

A PAWN IN THE GAME.

My father nearly jumped out of his chair. I can see that I must have been full of surprises for him.

"What has led you to change your views, my son?" he asked gravely.

"I have not changed my views, but I have changed my mind," I said, and then, thinking this might not be very lucid, I added: "I mean that my opinions are the same, but I have decided to enlist in spite of them."

He seemed about to question me further, but did not. I think he suspected that Julia Lorraine had something to do with this sudden and unexpected change in my plans, but with characteristic delicacy and tact, he refrained from any further inquiries,

and, after the first start of surprise, treated the matter as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"I won't deny that I am pleased with this new decision," he said, "though I shall be sorry to part with you, my boy. I can still get you that commission, or perhaps a better one now."

"No, sir," I said, "I don't want any commission. I know nothing about fighting, and I do not wish to be placed, through influence, over men who know a thousand times more than I do. I would only show my ignorance. I intend to begin at the beginning, and make a scientific study of the art of warfare. Since I am going into this thing, I intend to do my best to attain some degree of efficiency and usefulness."

My father smiled.

"Your resolution is most commendable, my son," he replied, "but I warn you that a private soldier leads a dog's life. He is a pawn in the game, and receives very little consideration."

"I expect to be a pawn in the game," I rejoined, "and I shall certainly not accept any position of responsibility for which I am totally unfit."

"Very well, son. I have learned that you are not to be influenced, once you have made up your mind," said my father resignedly.

So it was agreed, after some further discussion, that we were to go up to Richmond together, as he had some business matters to attend to there, and I was to join whatever regiment would get me to the front at once. General Lee's army was somewhere in the neighborhood of Fredericksburg, and my one idea, now that I had decided to become a soldier, was to get into the midst of things and learn the business as quickly as possible.

It is a remarkable thing how the whole atmosphere in a household can suddenly change. It was at dinner that evening that I first noticed it. I had become a hero in an hour.

The servants fussed about me, and nothing seemed good enough for me, in their estimation. I was treated like a prodigal son, though I was really just the opposite. It was a little gruesome, like being fattened for the sacrifice, but I didn't mind. In fact, I was childish enough rather to like it.

Julia looked at me with a new expression in those eyes, about which I have written so much, and tried in a dozen different ways to show that she wanted to patch up our friendship before I went away. I am sorry to say that I met her little advances rather coldly at first, but no one could possibly resist her for any length of time, when she was really trying to be nice.

Before I left we were on the best of terms again, and she gave me a good-by kiss which, though only a sisterly one, made me heartily wish the war was over and I was a returning hero, instead of one just leaving.

I think it was some time in the first part of April, 1863, that my father and I started for Richmond. He was still urging me to let him procure at least a lieutenancy for me, but I would have nothing to do with it.

It would be like asking a man who had never studied drawing to do a mural decoration. I intended to learn this fighting business properly, since I had decided to go in for it.

I found that a regiment was being organized to reenforce General Jackson's corps. Recruiting stations were scattered about town. Men were needed so badly that the examinations were rushed through with as a mere matter of form.

My name was enrolled as Private Warren Berkley, Fifty-Ninth Virginia Volunteer Infantry. I was fitted out with a uniform, knapsack, canteen, etc., and sent, with several other young fellows, to the regimental camp, just outside the town, where I was assigned to a company, provided with a musket, which I did not even know how to fire or load, and, with the rest, turned over to a sergeant, to be taught some rudiments of drilling.

My father shook hands with me and patted me on the back affectionately.

"Take good care of yourself, son," he said, "and when you've got the Yankees licked, get a furlough and come home as soon as you can. Good-by, my boy."

"Good-by, sir," I said cheerfully, though I did not feel that way.

I watched him walk off, holding himself erect, a much more soldierly figure than I was, I am sure, in my clumsy, ill-fitting uniform.

I felt sorry, of course, to part from him, perhaps forever, as far as I knew, but there was something in the atmosphere of this new life I had entered upon which was beginning to take hold of me. I was conscious of a certain enthusiasm and eagerness which were unique sensations to me.

I was already beginning to forget my ab-

horrence of the brutality of warfare, and to feel a sense of exhilaration and a desire for action. I was surprised, as I had expected the whole business to be very distasteful, especially at first. Could it be that I was actually going to *enjoy* fighting and killing people—also running the risk of their killing me?

But I was allowed very little time for these reflections.

"Fall in!" cried the sergeant who was to drill the new recruits.

I had not the slightest idea what he meant, but as I saw the other fellows standing in line, I joined them. I had heard that it was dangerous to point firearms at people, so I placed my musket in a perpendicular position, with the muzzle on the ground, which I thought was safest.

The sergeant laughed, grabbed me roughly by the shoulders, and shoved me into my place in the line. I was on the point of telling him not to be quite so rude in his manner toward a gentleman, but I thought I would better take things as they come for a while, until I had gained some experience.

He then showed us the way the muskets were to be handled, demonstrating the different positions, such as "right shoulder," "present arms," "port," and "order, or ground arms."

When we tried these maneuvers ourselves we were extremely awkward at first. The man next to me in line struck me a sharp blow on the head with the barrel of his musket when endeavoring to execute the "right shoulder" movement, but he offered me no apology, so I put him down as a rather ill-mannered sort of fellow.

To add to my discomfiture, the first time I brought my weapon from my shoulder to the position of "order," the stock came down with crushing force on my right foot. I bent over with the pain of the blow, but the sergeant yelled:

"Hey, you — attention! Stand up straight!"

"I beg your pardon. I dropped the gun on my foot," I explained.

"Shut up!" he snapped. "No talking in the ranks."

Again I was on the point of telling him to be a little more courteous and considerate in his treatment of a gentleman, but I remembered having read something about "military discipline," and I supposed this was it.

Probably a sergeant was a very high officer, I thought, perhaps next in rank to a general, and no doubt it was against the rules to argue with him.

We were kept practising the different movements for a long time, until my arms and back were so tired I was ready to drop. At last I said to the sergeant:

"Pardon me for suggesting it, sir, but hadn't we better knock off for a while and take a little rest? I am becoming quite exhausted, and—"

"Silence!" he roared. "When I want any suggestions I'll ask for them. You'll drill until I tell you to stop. Understand?"

"Certainly," I began politely, "but—"

"But nothing! Shut up!"

Really, this man's manner was most offensive, but I decided to put up with it, at least for the present. So we were drilled with the muskets and also taught several foot movements, until, when the order came at last to "fall out," I was ready to literally "fall" with fatigue.

CHAPTER V.

ROUGHING IT.

I WAS assigned, with several of the other recruits, to a small tent, which I understood we were to sleep in; but upon looking inside I saw no beds, so supposed I must be mistaken.

We received a small supply of bacon, beans, coffee, sugar, and a kind of cracker which they called "hardtack" — also a kettle and a frying-pan. I could have done nothing with these articles, but one of the fellows proved to be very clever at that sort of thing.

He built a fire, and soon had bacon sizzling in the pan, the odor of which gave a keen edge to my appetite. The same man made coffee for us; and, though we had no cream, still it tasted well enough.

I expected that we would be served some sort of dessert; but we were not, so I was obliged to make a meal of the bacon, hardtack, and coffee. It was roughing it a bit, to be sure; but in a war one must expect that, of course, so I simply ate what we had and asked no questions.

We sat about the fire, conversing on various topics for some time. I found that my companions were a very illiterate set, and some of their conversation struck me as extremely coarse and vulgar. Most of their

jokes and various allusions were entirely beyond me.

I did my best to join in their talk when I could, but they appeared to know absolutely nothing about art or literature. When I spoke of some of the pictures I had seen in the galleries abroad, they even seemed to doubt my veracity, hinting that they did not believe I had ever been to the places I mentioned. But when I described a few of my adventures in the Latin Quarter their attitude changed immediately, and they became interested.

A peculiar thing I noticed was that the more my stories bordered on the *risqué* the more they were appreciated, and a little anecdote I told about a certain model seemed particularly to please them.

I was rather enjoying myself. The picturesqueness of the scene, with the groups of men in uniform about the camp-fires, the shifting shadows, and the white tents and dark trees in the background, appealed to me strongly.

I was just thinking how I would like to make some sketches, when a bugle-call sounded, which my companions told me was "taps," the signal for all who were not on duty to retire. When I asked where we were to sleep they slowly led the way into our tent.

"But there are no beds here," I objected.

"You won't be sleepin' on no beds until your enlistment runs out," remarked one of the men. "Did you-all think the colonel was comin' to tuck you in?"

There was a general laugh at this piece of sarcasm; so I said no more about it, but watched what the others did and followed suit.

We all had blankets, in which we wrapped ourselves, using our knapsacks for pillows, and removing only our shoes and coats. I had no idea that a man could sleep in this way, and I felt certain that the ground was damp and that I would probably get a bad cold, or an attack of rheumatism; but I was too tired to worry.

I had passed a strenuous day, full of new experiences; and I must have dropped off to sleep at once, for the next thing I knew one of the men was shaking me and telling me to get up. It was broad daylight, and the whole camp was stirring.

Our breakfast was about the same as the supper the night before. I had always been used to having some kind of fruit as an appetizer in the morning; but I did very well without it, for I had made up my mind to bear whatever hardships I encountered without complaining.

We were drilled pretty hard for a few days; but at last the "awkward squad" was disbanded, and we were pronounced ready to be sent on to the front.

In Richmond, before enlisting, I had purchased a "Manual of Military Tactics," which I intended to study conscientiously, in order to perfect myself in the technicalities of military life while I was learning the practical side by actual experience from day to day.

But when I endeavored to begin my studies I found the thing was totally unintelligible to me. I could make nothing of it, but decided to keep the book for future reference. Perhaps I would be able to understand it later on.

And speaking of this book reminds me of the only other incident which occurred while we were in camp which seems worth telling about. Perhaps this episode does not reflect any particular credit on me, still it goes to show how I was being influenced by my new surroundings.

A year, or even a month, before I should have acted very differently under similar circumstances; and if any one had told me that I should engage in a brawl with a common, uneducated fellow, and end by brutally assaulting him with my fists, I should have been highly indignant at the idea. This is exactly what I did, however, and I must confess to a certain feeling of pride in the performance.

One of the corporals in the company to which I belonged—Company B—was a big, rough fellow named Quirk. From the time when I had first been assigned my place in the line, this man seemed to take a personal dislike to me.

He was a soldier of some experience, with a good record, but had the reputation of being a quarrelsome bully and a hard man to get along with. All the men in the company seemed careful to avoid having any trouble with him, for he was a big, powerfully built man, and said to be a dangerous fighter.

He singled me out for his attentions, and it seemed that nothing I could do suited him. If I made a mistake at drill he would jeer at me, or snarl out a sharp reprimand. I was still a beginner, and this continual persecution made me nervous and more awkward than I would otherwise have been.

. He was constantly annoying me in one way or another. I could never walk near him without his sticking out his feet to trip me up. I could not utter the most casual, commonplace remark without eliciting from him a sneer or a contradiction.

Because I showed no desire to associate with him and a few of his cronies, he was forever accusing me of considering myself better than my comrades.

I felt a certain fear of the man, he was so big and self-confident; but I reached the limit of my endurance one evening, when we had been in camp about four or five days. I was sitting by the fire with my book on military tactics, trying to see if I could not manage to understand some of its technicalities, when Quirk approached me and leaned over my shoulder to see what I was reading. Then he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Hey, boys," he cried, "come here and look at mama's boy learnin' to be a soldier out of a book."

This brought a chorus of laughter from his friends.

Then, turning to me, he said, with his most offensive sneer:

"You won't never make no soldier, so give it up. It's too bad you ever left your mother's apron-strings."

With that he leaned over and tore out the page I was reading, held it to the fire, and was calmly lighting his pipe with the sheet when I sprang to my feet.

I struck him a blow — or, rather, two blows—which I had learned from a pugilist in London. I had never expected to use this knowledge, but had been interested in the man's demonstration of the art of boxing. The left fist is brought swiftly up to the point of your opponent's chin, tilting his head back; and the right is almost simultaneously swung to the same point from the side, with crushing force.

I could hear Quirk's jaw crack as he went down, and knew it was either broken or dislocated. His friends carried him away, quite unconscious, and I was taken to the captain's tent by our first sergeant, who had seen the whole affair, and explained the circumstances to the captain.

In view of the persecution I had undergone, of which the captain knew something, I was let off with a mild reprimand.

The first thing in the morning I received a message from Quirk, asking me to come and see him. He was sitting in his tent with his jaw bandaged, and a strong odor of liniment about. He shook hands with me, said I was the best man in the regiment, apologized effusively for his actions in the past, and expressed the hope that we might be friends in the future.

"It's the only way I'll feel safe, Mr. Berkley—to know that you're my friend," he said.

CHAPTER VI.

IN ACTION.

THIS little incident, though to my mind a rather vulgar affair, nevertheless served to make me a general favorite with my comrades, most of whom had been more or less victims of Quirk's bullying. And among them all I had no stancher friend and admirer than Quirk himself. He could not do enough for me; and let any one dare speak ill of me in his presence, and he would proceed to show that he still retained some of his prestige as a fighter.

A few days later the rumor began to circulate about the camp that an important battle was imminent, and that we were to be sent into action at once. Most of the men were delighted at the prospect, while others, including myself, took the news more thoughtfully. But I was glad when the order came to break camp, as I wanted to gain experience as rapidly as possible.

The Federal forces, under General Hooker, had crossed the Rappahannock River, and were located in the vicinity of Chancellorsville. There had been some fighting of an indecisive nature, and we were to be sent to join General Jackson's corps. This was as much as any of us knew when our march toward the front was begun.

I had never really known what fatigue was before. For two solid days we marched, and I lost all sense of direction and all thought as to where we might be going.

On the evening of the second day I heard that we had caught up with the rear division of Jackson's corps, but I did not care. Too tired to bother about even eating, I almost dropped in my tracks at the welcome word "halt," rolled myself in my blanket, and slept. That was the one thing I wanted—sleep. Nothing else interested me.

Next morning I awoke much refreshed, and they gave us plenty of time for a good breakfast, which I enjoyed thoroughly. Rumor had it that there had been consid-

erable fighting the day before, and that some special maneuver was about to be attempted, involving General Jackson's entire corps.

That was about all I could learn, and I started on the march with no definite idea of where we were or where we were going. I did not even know to what division of the corps our regiment had been assigned. Truly, a private soldier is a pawn in the game, as my father had said.

All that day, as on the two days previous, we plunged forward through thick woods, where our progress was impeded by underbrush and our formation sometimes almost entirely broken up. About noon word was passed along the line that we were executing a flank movement and were to attack the enemy on their right. This was certainly getting into action promptly for a beginner.

I had barely learned to execute the simplest movements of the drill and how to load and fire my musket, when I was to engage in a battle; but I gave the matter very little thought at the time. My principal worry was the constantly increasing weight of my gun and haversack as we went along.

At every step these articles seemed to grow heavier, until I thought they would drag me down. When I looked at the officers, with only their light swords to carry, I was inclined to wish that I had allowed my father to use his influence to get me a commission.

The underbrush through which we pushed our way seemed to reach forth long branches and try to drag me back or trip me up. My face was cut and bleeding; but, like the rest, I staggered on.

We were taking a circuitous route, which I understood was to keep our movements from the observation of the enemy, who were said to be close on our right. At times we caught glimpses of other portions of the corps, and later in the day our progress was less impeded by woods, and part of the time we followed what is known as the Fredericksburg Plank Road. Here my throat became parched with the dust, but it was a slight relief from struggling through the dense thickets.

Late in the afternoon—I had no way of knowing the exact time—we were brought to a halt and permitted a little chance to rest. It was then that I got my first and, as it proved, my last sight of General Stonewall Jackson. He was walking along the line with some other officers, and stopped to speak to our captain.

"So this is one of the new companies," he said.

"Yes, general," replied the captain, saluting.

"I am very glad to have them with us, captain. There will be plenty of work for them soon," he said, and hurried on.

I never saw a finer or more soldierly-looking man. He was of about medium height, broad-shouldered, and wore a heavy black beard and mustache. Even from where I stood, I could catch the commanding flash of his eye, and was conscious of his great personal magnetism.

I think the few words he had spoken and the mere sight of him added to our courage and enthusiasm. I know I felt that I could follow him anywhere with absolute confidence.

Our line was soon set in motion again, and in a few minutes we heard firing ahead and to our right. These were the first shots I had heard, and I had never fired my own weapon except with blank cartridges in camp.

My first sight of the enemy was not at all what I had anticipated. I had pictured in my mind a steady line of blue-clad soldiers, loading and firing at us with deadly effect. But it appeared that we were taking them entirely by surprise; and they were thrown into the utmost confusion, offering, indeed, but a feeble and unorganized resistance.

We were almost upon them before they realized it, and they were in no kind of formation, being scattered about in groups, some playing cards and some cooking their evening meal, their muskets stacked and out of reach. Some of them, however, made an attempt at resistance, snatching up their weapons and firing at random, while others took one look at us and ran for it.

I shall never forget the strange feeling I had when the man next to me in line, a fellow whom I knew quite well, and rather liked, suddenly threw up his hands, his musket flying in the air, and fell forward on his face without uttering a sound. Later I saw many similar, and much more horrible, sights, but nothing ever affected me like this first sudden wiping out of a man I had talked to and associated with for days.

But the sensation of horror was necessarily brief, as I had other things to think

about. Before that night was over I had become used to seeing men fall on all sides.

It was no doubt a rare piece of luck for me that my first engagement should be one in which the enemy was taken by surprise and utterly routed in the first charge. It gave us all confidence and courage to press onward—otherwise I might have been running in the opposite direction.

For some time we continued to charge, without meeting any determined opposition, the enemy attempting to rally at times, but giving way always in considerable confusion. Later they made a stand in a line of entrenchments and opened a damaging fire upon us.

The captain of our company was killed, and his place taken by a lieutenant. We charged upon them, with yells of enthusiasm, like a band of Indians, and a fierce hand-to-hand struggle ensued. The din of the firing became somewhat lulled as we came to close quarters.

I leaped over the embankment, and found myself crossing bayonets with a big fellow who lunged at me with the utmost fury, in the meantime keeping up a volley of the most lurid and picturesque oaths I had ever heard. I sprang aside barely in time to escape his thrust, and as I passed my bayonet through him he went down swearing spitefully.

This was the first man I had killed, to my certain knowledge; but the action was so swift, and my excitement so great, that I thought little of it at the time, though later on this same poor Yankee managed to bother me a good deal.

We still kept on, but met with no more resistance for some time; and as the darkness came on we found ourselves in the thick woods again, so, as we could not see where we were going and our formation became broken up, we were ordered to halt and fall back to reform our line.

Now that we had a little chance to rest, I realized that I was utterly worn out. My knees gave way under me, and I was seized with a violent fit of trembling. The men about me were talking and discussing our success enthusiastically, but I took no part in the conversation. Others were groaning with the pain of their wounds.

I sat down and propped myself up against a tree to get a little rest, and it was then that the thought of the man I had killed came to my mind. I could see his face, convulsed with pain, as I had struck him, and his curses rang in my ears with a sort of rhythm that was maddening.

About an hour later my thoughts were turned from this unhealthy channel by news that filled us all with genuine sorrow. It was reported that General Jackson had been accidentally fired upon and fatally wounded by an outpost of our own pickets.

CHAPTER VII.

"REMEMBER JACKSON!"

WE had about two hours' rest, and were then ordered to advance again. We were now not far from the town of Chancellorsville, and the Federals had established a battery on an eminence called Hazel Grove, which opened a damaging fire upon us, so that we could not hold our present position without capturing these works. It was either that or retreat.

Our corps was now temporarily under the command of General J. E. B. Stuart, who led the first charge in person. Three times we gained possession of this battery, only to be driven out again, as reenforcements were constantly arriving from the Federal's first corps, under their General Sickles.

Many of the facts in regard to this night of fighting I have obtained long since the war was over. At the time the whole thing seemed a nightmare of confusion and deafening racket, through which I plunged mechanically, doing as those about me did, without the slightest idea of why we were doing it.

While we were fighting the moon came up, making the scene almost as bright as day. To me there was something incongruous about this fierce battle on such a beautiful night. If it had been stormy, or dark and cloudy, the setting would have been more in keeping with the events which were taking place; but the clear sky and calm moonlight seemed to call for a scene of peace and quiet, rather than the noisy turmoil which surrounded us.

A fourth time we were thrown against the battery on Hazel Grove, and our loss was so great that we were obliged to give it up and fall back to a line of entrenchments out of range of the enemy's guns. We had been literally blown to pieces in this last charge, and it was a maimed and shattered remnant of our brigade which returned to the shelter of these works, where we lay from about midnight until dawn.

The firing continued somewhere on our left for about an hour, but there was no more work for us until daylight. I was in a state of excitement which kept me from realizing my utter weariness, but I stretched myself out on the bare ground, and the next thing I knew it was morning, and some of the men were cooking breakfast. It seemed that I could always sleep, even under the most extraordinary conditions possible.

As I was thinking over the events of the last few days, I suddenly realized that it was Sunday, so I supposed, of course, there would be no more fighting until the next day. When I spoke to some of the men about this they asked me what church I was going to, and whether I should wear a business suit or my frock coat.

I saw at once that they were joking with me, so I said no more about it, and a little later our line was again set in motion.

I had never been a very religious person, but it seemed to me that fighting was hardly the proper thing on a Sunday. However, it was not my business to express an opinion. I had learned that much.

As I expected, we were again sent against the battery on Hazel Grove, which had repulsed us so rudely the night before; but this time we were reenforced by a brigade from another division, and, to our surprise, met with little resistance, the enemy retiring in good order, after a scattered musket volley, without bringing the big guns into play at all.

An artillery regiment followed up our rear and took command of these guns, while we followed up the charge.

The Federals met our attack with a determined rally, and at first we were driven back again on Hazel Grove. Disappointed by this repulse, Colonel Carter, who was in command of our brigade, made an appeal to us to try again, reminding us of the death of our great commander, General Jackson, which we should endeavor to avenge. Immediately this sentiment was taken up and passed along the line as a battle-cry.

"Remember Jackson!" we shouted, as we charged down the hill again and across the fields toward Fairview, where another line of the enemy's batteries were stationed.

And all that day these words encouraged us to new efforts, making us forget our weariness and refuse to recognize defeat.

Fairview was a higher hill than Hazel Grove, and we were driven back from it, as we had been from the latter, so many times that afternoon that I lost count. But as many times we returned to the attack, shouting our new watchword:

"Remember Jackson!"

The fighting that day was to me another nightmare of din and confusion. My head throbbed with the constant roar of firearms, my throat was parched, and my eyeballs burned like red-hot coals, from the smoke.

I was far past any sense of fear I may have felt at first. I saw about me death and mutilation in every form, but these sights no longer affected me. The world consisted of ourselves and the enemy, against whom we must throw ourselves ceaselessly, like waves upon a beach.

I was no longer a human being, with a personality of my own, but a particle, like a drop of water in that wave, and it never occurred to me to suppose that I could do otherwise than rush on with the tide. I was neither brave nor cowardly, but simply an atom in that big thing which is called an army.

But in spite of this feeling of insignificance and helplessness, I could never hear those words, "Remember Jackson!" without a flash of personal enthusiasm and inspiration to do my best. Such was the influence of this great general, even though he could not be with us in person.

At that time he was lying helpless at a place called Guiney's Station, on the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad, with little chance of recovering from his wounds, but his spirit was still with us, in the thick of the fight.

Toward evening we gained a permanent foothold on Fairview Heights, and at last we were about fought out. The enemy were retreating on Fredericksburg, and other regiments passing us in pursuit tried to encourage us to keep on with them by shouting our own battle-cry, but we had done about all that was in us, and could only cheer them on, while we gained a little necessary rest.

We spent the night at Fairview, and I think there was very little fighting anywhere after dark. Next morning we were refreshed and ready to go in again, but very little of the work devolved upon us that day.

Fredericksburg was captured by General Early's corps, and a part of the Federal

forces, under their General Sedgwick, was cut off from the main body, and forced back toward the Rappahannock River. Our division, however, took part in none of these movements, and we knew little about them at the time. We were sent to reenforce General Early at Fredericksburg, but when we got there the fighting was practically over in that vicinity.

Night came on and hostilities were again suspended. In fact, during all my service I never experienced another night of fighting like the first one of this battle—the night of May 2.

On the morning of May 5 General Hooker began his retreat across the Rappahannock, and was allowed to make the crossing unmolested. General Sedgwick's corps also crossed that same morning, farther up the river.

The battle of Chancellorsville was over, and General Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was victorious. I never would have supposed I could be so enthusiastic over an affair which involved the slaughter of thousands of innocent men, but my old ideas of the cruelty of warfare were forgotten, and I thought only of the fact that *we* had won.

I wrote a letter to my father, and one to Julia, in which I described the whole battle with the greatest enthusiasm, as one might tell about a game of cricket, or a horse-race.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MEETING ON PICKET DUTY.

After this we had no more fighting to do for some time. There was an engagement at a place called Brandy Station, mostly between cavalry, in which we took no part. The Federal forces were again defeated and driven back across the river.

Our corps, which had been under the command of General Jackson, was divided into two corps, the second and third, the former being placed under General Richard S. Ewell, and the latter, to which our regiment belonged, under General A. P. Hill, a man whose iron will enabled him to overcome the handicap of a broken constitution and attend to his duties with an efficiency second to none.

Preparations were being rapidly made for an invasion of the Northern States, and our ambitions did not stop short of the capture of Philadelphia, and even New York City. Reinforcements were arriving every day, and we were in the highest spirits, on account of our recent victory, and eager for the march into Northern territory.

We were not kept waiting long, the entire army being set in motion within a few days after the battle, taking a westerly course, through the Shenandoah Valley. The only resistance encountered was from a garrison of the enemy, under their General Milroy, at Winchester. They were driven out, after one day of fighting, and a large part of their force captured, while endeavoring to get away under cover of darkness that night.

Once west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, our course was changed to the northward, and we were fairly on our way to the invasion.

Our march was now very different from the forced pace which had been set for us before the big battle. We were in no such hurry, and proceeded slowly through a very beautiful country. Moreover, I had now become accustomed to the soldier's strenuous existence, and felt comparatively little fatigue or inconvenience from any of its hardships.

I had time to enjoy the beauty of the scenery, and wished a dozen times a day that I could have had my sketching outfit with me, to make studies of the various bits which took my eye.

But though I was constantly admiring the beauties of nature, the desire to express myself through the medium of my pencil or brush became constantly less strong, and I found myself thoroughly enjoying the physical side of this active, outdoor life, as my longing for the more refined intellectual enjoyments of former days gradually decreased. I believe I actually looked forward with eagerness to the time when we would have more fighting to do.

Theoretically my views on the subject of war were no different from those I had always held, but my tastes were certainly changing. This march northward into the enemy's country, along the line of the magnificent Blue Ridge range of mountains, was full of new and interesting experiences for me.

Nothing happened, however, outside of the general routine of life on the march. The greater part of our supplies were obtained from the farms and small towns near which we passed. Our orders were

to pay cash for everything we took, which we did, but in Confederate currency, which was accepted with a very ill grace, not only by the Yankees, but by our own people, while we were still in Virginia.

It was not until we had got as far north as the town of York, Pennsylvania, and had turned about to meet the advance of the enemy, that an incident occurred which showed that I still had much to learn as a soldier.

We were in camp for the night, near the York Road, and I was on picket duty about a mile in advance of our line, on this highway.

I think it was nearly midnight when I heard hoof-beats approaching, and the figure of a man on horseback loomed out of the darkness. He made no attempt to get past me, but leaped to the ground when I ordered him to halt, and looked at me intently.

He was dressed in civilian attire, and I thought there was something familiar about his figure.

"Where did I hear that voice last?" he said, as if trying to remember something. And then, after we had stared at each other some more, "As I live!" he cried, coming closer.

"Stand back!" I ordered, thinking this might all be a trick.

"As I live, if this is not Warren Berkley, the beau of the boulevards, playing soldier!" And he burst into a violent fit of laughter.

"And if this is not Carroll Dane, the—what shall I say? The Prince of Montmartre—playing spy."

His face turned grave at once.

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly.

"Why, nothing," I answered. "But you looked so mysterious, in that cloak, riding about in the middle of the night alone."

"But tell me," he said, "what are you doing here?"

"I am on picket duty," I answered, with dignity.

Again he burst into a roar of laughter.

"But where is Warren Berkley, the exquisite?" he asked, still laughing.

"Vanished," I said, "if there ever was such a person. My father wrote me to come home. I did so, and later enlisted in the Army of Northern Virginia, and here I am. The rest of the army is back there," motioning with my hand in their general direction.

"All of it?" he asked eagerly.

"All except the cavalry, I believe," I replied innocently.

"This is news," he gasped, under his breath.

"Now tell me your story," I went on. "What are you doing here—you, who should be over in Paris, keeping your little Lisette from getting lonesome."

"Ah, little Lisette!" he sighed. "She will not remain lonesome long, though. I also was called home on account of the war. I live within a few miles of here, you know. If I tell you where, I suppose you will bring an armed force, and lay waste to my domain."

"No," I promised, "you shall be spared for old times' sake."

I should perhaps explain that this same Carroll Dane had been one of my fellow-students in Paris, and a most intimate friend. In fact, we had shared the same studio for a season, and had been sketching together at Barbizon many times.

Also there had been other incidents in which we both had had a share. I could not get over the surprise of meeting him here. Truly, it is a small world.

He tied his horse to a tree, and we walked slowly up and down the road, talking over old times and telling our more recent adventures.

He told me that he had served a term of two years and nine months, which he considered sufficient to satisfy his sense of duty, and had decided to apply himself for a time to the business of guiding his own personal affairs through the hard times attendant upon the war. He was surprised to learn that General Lee's forces were so near at hand, as he had thought we were farther to the north, perhaps approaching New York City.

I told him freely all I knew concerning our position, and the plan of campaign which was contemplated, as far as I understood it, without the slightest thought that I was giving out important information which should be kept a secret. He asked me many questions concerning the strength of our forces, the location of the different divisions, and what I thought our next move would be, and I answered him with the utmost innocence, never suspecting that I was being "pumped."

After a while he told me that he would have to go, as he must be home before morning.

"Well, Berkley, old fellow," he said, as we shook hands, "it has been pleasant to talk over old times, in the midst of the more serious matters of the present. Who would ever have expected to find you in that ugly, dilapidated uniform of a private soldier? Warren Berkley, the glass of fashion, etc." And again he laughed at me as he sprang into the saddle.

"Circumstances change our lives," I remarked profoundly.

"To be sure," he said, still smiling. "Some little thing will often influence great events. For instance, the information you have so kindly given me to-night may prove of great value to—certain people."

"What information?' I asked him in surprise.

"Oh, in regard to the position of your army, and their plans," he answered.

"But you have no right to use anything I may have told you in a private, friendly conversation," I said indignantly.

"All is fair in love and war," he remarked.

"Nothing of the sort," I cried angrily. "This is not playing the game at all, you know. If you make use of any of the information you have tricked me into giving, it will be the act of a spy and a cad."

"Nevertheless, it is too valuable to keep," he replied.

"Look here, Dane," I said, "if you do not promise at once to keep absolute silence in regard to whatever I have told you, I shall drag you off that horse and give you the worst thrashing you ever had in your life."

"More surprises," he said, smiling again. "The gentle Berkley has become a fighter. I could not risk a hand-to-hand encounter with so terrible an adversary, so will say 'Good night.'" And, digging his heels into his horse's sides, he galloped down the road.

I was so angry I think I would have shot him, but I had left my musket leaning against a tree, several yards away, and before I could reach it he was out of sight.

CHAPTER IX.

PLAYING THE HERO.

WHEN I was relieved from duty that night I went straight to the captain of our company and told him all about this affair, and exactly what information I had given away, but he only laughed at me as he said:

"Probably most of what you told the man was entirely wrong, so I reckon there's no harm done. But you should never engage in conversation with any one while on picket duty."

This was a great relief to me, as I had expected a severe reprimand and perhaps punishment, for betraying important secrets. Still I was none the less angry at Dane for making a fool of me, and I made up my mind to even up the score if we ever met again.

But it chanced that our next meeting was under conditions which made it impossible for me to indulge in retaliation.

The next day a squad of us were sent on a foraging expedition, under the command of Quirk, the man with whom I had had the little misunderstanding while we were in camp at Richmond, and who had now become a sergeant. We were on the best of terms, and he never ceased talking about the way I knocked him out.

"Any man that can lick *me!*" he would say admiringly, and leave the rest for his hearers to infer.

We were sent out with orders to bring in almost any kind of provisions we could get, and provided with a plentiful supply of Confederate money with which to pay for it. We took a southerly course, toward the little town of Gettysburg, near which were some fine farms, on which we hoped to levy toll.

Quirk was very proud of his command, and assumed all of his old pompous manner toward the people we approached with our requests or demands.

This only amused me at first, but later we came to a fine farmhouse, pleasantly situated on the side of a low hill, surrounded by large trees and well-kept lawns and gardens. The barn near-by was as big, or bigger, than the house itself.

"This place should be good picking," remarked Quirk, as we approached.

He knocked on the side door, tried the latch, found it unlocked, and marched in without waiting to be asked. I did not approve of this way of doing things, and I knew that his instructions were to treat people with courtesy, but I went in with the rest, to see what would happen.

We found ourselves in a large, old-fashioned dining-room, with a big mantel and open fireplace at one end, and furnished

with a fine old mahogany dining-room set. Quirk swaggered over to the sideboard and helped himself to a drink from a decanter. Then he started for the next room, but was met in the doorway by a girl, who confronted him with an angry expression on her face.

She was a very pretty girl, and as I had scarcely seen a woman for weeks, the sight of her, as she faced us so defiantly, was particularly pleasing to me.

"What are you doing here, *gentlemen?*" she asked, with a satirical emphasis on the last word.

"We have come to ask a few favors of you, my dear," said Quirk, "and the first will be a kiss."

I think he was a trifle affected by the liquor he had just taken. I had never seen him quite so offensive before.

He advanced toward her with arms outstretched, and she backed away from him, a look of fear coming into her eyes.

The idea of military discipline had been drilled into me so constantly of late that I stood for a moment, hesitating to interfere with my superior officer. Quirk had grasped the girl's wrists, and she was struggling with him, gamely and silently—not screaming, as most women would.

Some of the men were laughing, while others fidgeted about uneasily. I stood there for about ten seconds, I suppose, stupidly looking on, admiring the girl's courage, and thinking what a cad Quirk was.

Suddenly it occurred to me that I didn't care a hang about military discipline in a case like this. I stepped forward, took a firm hold on Quirk's collar, and jerked him violently back. He tried to swear, but choked instead as I twisted my fingers in his collar.

"Quirk," I said, holding him at arm's length and looking straight into his eyes, "you know what I did to you once. Now, get out of here."

It struck me at the time that this was a very poor speech for such a melodramatic occasion. I should have thought of something more heroic, more eloquent. But somehow these grand-sounding lines never seem to come to a man until after the time to speak them has passed. Quirk stared at me in astonishment.

"All right," he grumbled meekly, "if you say so, Berkley."

I led him to the door and helped him through it with a kick, which was also a very unheroic, undignified thing to do, as I realized the moment after I had administered it.

The other men followed him out, and when the last one was gone I turned to the lady, nervously removing my hat, which I had not thought to do before. Surely this war was making a boor of me.

"Madam," I said, "I hope you will pardon this intrusion." Another brilliant speech.

She smiled delightfully, and then grew serious.

"I can never thank you sufficiently," she answered. "My father and I are alone in the house. He is an old man, and not well. I was afraid if anything happened to excite him he might be made really ill."

"I hope he has not been disturbed," I said, "and I promise that you shall not be molested further."

She looked at me suddenly with another amused smile, and went on:

"You seem to have a good deal of authority for a private soldier. Are you always so disrespectful to your superior officers? But perhaps you are a general or something in disguise." And then, as if abashed at her own boldness: "Forgive me if I was rude, Mr.—Berkley, did he say?"

Rather nice of her to have noticed my name.

"Private Berkley, at your service," I said, bowing. "You were not in the least rude, but I am sorry to have to disappoint you. I am *not* a general in disguise."

She held out her hand, and said frankly: "My name is Elsie MacPherson. I am very pleased to know you, Mr. Berkley. I shall never forget what you have done for me to-day."

"It was nothing," I stammered awkwardly, and, as I turned to go out, I found myself face to face with Carroll Dane.

"Berkley," he said sharply, "what are you doing here? I didn't suppose you would stoop to this sort of thing in playing soldier."

"Don't lecture me, Dane, after your trick of last night," I replied angrily.

"You know each other?" asked Miss MacPherson in surprise.

"We are beginning to," I said.

"I asked you a question," snapped Dane. "What are you doing here?"

"But you mustn't quarrel," interposed Miss MacPherson eagerly. "Mr. Berkley

has just done me a service, Captain—Mr. Dane."

I wondered why she called him captain, as he was still dressed in civilian's clothes. She explained what I had done, making a great deal more out of it than it really amounted to.

"Excellent!" he cried when she had finished. "I beg your pardon, Berkley. I should have known better than to misjudge you."

I was becoming embarrassed at being made a hero of about nothing, and I could see Quirk and the rest of the men waiting impatiently for me outside; so I said good-by to Miss MacPherson again, and took my departure.

She invited me to come and see her whenever I got a chance, which I most readily promised to do, and then I lined up with the squad and marched off, under the command of the man I had just handled so roughly.

CHAPTER X.

GETTYSBURG.

I SPENT the rest of that day, and a good part of the night, wondering what the relations between Dane and Miss MacPherson might be. Were they simply friends, or something more? The latter, I feared, and I didn't like the idea at all. She was such a very young-looking girl, and Dane's life in Paris had been—but I shouldn't say anything about that. A man may change, of course.

The following day I had little chance for further reflection on the subject. We were on the march at daybreak southward along the York Road toward Gettysburg, the obscure little village which was to become as famous as Waterloo within the next three days.

It was the 1st of July, 1863, as I know now, but at the time I thought nothing of the date. It had rained the day before, and the roads were wet and muddy. We were marching through a thick mist, which the sun did not disperse until later.

Rumors that the Federal army was in the immediate vicinity had caused considerable excitement in the ranks, and every one was looking forward to an encounter. Our recent victory had made us confident that our enemies were no match for us, and we were eager for a decisive battle, in which we felt sure of our ability to crush them entirely.

As we approached the town we heard firing from the scouts who had been sent ahead, some of whom soon came in with the news that the Federals were already in possession, and that we should be on top of them before we knew it. Evidently our wish for an engagement was to be promptly gratified.

Our advance was continued, however, and we soon encountered a force of the enemy, the size of which we could make no guess at. A lively skirmish ensued, in which we charged and were repulsed several times. Later we were reenforced from the rear, and succeeded in driving them back on the town.

The rest of the morning was spent in a futile attempt to dislodge them, and some exciting encounters took place in the streets, the confusion being increased by the crowds of frightened fugitives endeavoring to make their escape. But we met with the most determined resistance, and were always driven out.

In the pauses between our own volleys we could hear firing farther back on our right, and about noon the first artillery was brought into action.

The enemy had a considerable force drawn up on Seminary Ridge, to the west of the town, but in the afternoon they were driven out by a portion of our corps, while our own division at last succeeded in gaining possession of the town, our opponents being forced to retire to a line of hills to the eastward, known as Cemetery Ridge.

During the afternoon the Federals were reenforced by their Eleventh Corps, and an attempt was again made to dislodge us from the village. We found ourselves fighting against the same men whom we had driven before us so easily at Chancellorsville, being informed of this by one of our officers who recognized their flags.

This fact added to our confidence, and we drove them back, with yells of derision, toward an eminence known as Culp's Hill, gaining temporary possession of this point ourselves, but being obliged to retire, as our charge was not sufficiently supported.

Hostilities ceased as darkness came on, and most of the night was spent in fortifying our positions in the town and on the heights of Seminary Ridge. It was a bright moonlight night, and we could see the enemy taking the same precautions to

strengthen their positions on Cemetery Ridge and Culp's Hill.

I tried to get as much rest as possible, thinking I had a long day of fighting ahead, but next morning we received no orders to renew the attack, nor did the Federals show any inclination to take the offensive. We had practically stumbled into the conflict the day before, our commanders having had no idea of the proximity of the Federal forces, but though our success had only been a partial one, we were eager to follow it up with a more decisive victory. So we waited with the greatest impatience all that day, and not a gun was fired, so far as I know, until about four o'clock in the afternoon.

After this, however, the violence of the conflict made up for lost time, but, much to my disappointment, our division missed the best of the fighting, the First Corps, under General Longstreet, usurping the principal honors of the day.

They drove the Federals back from their position at a place called the Peach Orchard, but were defeated in their efforts to gain a foothold on the summits of the Round Tops, two high hills to the south of the town, the possession of which would have enabled us to crush the enemy's entire left wing.

Our division tried another charge on Culp's Hill, which was only partially successful, as we were unable to hold the position, being driven back by a reinforcement of the enemy.

Night came on and our relative positions were little different from those of the night before. Certain points had been gained, but our losses had been very heavy.

We were beginning to realize that the Yankees could fight after all, and it was a far more difficult undertaking to whip them here on their own territory than it had been back in Virginia, where our officers were familiar with the country.

The next morning, in my memory, is a confused blur. The fighting I had seen before had been nothing compared to this. Our attack was directed against the enemy's left, and I lost count of the number of times we charged up the slope of Little Round Top, the lower of the two hills, which it was necessary to gain before attempting the other. We kept the Federals on the defensive, but could not gain permanent possession of this important point, for they realized the importance of holding it, and fought stubbornly, desperately.

The scene was a pandemonium far surpassing anything I have ever witnessed before or since, and the losses were enormous, the field being literally strewn with the dead and wounded of both sides.

It was some time in the forenoon that our division made its last charge, and was driven back in some confusion, which encouraged the enemy to follow us up with a more persistent counter-charge than they had before attempted. Our company, which was reduced to a mere squad, took refuge in a farmhouse southwest of the town, and it was not until our pursuers had been temporarily checked that I had time to observe that it was the same house which I had visited with Quirk, only two days before, when the whole scene had been one of rural peace.

What a different aspect the place now presented! The walls were shattered in places, and the scattered contents of the different rooms gave evidence of the hasty departure of the occupants. I most devoutly hoped that one of them especially had made her escape in safety.

The house afforded us temporary protection, and we prepared to hold it as long as possible, as a check to the Federal advance. They came on at double-time, and we fired into them with considerable effect, but they did not pause.

As I raised my musket to shoot again through the window by which I stood, I felt a sharp pain in my right shoulder, as if a red-hot iron had been thrust into me; everything turned black before my eyes, and even in this last moment of consciousness I realized that my turn had come at last, and this one question flashed across my mind:

"Wounded or killed?"

Then I knew no more.

As my consciousness gradually returned, I found myself lying in a delightfully comfortable bed, with the sunlight streaming in at a window near-by.

The first thing that impressed itself on my mind was the quiet. I had come from a world of din and confusion, booming of cannon, crashing of muskets, and the shrieks of wounded men, into one of peace and rest.

I tried to move, and a sharp pain stabbed through my shoulder, so I lay still, and enjoyed doing so. What was the use of moving, anyway? It was much better to lie motionless and revel in this restful quiet.

Gradually I pieced together my recollections of the battle, and my last part in it. I must have been left for dead by my comrades, but where was I now?

In a hospital? I thought not, for hospitals in war-time were nothing like this, and ordinary soldiers were not put in private rooms. Was the battle over, and what had been the outcome?

But I grew tired of thinking at last, and again indulged in the luxury of utter relaxation. Never mind where I was. I would find out soon enough, and things would take care of themselves. Hang the war, anyway. I was glad to get a rest from it.

Presently I heard some one come softly into the room, and when I opened my eyes I beheld a vision that I supposed was an angel, standing by my bed. Probably this was heaven, I reasoned. Then I remembered where I had seen that angel before. It was only Miss MacPherson, the girl whom I had so dramatically rescued from the gallantries of poor old Quirk.

CHAPTER XI.

CONVALESCENCE.

"MISS MACPHERSON," I said, my voice sounding weak and far away, "would you mind telling me—"

"Oh, Mr. Berkley," she cried, "I'm so glad you're better. You mustn't talk now. You have been very weak, and you must keep perfectly quiet."

"Where am I?" I asked, feeling that this was the next question that is always asked under the circumstances.

"If you will promise to be good and keep very still, I will tell you all about it," she said.

I promised, and she told me what had taken place. She and her father had pluckily returned to their home the very day after the battle, having received positive information that the Confederate army was preparing for retreat.

"From whom did you learn this?" I asked.

"From Mr. Dane," she replied, as I expected. "But you are not keeping your promise."

I apologized, and she went on, apparently knowing just what points I would be most anxious to know about.

"The Reb—the Confederate forces were defeated at the end of the third day—that was day before yesterday — and they are now in retreat," she said. "General Meade is not following them up."

She seemed to know a lot about it, from Dane, of course. She went on to tell me that when she and her father had returned, accompanied by a friend (Dane again, no doubt), the morning after the battle, they had found me lying as I had fallen, on the floor in their dining-room, and at first they had thought I was dead. Finding that I was not, they had put me to bed, and I had added to their already sufficient troubles by requiring considerable attention, being unconscious most of the time and delirious the rest.

She did not put it that way, of course, but I could easily see it, in spite of her efforts to make me feel that I was a welcome guest rather than a burden.

"What day is this?" I asked.

"Sunday, July 5," she said; "but if you speak again I won't tell you another thing."

So I had been lying there nearly two days, and our army had been in retreat since the morning of the fourth.

What an ending for our campaign of invasion, which we had entered upon so confidently! General Lee, our hitherto invincible leader, had been defeated at last. Without presuming to criticize the way this battle was fought, I could not help thinking that if General Jackson could still have been with us the outcome might have been different.

"Now you are to get some sleep," Miss MacPherson said, interrupting my gloomy reflections, "and after a while we will see if you can't eat something. We'll soon have you strong and well again."

I tried to say at least a few words of thanks for all the kindness that had been shown me, but she pointed a warning finger at me.

"Silence, Private Berkley!" she said, and marched out of the room, leaving me quite dazed by the good luck which had befallen me.

It may seem strange that I should call being wounded good luck, but under the circumstances I could only congratulate myself. I might have been thrown into an ambulance with twenty others and jogged over rough roads, or I might have been left on the field, instead of which I was comfortably established in the guest chamber of a farmhouse, and waited upon by a nurse who made being ill a delight.

I let my thoughts wander along these lines, and soon forgot the unpleasant subject of our defeat.

Later in the evening Miss MacPherson brought me in some broth, which was the only nourishment I was allowed to take for the present. To have this fed to me by her own hand I considered the very limit of luxury. Nothing ever tasted so good to me, and I told her so, but she again enforced her command of silence.

I must get a good night's sleep, and tomorrow I might be allowed to talk, if I was stronger. So I obeyed orders and slept very well, for I was still weak and in need of rest.

Next morning, when I heard footsteps at my door and turned, expecting to see my pretty nurse, I will admit that I was somewhat disappointed when my friend Carroll Dane came into the room.

"Good morning, Berkley," he said cheerfully. "You are looking much better."

"I feel much better than I look," I replied. "I say, old chap, do you think you could shave a fellow?"

He laughed.

"Want to primp up for your nurse's benefit, eh? Well, you've already had a pretty close shave, and I think you had better keep still for a few days, and not worry about your appearance."

Dane had once entered on a course of medicine, which he lacked the industry to finish, but he had picked up some general knowledge, and he looked me over, partly removing the bandages from my shoulder, and pronounced my condition excellent.

"But you'll have to stay in bed and keep quiet for some time yet," he warned me.

I did not receive this news with any show of consternation, and noticing this, he grinned at me again.

"Enjoying yourself, eh?" he remarked.

"If you could only manage that shave," I began.

"You are a very exacting patient," he said, "but I'll see what can be done later."

Then Miss MacPherson brought in my breakfast, and again I was fed, while Dane looked on.

"Some people are naturally lucky," he remarked. "I shall go and shoot myself in the shoulder."

Miss MacPherson pretended not to hear him.

After breakfast Dane told me more about the ending of the big battle. He described General Pickett's heroic charge, which resulted in the annihilation of his entire division, and told of the terrible confusion into which the Confederate troops had been thrown, blaming General Meade very decidedly for not taking advantage of this to strike a decisive blow before order was restored.

But I did not allow my thoughts to dwell on these matters, for worrying could do no good, now that it was all over.

Miss MacPherson brought her father in to see me later in the day.

He was a slender, frail-looking old man, possessing much charm of manner. He talked to me pleasantly on various topics, avoiding the subject of the war, and putting me at my ease with a delicate tact which could not have been surpassed by the finest exponent of our famous Southern hospitality.

I had heard that the Yankees were cold and unfriendly, especially to strangers. If this were so, the MacPhersons were an exception to the rule. During my entire stay under their roof I was never once allowed to feel that my presence was a burden, but was treated as a guest whose departure they wished to postpone as long as possible. Though everything was done to facilitate my speedy recovery, they never let it appear that they wanted me to get well so they could be rid of me.

Dane came to see me every day for about a week, after which I saw him no more. When I inquired about him, Miss MacPherson told me he had gone South on business. I cannot say that I missed him.

I had seen enough to convince me that he was very much in love with Miss MacPherson, but whether or not he was an accepted suitor I could not tell. But as I was under some obligations to him for his kindness in doctoring me and dressing my wound, I did not feel that it would be quite honorable for me to take advantage of the circumstances which separated him from her to usurp whatever place he held in her affections.

As the pleasant summer days passed, and I gradually regained my health and strength, this task of leaving unsaid the things which I longed to tell her became constantly harder.

While I was still in bed she used to read to me, and I would lie there, watching every expression which crossed her face, and listening to every musical inflection of her

voice, but when she had finished I could not have told a thing that she had been reading about.

When I grew stronger we would walk in the garden together in the evenings, her father sometimes joining us for a while, but always retiring early and leaving us alone.

The effort it cost me on these occasions to refrain from telling her how much I loved her was about superhuman, I think. But I was held back not only by considerations of loyalty to my friend Dane, but by my position as guest, and the obligations I was under to her and her father.

At last, however, I began to see that my will power would not hold out much longer, and as I had practically recovered from my wound, and was nearly as strong as ever, I felt that the time had come for me to take my leave of these good friends.

When we said good-by, I could find no words to express my gratitude and appreciation of their kindness. In Elsie's eyes I thought I could detect an expression almost of reproach, which nearly caused me to forget all my good resolutions at the last moment—but I managed to tear myself away, boarded the train for Baltimore, and stood on the back platform, waving my cap until the little Gettysburg station dwindled out of sight in the distance.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FINISHING TOUCH.

My journey South was an uneventful one until I reached Richmond. Here I found every one gloomy and disheartened over the reverses which the Southern forces were meeting with at all points, and somewhat alarmed over the possibility of an invasion of their city by the Northern troops.

About the first person I met on the street was my friend Carroll Dane, who seemed to have the faculty of turning up everywhere. He was dressed in civilian attire, as usual, and I suddenly remembered that I was fitted out in his clothes from head to foot, clothes which he had given me while I was still confined to my bed. He looked me over critically, as he shook hands with me.

"You don't fill it out," he said. "I thought my friends, the MacPhersons, would fatten you up, but I guess you were too much in love."

"Dane," I replied, not caring to joke on this subject, "what are you doing here in Richmond?"

"Oh, just looking about," he answered.

"Well, don't look about too much." I said. "You know I still have some sense of patriotism left, and I shall have to give you up to the authorities if you go too far."

"I never take chances," said Dane coolly. "I always know the people I am dealing with. You, for instance, will not give me up, for the simple reason that you are bound by a point of honor."

"A point of honor?" I repeated. "The honorable thing would be for me to look after the welfare of my cause."

"Not under the circumstances."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because I am your rival."

"Because—what?"

"Because," he repeated solemnly, "I am your rival for the affections of a certain young lady, and therefore you could not use such means to put me out of the way."

"Oh," I said. "I see."

This was a new way of looking at it, but at least it implied that I was to be reckoned with. If we were rivals, then perhaps I stood as good a chance as he. I made a sudden resolution.

"Very well," I said, "if you put it that way, I will take you at your word. Let it be understood that we are rivals, and that I shall use every fair means in my power to win."

"Of course," he agreed. "Every fair means. But it would not be fair to give me up as a spy."

"No," I admitted, "I could scarcely do that, as you say."

"I am surprised that you should seem so anxious to have an old friend shot," he said. "You have become a very bloodthirsty character."

We parted on the best of terms, and I have never seen him since. His was a hazardous branch of the service, and whether he survived the war or not I do not know.

I had decided to go home for a visit before thinking of rejoining my regiment, as I felt that I was entitled to the rest, and that my father would be anxious to see me. I did not wait to write that I was coming, and my arrival was an absolute surprise.

My welcome was in the nature of an ovation. If ever a man was put on a pedestal, I was. I had atoned for my past reluctance

to enlist, and now I was a hero and a veteran. .

The fact that I had been wounded was the finishing touch which made my glory complete. I was petted and spoiled until I felt sure that I would never be fit for the service again.

My father could not make enough fuss over me, and he never tired of listening to my accounts of the different experiences I had been through. Miss Julia would also listen to these stories of the campaign, like a child absorbed in a fairy tale. Without wishing to appear conceited, I cannot deny that there was a subtle something in her manner toward me which made me feel sure that should I again make a certain offer, which had once been so scornfully rejected, it would now meet with a very different reception.

I also knew that this was the one thing which would make my father absolutely happy, and I sincerely regretted that it was a thing I could not do, even for him. It seemed that I was fated to be constantly disappointing poor father, much as I desired to please him.

The three of us were walking in the garden together one evening, after I had been at home about a week, and I knew that father thought it was about time that I made a formal declaration, and get the matter settled. I had had plenty of time, and I was expected to speak. I felt instinctively that something definite was expected of me, and I think there was no doubt in my father's mind as to what that something would be. I was sincerely sorry that it could not be.

It was an ideal evening, and as the shadows deepened and the stars began to come out, father glanced about him and seemed to consider that the time had come for him to leave us together, in this perfect setting. But as he was about to go into the house, I detained him. It was best to have it over with at once.

"Father," I said, "you once offered to use your influence to get me a commission. Could you not now bring that same influence to bear, and get me a parole from duty—say for six months? I think I have earned it, and I have something to attend to before returning to the service."

"Certainly, my son," he said, in a pleased tone. "You have, as you say, earned it, and it can be arranged very easily. I will go up to Richmond and attend to it at once."

It hurt me to tell him the rest, but it had to be done.

"To-morrow, father," I said, "I start North again, on a trip."

He stopped and looked at me in astonishment. An expression of hurt surprise flashed across Miss Julia's face, but the next moment she was smiling at me.

"You are going North again?" repeated father. "Where to?"

"To the little town of Gettysburg," I said.

THE END.

The Man Who Leased Air.

BY VIOLA JUSTIN.

The Astounding Thing That Happened in the Office When One Partner Went Away on His Honeymoon.

THIS story begins where so many end —with a wedding and a honeymoon.

Although it was not Ewald Goodale's honeymoon, it affected him deeply. He greatly missed his partner, Lester Marshall, and his cheery face at the double desk in the little office where the glass door proclaimed their vocation backward, if you were inside, thus: ETATSE LAER, and REAL ESTATE, if you were out in the corridor of the Universal Trust Building in Doverdale.

It was Monday morning, and a heap of letters were sleeted up against the door. Goodale entered and kicked them aside viciously, remembering that only the Saturday before his partner had been single and happy. Goodale couldn't realize how any one in the world could be happy this particular morning.

He walked over to the windows that faced Main Street, and as he pulled up the shades a shower of sparkling motes floated in on the morning sunlight. He opened the window and thrust his head out a little way, then drew it back.

He had evidently seen something that displeased him mightily, for his temper had not improved. He sat down at his desk, opened a drawer, and took from it a sort of plan. It was, in fact, the plan of the street he had just looked at. He laid it on the glass top of his desk and glared at the thing.

"Funny," he muttered, "that this block in the heart of the city, and the best commercial street in town, is crammed full on either side with flourishing shops right up to the lot Lester and I own. Then the break in the row made by our property looks like the space caused by a missing tooth in an otherwise perfect set. If I could sell that lot, maybe I could get married, too."

He tossed the plan back into the drawer and opened the morning paper, showing signs of further contumely as he perceived the advertisement of the lot for sale at $25,000 in the same column, same type, same place, it had occupied for the past year.

Yet no one had bid on it. No one wanted that "One chance in a lifetime," that "Great sacrifice in the heart of the fastest-growing, most popular block on Main Street," that "Song which Goodale & Marshall, real-estate agents, were willing to render for the sum of $25,000."

Next to their business, this lot on Main Street was the cherished and joint possession of the two young partners. Goodale had often declared that it was a clump of dirt in their path of progress, but Marshall maintained that there was a fortune in it, and openly avowed that next to Margaret, the present Mrs. Marshall, he loved the lot with all his enthusiastic young soul.

"If it were all mine, I'd give it away," Goodale often said in disgust.

"And if I had the time I'd sell it and become rich and famous," retorted Marshall. "All it needs is a little ingenuity to get rid of the thing."

"All it needs," added Goodale, "is a stick of dynamite to get rid of it."

"Good morning, Mr. Goodale." The cheery voice of his stenographer, Miss Strickland, roused him from his gloom.

"Morning," he responded briefly, taking the letters she had rescued from where they lay scattered on the floor.

"Nice day," she commented, removing her hat.

"Is it?" asked Goodale, examining his mail absently.

"Why, yes, so sunny and pretty."

"Of course," came the stammered reply. "I beg your pardon, Miss Strickland. Here's a picture post-card from Mr. and Mrs."—he paused and examined the handwriting—"Mr. and Mrs. Marshall." He read finally: "'Best wishes. We are stopping at the Waldorf. This is a picture of the Flatiron Building, nearly a mile high. Regards.' Humph!" Goodale added, "should think old Lester might have had more than just 'regards' for me, working like a slave here in Doverdale while he's off skylarking for two weeks."

Goodale turned the picture around and looked at it a long time. Then he called Miss Strickland over to share in his emotion of pleasant astonishment.

"Twenty stories," he announced, counting them with his thumb-nail. "That is some building, Miss Strickland." She nodded.

"Then," he continued, gazing dreamily at the gaily colored replica of the structure, "think of all the money they get for those lofts up above the third story! Why, it's like selling the atmosphere!

"Look here," he continued, warming to his theme, "the foundation of this thing is just a little flatiron-shaped city block, with one frontage on Fifth Avenue and another on Broadway. And just look here. After you have passed the fourth floor—" He broke off abruptly to add: "How high is our new bank building? Five stories! And they call it a sky-scraper! Well, after you pass the fourth floor of the Flatiron all the other lofts up in the air must be clear profit. Do you get that, Miss Strickland?"

Miss Strickland nodded, but there was doubt in her brown eyes.

"Yes," she murmured obediently, "we ought to have a real sky-scraper in Doverdale."

"We ought to have a giant building about ten stories high, Miss Strickland, right here in the middle of Main Street," Goodale continued feverishly. "A noble building like this one, for instance, and we could call it the Frying-pan or any other kitchen utensil we liked."

"Oh, Mr. Goodale, it might do for

Fifth Avenue and Broadway in New York," Miss Strickland replied, "but Doverdale is so conservative."

"Not at all," cried Goodale. "I think I've got an idea."

He jumped to his feet as he spoke, crushed the post-card into his pocket, and reached for his hat.

"If anybody comes for me just tell them that I have gone over to the Doverdale *News* for a few minutes. I'm going to change that notice advertising the lot, then I'll proceed to make Doverdale talk over its tea for a week, for I'm going to be the man who builds the first sky-scraper in this town. It may take a long time, but I'm going to do it."

II.

MR. AND MRS. LESTER MARSHALL, of Doverdale, stood at the news-stand of the Waldorf, looking over the post-cards. They had already sent Goodale ten, depicting the city's noted buildings and places of interest.

Mrs. Marshall loved to look at them, and sometimes spent fifteen or twenty minutes at a stretch whirling the little revolving stands and reading the inscriptions which were printed on the cards. Then she bought a few, lest the fair creature who presided might accuse her of parsimony; later unloading the lot on Goodale.

The bride had never been in New York before, and her husband had only passed through it on his way to Trenton, which is scarcely a fair way to judge any city; they were completely dazzled.

They took a ride up Fifth Avenue on a rubber-neck wagon, gazed with awe on the homes of the wealthy, and listened and marveled over the megaphone man's familiarity with the lives and idiosyncrasies of the rich.

A trip to the Singer Tower revealed New York reduced to a patch of land that appeared to be a kitchen-garden crawling with people, hurrying hither and thither like millions of ants. This view normalized their perspective of the Empire City, and they descended to the street, leaving much of their awe behind them and transferring their reverence to the great structure that had shown them New York as it really is. It ended in their sending another post-card to Goodale, this time of the Singer Building.

On returning to the hotel, Wednesday afternoon they found that he had evidently enlightened Doverdale as to their whereabouts, as they had secretly hoped he would, for behold a copy of the Doverdale *News* had arrived and was awaiting them.

Marshall led his bride into the Turkish room to read the latest news from their home town. He glanced over the first page, hoping that the editor would have mentioned their trip in the "social column."

"It makes me homesick," remarked Mrs. Marshall, though her eyes were feasting on the pretty gowns of the women who passed to and fro before her.

Her husband started to reply, then stopped. He had evidently read something in the paper that puzzled him, something that wiped the smile from his face and caused him to turn an eye blazing with wrath upon his wife.

"For Heaven's sake, Margaret, will you read that advertisement, the one that's marked, and tell me whether I am drunk, or mad, or losing my eyesight?" he exclaimed.

Mrs. Marshall took the paper from her lord and read the paragraph to which he pointed with a trembling finger. Here is what she saw:

> As Goodale & Marshall are going out of business, they are making a special offer on the famous 25 x 100 lot advertised in these pages for over a year, at $25,000. It is situated between the post-office and Meagers' drug-store, in the most popular and fastest growing block on Main Street.
>
> The firm have decided to sell the lot at the unbelievably low figure of $15.00 (fifteen dollars).

When Mrs. Marshall had finished reading, her husband jumped to his feet and dragged her to the telegraph-desk.

"Goodale & Marshall selling out!" he cried. "Goody's gone crazy. I only hope they'll do something with the poor old chap that will prevent him from going clean off his base before I can get there. We'll have to postpone our honeymoon, dearie, and take charge of the business for a while."

Marshall despatched a telegram to the editor of the *News*, ordering him to kill the advertisement, adding that he would better watch out for the office and Goodale until he (Marshall) returned on the 4 P.M. train next day.

Then he telephoned the W. L. B. for parlor-chairs, settled his hotel bill, and,

leaving a call for 6.30 A.M., he and Margaret went to their room to pack.

III.

AGAIN and again they read and reread the advertisement in the *News*. They couldn't understand it. First they decided that Goody had gone crazy the day after the wedding; but then the editor of the *News* must have gone mad, too, to allow such an advertisement to appear.

Again, Goody might not have been mad at all, but in some unaccountable way have become plunged in abject poverty. Whatever it was, Marshall realized that it dated from his wedding, although his partner had at that time shown no symptoms of a sinister nature. Sudden insanity was, after all, the only explanation of his strange decision to sell the lot at such a ridiculous figure.

It was nearly four o'clock when Lester and his worried bride registered at the Elf Hotel at Doverdale. Marshall begged her to rest while he went down to the office to have it out with the lunatic. Clearly Goody *was* mad, for on buying a copy of the *News* the frantic Marshall beheld the same impudent notice he had read the day before. He couldn't understand why the editor had allowed the thing to appear again after the peremptory telegram from New York.

As he turned into Main Street Marshall noticed a great crowd of people standing in a line from Plum Street to the sidewalk opposite the Universal Trust Building. Officers had been called upon to prevent the crowd from blocking the pavement. Up and down both sides of the street were jammed eager men and women.

Marshall explained to several "plain-clothes" men that he wished to go to his office in the Universal Trust Building. His heart sank when he saw that the crowd thickened and seemed to coagulate about the door of this structure, for he imagined that the throng had collected to see the madman carried away in an ambulance. There was no ambulance, however, but the impression that he had come too late to prevent his friend being taken to an asylum sent Marshall rushing up the stairs to the second floor.

Another great number of people were standing outside the closed door of his office, with an overflow of the curious ones clinging to the railings and stairways leading up and down.

"What is it?" he demanded of a strange-looking individual who blocked his further progress. "What has happened?"

"Aw, stand back there — it ain't your turn yet. We've been waiting here three days, and there's got to be justice done."

"Justice fiddlesticks! That's my office," Marshall insisted. "I'm Mr. Marshall, of the firm of Goodale & Marshall."

The other laughed.

"You can't get in on that. It's too thin. A fellow tried that game yesterday, and got hurt, too."

Marshall felt in his pocket for a card, but the door of his office opened just then a trifle and he saw Goodale, genial Goodale, apparently as sound and sane as the day of the wedding.

Marshall crowded forward. "For Heaven's sake, Goodale, let me in!" he roared over the heads of the people. "It's Marshall back from New York—let me in!"

Goodale looked him over quickly, recognized him with a slight nod, and replied coolly:

"Can't see you now. You've got to take your turn with the others, old man."

Marshall could scarcely believe his ears. Once more he shouted: "Whatever this madness means, I'm going to say right here: Half that lot you are selling is mine."

A snicker greeted this speech, and Goodale called back: "Well, Marshall, old fellow, I've never done you yet—you'll get your seven-dollar-and-fifty-cent share all right!"

At this final piece of impudence Marshall attempted to force his way to the door, but before he could take another step it was shut in his face.

He looked at it an instant, and at the unfriendly, selfish countenances about him. Then he became downright, furiously mad. He ground his teeth with rage, and then a thought struck him. He would call on Swanson of the *News* and see if the editor could tell him anything to elucidate Goodale's extraordinary actions.

He strode up and down in Swanson's outer office for about half an hour, baffled, angry, and wild with impatience.

At last the editor came out and shook hands with him.

"Why didn't you kill that ad.?" Marshall began excitedly.

Swanson held up his hand.

"Wait a minute," he said. "There isn't anything for you to worry about.

Your homecoming has almost ruined poor old Goodale, I should think. You simmer down and let Goodale alone. I can't tell you any of the particulars, but I will say that boy's a raving genius."

"He's a raving lunatic! How dare he advertise that we are selling out and offer our twenty-five-thousand-dollar lot for fifteen dollars without a word to me?" said Marshall excitedly.

The recollection of his wrongs sent him pacing up and down the floor again.

"Am I to be kept in ignorance of what this crazy fool's going to do with my business and my lot?"

"Remember half of it belongs to Goodale," Swanson suggested.

Marshall glared at him.

"Will you kindly tell me which of us three is crazy?" he demanded.

"I'll tell who ain't crazy if you want to know," said Swanson, fixing his keen eye on the angry young man. "It's Goodale."

Marshall was disgusted with the editor's evasive answers, and was about to walk out of the office when Goodale himself leaped into the room as if he had been shot out of a catapult.

"Swan, old boy, I've done it!" he cried excitedly. "I've just settled with old Foster Gray after a terrible two hours. He knows a good thing when he sees it. There were three companies battling for a chance at that pesky little lump of ground—but I've sold it to the richest old money-grabber in town—"

"Who wouldn't have bought the lot at that preposterously low sum?" screamed Marshall. "There isn't anything phenomenal in that. I'd have bought my share back from you at fifteen dollars if that was what you wanted."

Goodale laughed hysterically.

"Listen to him, Swan. Look here, Marshall, don't go insulting me till you have cause. That ad. was only a bait. Three big companies, battling for a little fifteen-dollar lot, and old Foster Gray promising to give me half of Doverdale if I'd let him in on my scheme.

"If you promise not to go up in the air, Marshall I'll tell you how I made the sale. I sell the lot for fifteen dollars, see, but only on the condition that the person buying it erects a ten-story—what d'ye call it, Frying-pan Building—on the site, and for every story above the fourth floor we are going to get one hundred and fifty dollars a month, each floor to be leased for no less than ten years. You see, Marsh, old boy, I wanted you and me to be the first men to put up a Pancake Building in Doverdale—you know, the kind they have in New York—why, you sent me a picture of one."

"Mrs. Marshall sent you ten," said Marshall stiffly.

"Sure," cried the happy Goodale. "That's where I got my idea—our idea. We've got old Foster Gray to build for us, and he turns the lofts over to us to rent for him. We collect the rent on all floors that are going to be built up in the air. See—we lease the air, old fellow, and collect a handsome income from the skies! Besides being the first men to put up a Pancake Building in this town."

"Flatiron," Marshall corrected.

"Oh, Soup-tureen, if you like!" cried Goodale. He dived into his pocket and fished up a crumpled five-dollar bill, two ones, and a fifty-cent piece.

"Here's your share of the lot, Marshall," he said, shoving the money joyously into his partner's hand.

A dim smile began to spread on Marshall's troubled countenance, which clouded again momentarily as he asked:

"But can you explain why we are going to sell out?"

"Because we are going to move into the new building next March," said Goodale on the spur of the moment—"and, by the way, I herewith invite you to my wedding."

"Wedding?" echoed Marshall.

"Yes, I've engaged Miss Strickland to do my typewriting for life."

ON THE STAGE OF LIFE.

We are like puppets in some conjurer's hands,
Who smiling, easy, nonchalantly stands
And says, amid the universal cheers:
"You see this man—and now he disappears!"

Tom Masson.

A Sky-Scraper Conspiracy.*

BY GEORGE C. JENKS,

Author of "A Misplay in Diamonds," "Doing a Favor to David," etc.

A Story of Plot and Counterplot Among the Steel-Workers on a Modern Tower of Babel.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

FRANK STANLEY, formerly a sailor, is now employed as a steel-worker on the Monckton, a sky-scraper in process of construction under the direction of Zeb Grant, who has made a special enemy of Dave May, the engineer, by declaring that May must be drunk when it is well known that he is a temperance advocate. Stanley confides to Jack Price, his chum and roommate at Mrs. Louden's boarding-house, that he has no call to be friends with Grant, as he recognizes him for the man who threw his friend, Jim Millen (now a telegraph operator), down a ship's hatchway, and lamed him for life. May is getting up a conspiracy against Grant to delay the completion of the Monckton. Stanley and Price are invited to attend the meeting in May's room, but they decline to take the oath, and are groping about in the hall outside, when they brush against Millen (who has been calling on Stanley) and now exclaims: "I wish they would let me take that oath!"

CHAPTER VI.

AN EAGER RECRUIT.

ALTHOUGH the words were spoken calmly, there was a strain of suppressed excitement in them which could not be mistaken by any one as familiar with Millen as Frank Stanley.

"Why, Jim, what made you come up here?" he asked. "I thought you were down in our room."

"I didn't stay there two minutes after you'd gone out. I couldn't."

"You couldn't."

"No. Talking about that fellow Grant has put my nerves on edge. You know how you feel when you're working a bad wire, which keeps on buzzing and dropping out the dots and dashes so that it jumbles everything up?"

"Yes, I know. It's hard to sit still at the key."

"That's right. You haven't forgotten what telegraphing is, Stan, have you? Well, that's how it was after you'd left your room to-night. I wanted to get to the open air and walk."

"Poor old Jim!" murmured Stanley. "Come on down-stairs."

He took Jim Millen by the arm and led him to the top of the staircase. Jim hung back as they were about to descend.

"I should like to go into that room," he said. "There's some one in there I want to meet."

"We'll talk about that when we get below," was Stanley's response. "We can't discuss anything here in this darkness. We don't know who might be listening."

There was reason in this, and Millen made no further objection to going down. When they were in the bedroom on the second floor, with the door shut, he remarked earnestly:

"Stan, I'm mighty glad I came here to-night."

"So am I, Jim. You know how good it always makes me feel to see you."

"Yes, and I'm always glad to see you, Stan. But what I meant particularly is that I think I see how I am going to pay some of my debt to the man who did *this* to me."

He touched his misshapen, useless leg with the thick cane as he continued:

"When I went up-stairs my only object was to find out how long you'd be before you could come home with me. You had said you were just going up to the third floor to see a man. I didn't know there was to be a formal meeting about something. So I was about to knock at the door, when somebody began to make a speech. I caught every word. I couldn't help it."

* *Began May* ARGOSY. *Single copies*, 10 *cents.*

"Yes," put in Jack Price. "Dave May has one of those fog-horn voices that carry."

"Well, he made a good speech. It was clear and straight to the point. When he was describing the character of Zebediah Grant I should have known whom he meant if he hadn't mentioned the name. I wanted to go right in and shake hands with him. I knew that everything he said about that dirty old rascal was true."

"I guess it was," agreed Jack Price.

"Then he said there was a campaign on—that the men working under Grant had a plan of revenge. I was waiting to hear what this plan was, when the speaker switched off. He said he wanted everybody present to pledge himself to the cause and then take an oath of secrecy."

"You heard all that?" exclaimed Stanley, surprised at the accuracy of Jim Millen's knowledge.

"Yes. It came to me almost as plainly as if I'd been in the room."

"H-m! What more did you hear?"

"Nothing. Soon afterward the door opened, and you and Mr. Price came out. Then the door shut, and you found me on the landing in the dark. Did you take the oath?"

"No," returned Stanley shortly.

"Did Mr. Price?"

"No," spoke up Jack for himself.

Jim Millen sat reflective and silent for a few moments. Then he said, with an eagerness that rather disturbed Frank Stanley:

"Do you think you could get me into that room?"

"What for?"

"I think I should like to join these men. From what I heard while I stood on the landing, I believe they would find me useful."

There was a look in Jim Millen's deep-set eyes that to Frank Stanley told of deadly purpose. He had seen it more than once in their old sailor days, when the devil in the bosom of his shipmate had been aroused by some act of injustice or oppression. It had come near resulting in a tragedy at least once before he was crippled on board of the Golden Hope.

"The club they are forming is only for steel-workers employed on the Monckton Building, Jim," answered Stanley. "Even if it were open to everybody, I don't think you would care to be a member."

"I would be a member of any club—if that is what it is—which has for its object the punishing of a tyrant, especially when he is the man I have been looking for day and night ever since I was landed at New York on a stretcher," said Jim Millen through his clenched teeth.

"By George! So would I," muttered Jack Price.

"Jim," said Frank Stanley, placing his two hands on Millen's shoulders and looking him affectionately in the face, "you know how I feel about this matter. But you promised me one day you'd let me wipe off the score for you."

"No, Stan—not exactly that. What I said was that if I never caught up with this man Grant—I didn't know his name was 'Zebediah' till I got it over the wire this week—I would be glad to know that you'd fixed matters with him for me. That would be better than letting him get away altogether. Wasn't that it, Stan? Now, honest—wasn't that what I said?"

"Yes; that's so. But I never meant to let you—"

"I know you didn't," interrupted Millen bitterly. "You knew I was not as strong as I used to be. You didn't want to let me into a scrap with my poor wheel. You thought, because I had only one good leg, I might get the worst of a physical argument, no matter how hard I might fight. I know just what was in your mind, Stan—dear old boy! Well, now I'm going to show you that Jim Millen, lame as he is, can still take care of his own vengeance."

"Very well, Jim. Only, be careful."

"Oh, I'll be careful," returned Jim Millen, with a short laugh. "I am going upstairs to see this Dave May. I'm going to tell him I have a right to join his—club. I believe, when I have told him my story, he will admit that I have more reason to hate Zebediah Grant than he or any one else. He'll *have* to let me in. I've waited two years for a chance to get at the man who did worse than murder me. Now it comes right in my way, there isn't anybody going to hold me off."

He had been limping up and down with his cane—as he generally did when excited—while speaking. Now he suddenly flung open the door.

"Jim! Jim! Don't be rash! Keep cool!"

Frank Stanley seized his arm and tried to keep him in the room. Millen pulled away and began to stump up the stairs.

"Jim! Stop! This won't help you at all!" persisted Stanley. "These men don't know what they are doing. They are going to get themselves into all kinds of trouble."

Jim Millen stopped on the stairs and looked down at his old chum steadily. His expression told Stanley it would be useless to argue further, even before Millen said, with an emphasis that suggested he was weighing every word he uttered:

"Stan, I'm willing to share *any* trouble which will make Zebediah Grant regret, even for a moment, that he made a wreck of me on the Golden Hope two years ago. All I ask you to do now is to wait till I come down." Then he added significantly: "It doesn't take long just to take an oath."

He turned and worked his way up the stairs under the influence of the excitement that filled him, as fast as Stanley himself could have gone. For a moment the latter was inclined to follow. Then he shook his head resignedly and stood still.

"It's no use, Jack," he said. "I know Jim Millen. When his blood is up he will do what he sets out to accomplish so long as he is able to move. We'll have to let him go."

"He may have a harder job now than he expects," remarked Jack Price. "Dave May isn't likely to let a stranger into such a dangerous game as this. I know *I* wouldn't."

Stanley did not reply. He was thinking about Cora Millen, Jim's sister. How was he to explain to her if harm came to her brother in this boarding-house? It was true that she knew Jim's headstrong disposition. All the same, she might think Frank Stanley should have held him back.

"Well, if Cora gets down on me, it will be one more black mark I shall have against Zebediah Grant," he said to himself fiercely. "That's all."

Jim Millen had reached the upper landing and was knocking at Dave May's door. There had been no sounds from the room since the ejection of the two young men. Doubtless this meant that the mysterious oath was being administered to the conspirators with due solemnity and in impressive silence.

No sooner had Jim Millen knocked, however, than the door opened. As Frank Stanley and Jack Price listened they made out that several men were talking on the landing. Then the door closed with a bang.

Up the stairs slipped Frank Stanley. He lighted a match on the dark landing, and satisfied himself that it was empty. Jim Millen had gone into the room. Dave May had admitted him to the secret counsels of his "club."

"Well, Jack," said Stanley, as they returned to their room, "Jim Millen has gone into that combination. I don't know what to do about it."

"Why should you do anything?" asked Price. "Let the boys deal with old Zeb in their own way. You have no love for him."

"No, but I am afraid of that temper of Jim's. It's liable to put him in the lead of any fool scheme these fellows may have. He never stops to consider consequences."

"Well, they are not going to do anything to old Zeb himself, are they?"

"Not physically. No, there is no likelihood of that. What they are aiming at is to hold up the work on the Monckton Building somehow, so that it won't be finished in the contract time limit. They will hit old Zebediah in his tenderest spot—his bank-account. I wish I knew just what their game is—I mean, how they plan to carry it out."

"What gets me is, why you should care so much," grumbled Jack Price.

"I have several reasons for caring," rejoined Stanley. "One is that Grant believes I am in the conspiracy. If anything happens he is pretty sure to spread the report secretly among the other builders that I am the ringleader. Then on the blacklist I go, and that means I get no more jobs as a steel-worker anywhere. That would be the end of my ambition, and would mean my ruin. I am not fit for anything else, except sailoring."

"Well, then, you could go to sea, if the worst comes to the worst, couldn't you?"

Frank Stanley looked reproachfully at his friend, and Jack Price got up to slap him gently on the shoulder.

"I beg your pardon, Stan. I oughtn't to have said that. Of course, you couldn't leave New York. I—I—had forgotten the girl. At the same time, I'm all-fired glad *I'm* not in love. But why couldn't you go back to telegraphing?"

"I don't think any man who has been a sailor, or has worked on these big buildings, where the air is fresh, free, and plentiful, could ever stand the confinement of a telegraph-office and the everlasting *click-click-click* of the instruments," replied Stanley, with a laugh.

"Hallo! There's Millen out of the room," exclaimed Jack, running to the open door. "He's coming down-stairs in a hurry."

After a few minutes of stumping and shuffling, Jim Millen burst in, flushed with excitement.

"Well, Stan," he cried, "*I've done it!*"

"What? Taken the oath?"

"Sure! Now I'm going home. Will you come with me as far as the Broadway car? I want to talk to you. That is, if Mr. Price will excuse you."

"Certainly. I have an engagement, anyhow," said Jack, lying with cheerful promptitude. "I was only waiting till you came down. Good night, Mr. Millen! See you later, Stan!"

Jack Price threw his hat rakishly on one side of his head and floated away. Frank Stanley gazed sadly at Jim Millen.

"I'm sorry you've done this thing, Jim," he said. "Are you going to tell your mother and—Cora?"

"No. That's what I want you to do for me, Stan. But don't talk about it while I am in the room. See? And don't get them scared. *You* know how to put it so that it will sound all right to them."

"I wish I could make it *actually* all right, as well as sound so," said Stanley. "It's too late for me to see them to-night, anyhow."

"Yes; it's nearly ten o'clock now. Well, we'll walk over to the car if you're ready."

The two old friends went out together. It struck Frank Stanley that he had not seen Millen so cheerful for a long time.

"What I want to ask you, Stan," said Jim, as they reached Broadway, "is this: Do you think Zebediah Grant would recognize me to-day as the man he knocked down the hatchway of the Golden Hope two years ago?"

"I think it quite safe to say he wouldn't," replied Stanley positively.

"That's my own opinion," declared Jim in a satisfied tone.

"Why did you ask?"

"Nothing particular, Stan. Here's my car. Will you help me aboard? Conductors do it rather roughly sometimes."

Frank Stanley—with a pain at his heart which was always there when the helplessness of his chum was accentuated in some such way as this—almost lifted Jim Millen to the platform of the car. Then, after waving a farewell, he stood looking after it until its lights were swallowed up among the many others that have given to upper Broadway the appellation of "the Great White Way."

"Poor Jim! I wish he hadn't done it!" he murmured.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THEY USED JIM MILLEN.

It was the next Sunday afternoon.

Everything was quiet about the half-built Monckton Trust Company's sky-scraper.

The automatic riveters, which kept up such a deafening racket all the week, were silent. The shouting men, sending white-hot bolts of iron shooting through the air, to be deftly caught in tin pails by other men fifty feet away, were absent. The elevators were immovable.

Dave May's engine, like the others in the building, was covered by a tarpaulin, and, from the hundred-foot sprawling arm of his derrick, the ropes, chains, and hooks dangled idly.

Things in general looked as if the hundreds of men might suddenly have been stricken dead or helpless in the midst of their work. Everything was just as if it had been dropped out of hand without warning.

As a matter of fact, the mighty agent which had abruptly stopped operations and caused tools to be left just where they happened to be was the whistle that had sounded at noon on Saturday, telling the men it was time to knock off for the week.

The upper portion of the skeleton steel frame, showing gaunt against the blue sky, looked almost pathetically deserted. The same lonesomeness was suggested below, where solid walls of white stone and marble were gradually hiding the steel beams, girders, and uprights, story by story.

The stone-masons were not many floors behind the steel-workers on the Monckton. In putting up the colossal commercial structures which are so large an element in all important American cities it is essential that the various artificers shall work not only in harmony, but almost simultaneously.

An expert, looking at the building, would have decided that it could be finished inside of two months, though probably with only a day or two to spare.

A layman would have been more than

doubtful. He would have said conditions were chaotic; that things were being done by accident; that there was no method, no regularity, no system.

Some such remark had been made to Zebediah Grant only the day before. He had laughed scornfully as he replied that the work was progressing in as orderly a way as its nature would permit. Barring unforeseen obstacles, he said, the Monckton would be turned over to the decorators and finishers well within the sixty days set as the limit of time in the contract.

On this bright autumn Sunday afternoon Pat Cregan, the watchman of the Monckton—a special police officer—naturally desired to enjoy the sunshine. Therefore he strolled about outside, but never out of sight of the main entrance, which was a little way down a side street.

The entrance was well protected from casual intruders. It could be reached only by walking over a rough temporary bridge of boards across a wide opening. This opening would, in due course, be covered in with a thick flint-glass pavement.

Down in the hole was a cellar; then, below, a subcellar, with other caverns farther down, deep in the dynamite-riven rock where the steel, granite, and concrete foundations of the building began.

"Hallo, Dave," said the watchman, as Dave May, the engineer, in his somewhat wrinkled Sunday clothes, came sauntering up. "Where did you come from?"

"Just got off a street-car, Pat. I wanted to get a spirit-level from my tool-box in the building. I borrowed it up at the boarding-house the other day, and now the fellow wants it."

"Where's yer tool-box?"

"On the thirty-second."

"What? Holy saints, man, ye can't git up there to-day! There's no elevators running, d'ye mind. Thirty-two stories!"

"That isn't much."

"Not much, is it? Arrah! The man'll have to wait till to-morrow."

"He can't, Pat," protested Dave. "He's leaving town to-night. He goes to work at noon to-morrow in Chicago, and he's got to have that spirit-level. I don't mind going after it. The stairs are floored with stone a good part of the way, and there's the iron frames the rest of it. Is the front door open?"

"Of course. That door's always open when I'm around. But that ain't the question. What I'm thinking about is climbing them thirty-two flights of stairs. I tell ye straight, Dave May, I ain't wantin' to do it. Not at all I ain't."

"You don't have to, Pat. I'll go up by myself."

"That wouldn't do neither."

"Why?"

"It's ag'in' me orders. I'm instructed not to let any one into the building unless I'm with 'em. If you go up there I've got to work along with ye. That's all about it."

"I hate to give you that trouble," apologized Dave. "But you see how it is. I borrowed this spirit-level last Wednesday, saying I'd bring it back the next night. Well, I forgot it that night, and every night. But to-day the owner came to me and said he was going to Chicago this evening, and he must have it. He's a stone-mason, and he uses a spirit-level in his business."

"I see, Dave. Sure ye've put yourself in bad."

Pat Cregan and Dave May walked slowly across the side street on the corner of which stood the Monckton, and went down toward the boarded-up main entrance, with its one little door.

"Well, what am I to do? You see, I've got to get that spirit-level this afternoon," said Dave.

"Ye'll have to go up, I s'pose, and I'll be after going up with ye."

"I'm much obliged to you, Pat."

"That's all right. But I wasn't thinking I'd ever go up to them high floors until the house was done and the elevators put in fit for Christians to ride in."

"You've never been up to the thirty-second?"

"Divil a one of me. The fifth is as high as I've been, and I was nearly killed going as far as that. Still, as I've got to go with ye, I reckon it won't be doin' me any harm to go over the whole place for once."

"You'll like it when you get up there," said Dave encouragingly.

Pat Cregan's response was an incredulous sniff.

"Ye oughtn't to have come in them church togs. They'll be all dusty 'fore ye get down," he remarked, as they entered the building.

They had gone up two flights of the stairs, which were unguarded by balustrades, when Pat suddenly stopped, and, in some excitement, turned to go down again.

"What's the matter?" asked Dave.

"Bad cess to me! I forgot to bolt the outside door."

"That's all right. I'll go down," volunteered Dave May.

Before Pat Cregan could stop him, Dave was running down the stairs, taking no heed of the danger of falling over the side, which the absence of balustrades made a real one.

In a couple of minutes Pat heard the grating of a bolt shooting into an iron socket, and he nodded contentedly. Then he heard Dave coming up.

"That was soon done, Pat!" sang out Dave, as he came into view on the second flight of stairs. "But I don't see why you have to be so particular when you are inside, especially in the broad daylight."

"Well, there's reasons for it, Dave," replied Pat condescendingly. "Anyhow, it's orders from Mr. Grant, and that's enough for me."

The watchman, in continuing his march up-stairs, went a little ahead of the engineer. Therefore, he did not see the black scowl that spread over Dave May's face at the mention of old Zeb's name.

Anybody who has ever undertaken to walk up thirty-two flights will bear witness that it is a tedious task. Also, that it calls for considerable personal exertion. Pat Cregan did not like it, and he said so, more than once. Dave May was accustomed to climbing, and his muscles were like steel, so that he did not mind the exercise.

"Be jabers, ain't we purty nigh there?" grumbled Cregan, as they reached the end of the stone-floored stairs. "I don't see any way of gitting no farther. There's nothing much to walk on any more."

He was looking at the loose boards laid across the steel framework, the only flooring on the stairs they would now have to climb to reach the thirty-second story. He rather doubted his own ability to negotiate them.

Pat Cregan was a watchman — not a "steeple-jack." That was his remark later, when discussing his present adventure.

"You haven't far to go now, Pat," said Dave. "You'll find it easier the farther up you get."

"It's a handsome liar I'm thinking ye are, Dave May. Maybe ye don't know it, of course, and therefore I'll have to forgive ye. But I'm telling ye with me hand across me heart that ye'd never have got me up here after that spirituous lever, or whatever ye call it, if I'd known what these stairs was like."

Dave May only laughed. He was gaining his purpose, and he could afford to make light of Pat Cregan's complaints. For, while he was listening to this grumbling, he knew something was taking place on the ground floor, far below, that would have sent Pat scuttling down the stairs in a dangerous hurry if he had had the faintest suspicion.

Dave May had worked out a neat little ruse, and the watchman had been an easy victim.

If Pat had kept his eyes open wider while in the street, talking to Dave May, he might have seen something which would have spoiled May's plans. But he didn't notice anything out of the way, and here was the consequence:

While Pat and Dave had been parleying about the spirit-level, a young man, with deep-set eyes, whose right leg was twisted and much shorter than the other, and who leaned on a thick cane, stood in a doorway, near the corner, watching them.

The young man was Jim Millen. He had come down-town on the car with Dave May, whose statement to Pat Creegan that he had just got off a trolley was about the only part of his story that was true.

Dave's yarn about having borrowed the spirit-level was pure invention. It had occurred to him that this would be a good tale to get him into the building. He had a spirit-level of his own among his tools on the thirty-second floor which he could produce in corroboration.

What Dave really wanted was to get Pat Cregan far away from the main floor for at least two hours. He calculated that it would take nearly an hour to go up and down the thirty-two flights of stairs and hunt for the spirit-level. After that he would hit on some other excuse for keeping the watchman in the upper part of the building for another hour or more.

Jim Millen, to whom Dave had carefully explained the scheme in detail, saw the two men go into the Monckton. He waited five minutes and then followed them.

Notwithstanding that Dave had so ostentatiously fastened the door when he ran down-stairs, it opened easily when Jim Millen turned the handle. This is easily explained. After Dave had noisily shot the bolt into its socket for Cregan's benefit, he had gently and silently slipped it out again for his own.

When Jim Millen found himself in the

gloomy maze of steel pillars and loose building material inside the door, he shook his head. He was doing something his oath had committed him to, but it was all very repugnant to him.

"Dave promised he'd make it all plain sailing for me," he muttered. "But I hate it all the same."

Just then he stumbled over a loose plank. A sharp pain shot up his lame leg. It changed the direction of his thoughts in a flash. Back to him came the day that he had been tumbled backward down the hatchway of the Golden Hope. All scruples were gone in an instant. He was ready now for anything that would mean revenge. He wished the "club" had given him something more violent to do.

"This seems such a trifling way to get back at him," he reflected. "Just making him lose money! Bah! What I'd like to do is to wring his neck with my bare hands. I may do *that* some day."

He had walked straight back into the shadowy interior of the building, and was standing outside the rough wooden shed that Zebediah Grant used as a private office.

As he had anticipated, the door was unfastened. He went in and closed it softly after him. It was too dark to make out anything clearly, and he turned on an electric light over the long table where Zebediah Grant generally spread out his plans.

Jim had never done a thing of this kind before. But, to his own surprise, he did not feel particularly nervous. He had worked himself up to the point where he felt that what he had to do now *must* be done. In some sort it was fate.

If the horrible thought that he was nothing more nor less than a common thief—a burglar—tried to force itself upward, he drove it down before it could take actual shape. His one idea, since he had found that Zebediah Grant was in New York, was to be revenged somehow.

Dave May and his associates had shown him how this could be done, effectively, if not melodramatically. Their method was not one that he would have chosen. It was not violent enough to please him. But, since it promised to harass the enemy, even though it would not cause him actual bodily pain, why, it was better than nothing.

"Some day," he said savagely to himself, "I shall have my fingers actually on his throat. If right and justice ever come to me, that is what *must* be."

Then he remembered with a guilty start—as if he had been neglecting a sacred duty—that Dave May had charged him to act quickly as soon as he found himself in this office. He had been wasting time.

The way had been well paved for him. Dave had learned that Pat Cregan, when on watch, spent much of his time in Zebediah Grant's private office. He liked to read there. As a result of this habit, the door was nearly always unlocked.

If it had chanced to be fastened now, Jim Millen had a false key in his pocket. It had been made by Dave May. As it happened, he did not need this key.

Now for the next move.

After a cautious glance around him, he went over to the fireproof safe in the corner and put his hand on the large nickel nob in the center of the door. He did not turn the knob. Bracing himself by planting his cane firmly on the floor, he pulled hard, as if trying to get the heavy door open by main strength.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT EVIL WORK.

Had there been an observer, it might have seemed to him that Jim Millen was wasting his energy. Massive steel safes, which have been properly secured by a few turns of the combination-knob, do not yield to mere pulling.

Powerful machinery has proved ineffective in such cases. Considering that there was nothing brought to the task now but the puny strength of a crippled man, it surely was ridiculous to suppose that the door would open.

But—*it did open!*

With only one hand grasping the knob, and without attempting to twist it, Jim Millen—who could not even stand without bracing himself on a cane—had dragged the great, half-ton door wide open. Most of the contents were at once revealed.

Piled up in the safe, because too bulky to stow away in the drawers, were the plans belonging to the great Monckton Building. Millen looked at them with glistening eyes.

"Dave fixed the door all right," he said to himself. "He told me he slipped in here yesterday, when Zeb and the boy were both out, and plugged the bolts so that they wouldn't move. That's one of the advantages of being a good mechanic. And

Dave May seems to be as slick as they make 'em."

After a cursory, but pleased, glance at the plans, he stopped and scrutinized the bolts. Then he murmured admiringly:

"Yes, I see how he did it. Mighty neat job!"

The safe was of an old-fashioned type. Although strong enough for ordinary purposes, it was nothing like the impregnable strong-boxes of chilled steel, with powerful, intricate locks, that are made to-day.

The bolts, from long use, worked loosely in their sockets. Dave May had managed to drive wedges of steel into the spaces by their sides. They were mere tapering slivers, but they did their work. The harder the bolt tried to force itself out, the more firmly would it be blocked. Before Dave had moved away from the safe, the bolts would not stir one way or the other.

As he had counted on, the wedging of the bolts was not discovered until the end of the working day, when Zebediah Grant closed his safe. This was about three o'clock in the afternoon. Being Saturday, the workmen had all gone away at twelve. The superintendent had stayed for a considerable time afterward, as was his custom, looking over his books and straightening out matters in the office generally.

He was angered when he found that the safe would not lock, but did not suspect that it had been done purposely. The slivers of steel had been so cunningly inserted that they escaped him entirely.

Zebediah was in a quandary. There was little chance of his finding a safe expert who would come to his relief at that late hour on Saturday afternoon. None of his own men were about. Even if they had been, what would they know about the mechanism of safes?

After thinking it over for a few moments, he decided that it would be wise not to let any one know the safe would not fasten. He would close it, and no one would know it was not locked as usual. That's what Zebediah resolved to do, and that is what he did do. So Jim Millen had easy access to the interior as soon as he attacked the steel door.

The first thing Millen did after getting the safe open and looking at the bolts and plans, was to go outside the office. He wanted to make sure no one was lurking about on the main floor.

With his thick cane to help him, he hobbled all the way around the place, sharply watchful. He peeped behind every pillar, pile of boards, huddle of wheelbarrows, and heap of miscellaneous litter in the neighborhood. Then he regarded in turn the two windows of the office, and his brows knitted as he saw how the electric light shone through from within.

"I'll have to do something about those windows," he thought, as he went back to the office. "Ah! It's all right, after all."

He had seen that there were dark-green shades to each window. It did not take him long to draw the shades down to the bottom. The windows were completely covered.

Then he took from his pocket the key that Dave had made, and tried it in the lock of the office door. It worked perfectly. He locked the door inside.

Jim had consumed altogether about ten minutes of the two hours Dave had told him he might have. He believed he could do what was expected of him in a shorter period. But he did not know for certain.

Anyhow, it behooved him to make the most of his time. Some unlucky accident might spoil Dave's careful calculations. Somebody might come to the office before he had finished his work.

Then—what? He did not care to think about it. He took an armful of blue-prints from the safe and laid them on the table.

There were drawers in the safe which no doubt held money. Any of them could have been forced without difficulty. But Jim Millen had no thought of doing anything of that kind. If there had been piles of greenbacks and bags of gold coin in plain sight, he would not have touched them.

Jim Millen was not a thief. At least—well, of course, what he was doing now was not entirely honest. Taking these blue-prints, which did not belong to him, out of another person's safe, would not strike the police or a magistrate as a wholly innocent action. But, on the other hand—oh, he had no time to argue with himself about that just then. There was work to do.

With an impatient shrug, as if to shake off a too obtrusive conscience, he spread the blue-prints out before him on the table. Each print was numbered. Besides, there were on each one legibly written memoranda, which served as a key to the plan proper, scientifically drawn to scale below.

The importance of the plans in putting

up a great structure like the Monckton cannot be overestimated. They are its very life-blood. Every geometrical line and diminutive figure and letter has its vital meaning. Each must have careful and repeated study as the work progresses. Without them the builder would be helpless.

Since Jim Millen had been unfit for manual labor he had studied draftsmanship and improved his natural talent for drawing. He intended to make of it more than a mere amusement. While he had fallen back for support upon his old calling of telegrapher, he did not mean to continue it longer than he was obliged. He hoped eventually to find employment in an architect's office.

Dave May had learned this much about Jim Millen the day after the latter had taken the oath. It determined him at once to let the new recruit carry out a purpose already formulated by the members of the "club."

The intention was to get hold of the plans and so alter them that the building would be thrown all out of gear when it reached the part represented on these blue-prints. Since neither Zebediah Grant nor the architects would be expecting such a move, they might easily fall into the trap.

If the trick were successful its effect would be to hold up the lofty tower above the thirty-second story. This tower was to be a unique feature of the Monckton. It was to be the crowning glory of an architectural masterpiece. Let the blue-prints be changed so that the dimensions of the structural steel did not fit the architect's figures, and it was obvious that everything must stand still until the muddle was straightened out.

Of course, the discrepancies would soon be discovered, and doubtless, suspicions would arise that the blue-prints had been tampered with. But by that time the mischief would be done. The work would have been delayed, and there would be no possibility of it being finished in time. It might even be necessary to prepare a new set of plans for the upper portion of the edifice.

It was the hope of Dave May that old Zeb would not be able to turn the building over, finished according to specifications, for at least a month after the date when heavy daily forfeits would begin to be wrung from him.

All this had been explained to Jim Millen. He smiled to himself as he began his work. The tampering must be accomplished skilfully, or it would be discovered too soon. What the conspirators wanted was to see that many tons of steel were put up in the wrong place before Zebediah Grant suspected that there had been any meddling with the plans.

"I think I can do it in less than an hour," decided Jim, as he arranged half a dozen of the blue-prints in order on the table.

There was nothing intricate in the task. He had been taking evening lessons in draftsmanship from a regular teacher in Cooper Union for nearly a year. Being deeply interested, he had progressed rapidly. Indeed, he hoped to be able to give up his work at the telegraph-key before another twelve months had passed.

So now, when he settled down to his work, it was with a sense of mastery. He knew just what he had to do, and was confident of his ability to do it well and accomplish his purpose.

It was not very different from a lesson that had been set for him by his teacher at Cooper Union a few nights before. The changing of a plan in some details, while not interfering with others, is one of the commonest duties of an architectural draftsman.

Jim Millen was soon so absorbed in the study of the blue-prints that he forgot everything else. He did not even remember where he was. All he thought of was the manipulation of each plan so that the building would be consistently lopsided. He had laid out this scheme to himself before he began, and he never departed from it. There was decided method in his destructiveness.

He had seated himself on the stool that Zebediah Grant used when examining his plans. But his thick cane lay on the table near him. It was conveniently handy, either as a weapon of defense or an aid to locomotion.

For an hour Millen pored over the blue-prints. With a white crayon pencil—an implement familiar to his fingers—he changed figures and small letters at various angles of the plan. Always he did it so neatly that only a close eye would detect it, and hardly then, unless suspicion had been already aroused.

"Well, there they are—done!" he exclaimed, at last, with a sigh of relief. "I

think if Grant goes on with the Monckton tower with these specifications as a guide, he is going to be led into a bad hole. I wish they would lead him to the edge of the roof and kick him off."

There was nothing in Jim Millen's aspect to suggest that his last words were uttered in a spirit of pleasantry. His face wore a fierce frown, and the blaze of hate was in his deep-set eyes.

Only now did it seem to come to him why he had been so busy in this little office for an hour, surreptitiously and an interloper. It had all been done as a step toward his vengeance on the man he hated worse than anybody on earth — Zebediah Grant.

But in his satisfaction that he had begun to prepare punishment for this man, he did not overlook the fact that he was in a dangerous situation. If Dave failed to keep Pat Cregan away, he would probably be discovered. If he were, it would be the police-station and—ruin.

"I've been in many a tight place before," he muttered. "But never in one that might make me a convict. There are things even worse than being crippled, I guess. Yet it is funny I didn't feel the least bit nervous before I began. I am pretty nearly all in now."

He had reached for his cane and supported himself on it as he gathered up the blue-prints from the table. He rolled them up as they had been when he found them, and carefully deposited them in the safe. As nearly as he could, he placed them in their former position, just as Zebediah Grant had left them.

"I don't think he'll know they've been touched," Jim told himself.

He closed the safe door and mechanically gave a turn to the nickel knob in the center. Then, having snapped out the electric light, he drew up the two window-shades.

"I must leave everything in the office as it was," he reflected. "Dave says that watchman has an eye like a hawk for anything out of the way around this building."

Having at length convinced himself that the office would show no trace of his occupancy, he stumped over to the door and softly unlocked it. He put the key in his pocket and opened the door.

As he limped out to the open desert of the main floor, a man stepped forward. He had been hiding by the side of the office, and Jim Millen felt that he had been trying to peep through a window, and actually had done so when the shade was raised.

The man was Frank Stanley.

CHAPTER IX.

STEEL AGAINST STEEL.

JIM MILLEN, leaning against one of the steel pillars, had raised his heavy cane to strike down the intruder before he recognized him. Then he dropped the end of the cane to the floor.

"Stan!"

"Yes. That's who it is."

Frank Stanley's voice trembled, and his face was drawn and ashen. He was holding to the corner of the office as if he needed support.

"How did *you* come here?" asked Millen. "I thought you were still up at the house, talking to Cora—and mother."

"I didn't stay long after you went out. Cora wanted a book I have, and I jumped on a car and went to my room to get it. As I was going up the steps of the boarding-house I saw you and Dave May two blocks away, walking toward Broadway."

"Yes?"

"It did not take me long to figure out where you were going. I went to my room and got the book Cora wants. It is in my pocket now. Then I determined to come down here and see what was going on."

"How long have you been here?"

"About an hour."

"What—in this building?"

"Most of the time. I got down-town just as you came in by the main entrance. I didn't see Dave."

"Well, I'm going out now, Stan," said Millen, assuming an indifferent tone. "Dave asked me to wait here for him while he went to the upper part of the building for some tool he wanted. But I guess he must be gone."

"Why do you think so?"

The door of that office was open, and I slipped inside to sit down. That's how I must have missed him. I suppose he came down and went out, thinking I had got tired of waiting."

Stanley shook his head decidedly.

"I'm sure that wasn't it," he said. "I have been either in this building, or just outside, ever since you came in. He couldn't have been on this floor or gone out without my seeing him."

"Well, anyhow, I won't wait any longer. You and I can go home together if you're going to take that book to Cora."

Jim Millen stumped in the direction of the main entrance as he spoke. Frank Stanley stepped directly in his path.

"Wait a moment, Jim."

Millen stopped.

"What were you doing in that private office?"

The frown that brought Jim Millen's heavy dark brows together showed that he did not like either the question or the manner in which it was put. He knew that when Frank Stanley's accents were low, clear-cut and metallic, as was the case now, he was deeply moved and was holding himself back only with a desperate effort.

"What was I doing in there?" repeated Millen. "I've told you, haven't I? With my lame leg, I got weary of standing around. Sitting on wheelbarrows and things didn't help much. So, as I saw the office door open, I went inside and made myself comfortable on a stool I found there. Perhaps I fell asleep."

"On a stool? That's queer."

"There was a table. Couldn't a fellow drop asleep with his head on that?"

Stanley brought his face close to that of his old shipmate and looked at his deep-set eyes as well as he could in the shadowy half-light. Then he said, sorrowfully:

"Jim, I didn't think this of you."

"What do you mean?"

"You are not telling me the truth."

"Are you calling me a liar?" suddenly demanded Millen. His voice was sharpened by anger, and there was menace in it.

"Don't put it in that ugly way, Jim!" pleaded Stanley. "Such a word has never passed between us in all the years we have been comrades."

"It couldn't, without a fight," snapped back Jim Millen.

"Jim! Jim!"

There was horror in Frank Stanley's tone.

"That's all right. I'm crippled, and I'd tumble over on my back at the first blow, no matter how light it might be. I couldn't expect anything else. But, by the eternal, I'd fight! I'd fight from the ground! The other fellow would have to come down to me, and we'd be on equal terms then. So long as I didn't need to depend on my game leg, I wouldn't ask odds of the best man living."

"Jim!"

"Yes, and I'd fight with a man who'd been my best friend if he gave me cause. It would be his fault, not mine. Just because I'm lame and have to crawl when I go up and down stairs, because men and women in the streets look at me with pity—and, gods! how I hate them for it—I'm to swallow any insult that comes my way! Well, I'll show you!"

"Jim! Jim!"

"Yes; I mean what I say. You've got to take back what you just said."

He had worked himself into such a fury that he was almost shouting. His face was livid, and the dark eyes, far back in their sockets, fairly rolled.

He raised his cane to emphasize his words, and staggered.

Stanley put out his hand to save him. Jim Millen savagely struck the hand away with his own left, as with his right he brought the cane sharply to the floor and recovered his equilibrium.

For the time being he was insane with rage. It was an ebullition of the ungovernable temper about which Frank had spoken to Jack Price, and which seemed to rend and tear at him as if wild beasts were battling in his bosom. There was a pause. Then Stanley said quietly:

"Jim, won't you listen to me?"

"*Ain't* I listening to you? What do you want to say?"

Stanley thought he discerned a slight lessening of frenzy in the other's manner, and he continued, in a soothing, argumentative tone:

"I have not applied any insulting word to you, Jim. If you will consider for a moment, you will know I couldn't."

"Sounded like it!" was the growling rejoinder.

"Now," went on Stanley, "I don't doubt that you were on a stool in that office. But what were you doing there? I heard the rattling of papers. *You were not asleep.*"

There was another momentary pause. Then Jim Millen replied, through his set teeth, with defiance in every accent:

"What I was doing there is my own business. If I'd meant to tell you, Id have done it as soon as I saw you here. Because a man has known you a long time, that doesn't give him a right to pry into your private affairs, does it?"

"Then you won't tell me?"

"No."

Jim Millen again moved toward the door. For the second time Stanley stood in his way.

It was one determined man against another—steel against steel!

"Jim," said Stanley gently, "you and I have been shipmates at sea and like brothers ashore. We've bunked together and messed together. We've laid aloft side by side in a winter gale when the yards were coated with ice and the leech-lines were as stiff as iron bars. We've worked touching elbows in a telegraph-office, and jollied each other over the wire when we were hundreds of miles apart."

"That's all right," broke in Millen. "But we can chin about that outside."

"No; we'll talk about it here, Jim. I want to marry your sister, and, if she'll have me, I will."

"Here, quit that!" ordered Millen roughly. "This isn't any place for family matters. And I want you to get out of my way."

Stanley did not move. The next moment there was a struggle. Millen, placing a hand on a wheelbarrow at his side, to steady himself, clutched Stanley's arm with the other, and swung him aside. It was all so unexpected that Frank almost lost his balance.

In that instant he lost control of himself. With a half-choked oath, he flung his arm around Jim Millen's waist and dragged him into the private office. Then, as he pushed the helpless, but still fighting, cripple into the swing-chair belonging to Zebediah Grant, he panted fiercely:

"Jim! You're an obstinate fool!"

The response was a sweep at him with the heavy cane. Stanley warded off the blow with his arm and stepped back out of reach. Millen, lying back in the chair, was out of the battle for the moment. But only for a moment.

With a resolute effort, he dragged himself to his feet, and, resting on his cane—as he always had to do when he stood alone—he lunged forward murderously, but without effect. Stanley avoided the attack with a quick movement.

The contest was uneven—wofully, pitifully uneven. Frank Stanley never forgot that all the odds were on his side. His one outburst of passion was over, and he felt only sorrowful affection for the poor, futile creature who would have killed him just then if he could.

Millen came at him again with his fist, aiming at his chin. But Stanley caught the swing on his elbow. Then, seizing the cane, so that Millen could not move, he pushed him gently, but firmly, back into the chair. Millen was frantic with impotent rage.

"You — you — coward!" he breathed. "You big cur! To take advantage of me like this. There was a time when I could have doubled you up like a jack-knife. You wouldn't have been of any more account in my two hands than a kitten. But now, because I have a twisted leg and Heaven knows what else broken inside of me, you shove me about as you like, and grin at me while you're doing it."

This last accusation was absolutely unwarranted. Stanley's face expressed only grief, sympathy, and horror at the quarrel into which he had been forced. But Jim Millen wanted to say the bitterest thing possible, and he hit on this. He would charge the other with "grinning." He could not have thought of anything that would have inflicted keener pain.

Stanley turned away. He did not want his old chum — just now his implacable enemy—to see how the cruel speech had hurt him.

That Jim Millen had been more powerful than himself before that terrible fall down the Golden Hope's hatchway he knew to be a fact. It had been proved in many a friendly tussle. Millen had put him on his back often in a wrestling bout.

In boxing, while the two were about equal in science, Jim Millen's superior strength had always told. He struck a tremendous blow with either left or right. In the vernacular of the professional pugilist, he "carried a terrible wallop in either hand."

"I'm not a coward, I hope, Jim," said Stanley. "And you *know* I am not grinning. But I *must* know what you were doing in this office."

"Why *must* you?" Millen sneeringly replied.

"Because I suspect that you have been doing something in this office for the 'club'—something that you will regret, and that I, as the man who is your best friend outside of your own home, whatever you may think, mean to save you from. That's all, Jim."

The two men had been so much taken up with themselves, that they had not heard stealthy footsteps outside, in the open space

of the main floor. But before Millen could reply to what Stanley had just said, Dave May appeared in the open doorway and said hurriedly:

"Come on, Millen. We'll have to get out —and quick, too. I left Cregan up-stairs, but he'll be down in less than two minutes. Hurry, now! Get a gait on!"

"All right!" responded Millen, struggling to his feet with his usual difficulty.

"I thought I heard some one talking in here. Were you shooting off your mouth to yourself?"

Then, as Dave looked about the office, he saw Frank Stanley standing back in the shadow.

(To be continued.)

From Over the Mexican Border.

BY GEORGE FOXHALL.

The Strange Fashion in Which the Result of a Card-Game Fracas Was Settled in a Frontier Community.

RUSTY WILLIAMS had a fiery temper and a foolish prejudice against seeing poker-hands dealt from the bottom of the pack. Mex Delmas didn't know about Rusty's temper, and personally didn't mind a little skilful dealing, so long as he held the cards.

So when they picked Mex up he had a broken jaw and a busted skull, and it was plain that his next words would be spoken in heaven if he managed to bluff himself through.

Rusty was nursing a bruised fist and looking dazed.

They held a brief inquest over Mex then and there, and decided that the meanest act of his worthless life was his death, because by it he had got the finest man in Texas into trouble.

The worst of it was, Tom Fargo was there, and Tom Fargo was sheriff. Also, Tom Fargo was the bosom friend of Rusty Williams, and didn't want to arrest him any more than he wanted to resurrect Mex Delmas, which would surely have caused a lynching.

"Boys," said Tom, "I didn't see the incident, but I'll have to make an official inquiry. If any of you fellows saw Rusty —that is, saw anybody strike the deceased —I'll have to arrest him. Who saw the blow struck?"

Nobody spoke for a minute; then Monkey Matzos, lounging against the bar, attracted attention.

"I did, Señor Sheriff," said he. "I saw Rusty Williams strike the deceased."

Several of the boys were contemplating killing another Mexican, when the sheriff turned politely on the volunteer witness.

"Monkey," said he, "you've got a fine command of legal English. Are you a citizen of these here United States?"

"The *señor* knows that I am a citizen of Mexico," said Monkey, striking a Farragut-in-the-rigging attitude.

"Mere formality, Monk," said Fargo. "Limp Hopkins, did you see Rusty strike the blow?"

Rusty had staked Limp six months when he got the amble that gave him his name.

"I did not," said Limp belligerently.

"Huh! It's the word of a white man against yours, Monk. You say you saw Rusty strike the blow, and Mr. Hopkins says he did not. Mr. Hopkins is a citizen of the State of Texas. However, to show that we're impartial, Lew Towney, forgetting that you owe Rusty three hundred dollars, did you see him strike the deceased?"

"I sure did not, sheriff. I was busy gettin' ready to shoot the deceased myself when I saw him palmin' the pasteboards."

The sheriff went through the crowd in the same way. Nobody but Monk had seen the blow struck, and he began to look like he wished he hadn't. Fargo turned to Rusty.

"Rusty," he said, "the evidence of them that didn't see you kill Mex far outnumbers the evidence of the alien what says he did. All the same, the law's a funny thing, and, *prima facie*, it looks like you'd better slip over the border and give aid and comfort to the *insurrectos* for a few months."

"I guess so," said Rusty, speaking for the first time, "but what do I want to join the *insurrectos* for? I don't want to do any more killing."

"You won't have to do no killing, son. All you've got to do is to see that you ain't killed. You see, if you join the *insurrectos,* it'll save the U. S. government a lot of trouble tryin' to extradite you. Savvy?"

"All right, boys. Let me know how the weight of evidence makes out, and I reckon I'll be back in time to run for mayor."

"You're as good as elected, Rusty," said Limp, and we all started to shake hands an' tell Rusty we expected to see him president of Mexico, for there wasn't a more popular man in Standing Rock City than Rusty Williams, who wouldn't hurt a fly, unless his righteous indignation caught fire from his red hair.

So we all wished Rusty luck, and loaned him all the change we had. He turned to go, but instead of going he dropped into a chair and began to laugh like he was crazy. Standing with his back to the door, with a big pistol waving in the general direction of the crowd, was Monkey Matzos, the witness for the offense.

"I protest," said he, "against criminals being set loose to disturb the peace of a friendly nation." He sure had the patter off slick. "Capital and business are endangered in my country by the rebel riff-raff. My own family would be impoverished by their success. The *señor* must not join the *insurrectos.*"

He put up one finger of the hand that wasn't swinging the pistol, looking like a warlike Dr. Bunyon enlightening the world. Rusty quit laughing to hear what the sheriff had to say.

"The spiel's all right, Monkey," said Tom Fargo admiringly, "but I reckon I'll have to arrest you for carrying concealed weapons."

However, as the weapon wasn't concealed at that minute, it seemed like Tom might have to postpone his act of duty unless he wanted the gun to get empty and his chest full. It was mighty humiliating to have that zoological exhibit holding up a roomful of American citizens, but you can't argue against facts.

As for letting Rusty promise not to go over to the *insurrectos,* or any other place, because a Mexican loafer happened to have a gun—not a bit of it. Monk put it that way. He said he'd let Rusty go if he'd promise not to join the rebels. Huh! *Let* Rusty go!

Rusty figured that he didn't need any half-breed to let him go, and when he was good and ready he'd go. He sat astride a chair, with his hands resting on the back of it, grinning at Monkey like he thought he was as good as a comic opera.

"I've heard a little about the family investment you have in Mexico, Monkey," he said. "It's mostly in futures."

"Is that so?" sneered Matzos, plainly puzzled by the word.

"Yes, the widow you're going to marry runs a laundry, and has a contract on the palace washing. You've drawn some dividends already, but you expect to have an easy thing if the *insurrectos* don't bust the contract."

We didn't get it for a few seconds, but when we did we could see by Monkey's face that it was pretty near true. That blew the lid off the laughing gas, and very likely Matzos would have fired into the bunch; but just at that second Rusty straightened up his legs and threw out his arms and, as Monkey ducked the chair that flew at him, Rusty was on top of him.

He had plenty of help, and it wasn't more than a minute before we had Monkey, subdued but raving, sitting on the floor while we held a council of war over him.

"I reckon Rusty can slip next door now, can't he?" asked Lew Towney.

"Better wait a bit," put in the sheriff. "If we ever want to see Rusty back we'll have to find out where we're at with this bunch of poison. He's only a near-man, but I figure that by the rules of evidence he might make some trouble for us if we don't fix him some way."

It was true enough, too. He could make a whole lot of trouble for all of us. That's the worst of an obstinate minority. Of course, we couldn't hold him until he died of a broken heart.

Shooting him was against the law, and, while we might condone an accident to a good man like Rusty, we were law-abiding citizens with a healthy disgust for killing.

Somebody suggested chasing him over the border, but, as there was nothing to prevent him chasing himself back again, that would have given small relief. Monkey was beginning to enjoy himself. He was grinning like a hungry hyena.

"Let's buy him off," suggested Trig Wilson.

"If the *señor* were a millionaire he could not buy my conscience," said Monkey grandly; and we all knew he was speaking the truth, for he didn't have enough conscience to wrap up and take home.

However, that didn't help much. We'd got to use undue influence to get Monkey's vote some way.

"Tell you what we'll do," said Limp Hopkins at last. "We'll let him heir the deceased's personal effects."

Well, it didn't sound very hopeful after the high price Monkey had already placed on his still, small voice, but we let Limp go ahead and see what he could get together. When we laid the proceeds in front of Monkey it looked worse.

There were three American silver dollars, two Mexican ditto, two plugs of chewing, some sundries, a piece of paper printed in Spanish, and a woman's picture. It looked like we hadn't filled.

Monkey read the piece of paper through with the same bored sneer on his face.

Then his eye caught the picture, and that bored sneer went so far and so fast Monk never knew how he lost it.

He jumped to his feet and raved at the picture and raved at the deceased in Spanish, nobody understanding a word, but everybody being pretty sure that it was a fine line of scorch stuff.

At last he quieted down and turned to Rusty.

"*Señor,*" he said, "I am grateful to you. You have done a noble deed — you have killed a reptile."

It began to look like Limp had laid down a royal flush.

"What's the trouble, Monk?" asked Rusty. "Is it the counterfeit presentment of the widow?"

"It is," said Monkey, thumping his forehead in grief and meditation. "*Señors,*" he broke out again, "I have one favor to ask of you. Give me three hours' start over the border, and then let it be stated that I killed Delmas."

That suited us in a way, but it puzzled us, too.

"Where do you get off in that, Monk?" asked the sheriff.

"The *señor,* I am afraid, does not understand the customs of my country. If I should prove that I killed my rival that will make me what you call good and solid with the *señora.*"

It was a neat custom, and Matzos smiled pleasantly over it. Anyhow, that part of it wasn't any of our funeral, and it yanked us out of a big hole, so we promised to do our best to help out Monkey's bloodthirsty brag.

He raked the bribe together, not forgetting the dollars and the chewing, and skipped.

"That picture was certainly a winner," said Rusty as Monkey disappeared in the distance.

"I figured it might be," grinned Limp, "when I saw it fall out of Monkey's pocket in the scuffle."

Wait. Next morning the sheriff received notification not to allow in his county one Manuel Delmas, one of the chief and most dangerous plotters of the insurrection, for whom the Mexican government had posted a reward of ten thousand dollars, dead or alive.

That's what that piece of printed paper was about that we found on the body of Mex Delmas, and we are still wondering whether we got the best of Monkey Matzos or he got the best of us.

A DIRGE.

We do lie beneath the grass
  In the moonlight, in the shade
Of the yew-tree. They that pass
  Hear us not. We are afraid
    They would envy our delight
    In our graves by glow-worm night.
Come, follow us, and smile as we;
    We sail to the rock in the ancient waves
Where the snow falls by thousands into the sea,
    And the drowned and the shipwrecked have happy graves.

Thomas Lovell Beddoes.

THE SHOOTING AT BIG D.*

BY FRED V. GREENE, JR.,

Author of "The Taint of Manhattan," etc.

A New Yorker on a Wyoming Ranch in a Game of Bluff That Brought Him into Nerve-Racking Situations.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

MONROE CRAWFORD, dissatisfied with banking in New York, and eager for a taste of ranch life, goes to Jim Decker, a friend of his father, in Wyoming, to become a cowboy. He meets Kittie, Decker's daughter, who is more friendly than are his fellow cowboys, one of whom especially, Bud Lawson, seems to resent the Easterner's presence. The first night Monroe, whom Decker declares they will call Monny, is invited to dine at the ranch-owner's table, and going over to the bunk-house later, comes upon a card dispute between Bud and Bump. Lawson pulls his gun, fires, and Bump falls to the floor. Instantly Crawford jerks out his own revolver and shoots in turn at Bud Lawson, who clutches at his heart and drops like a log.

CHAPTER VI.

MONNY'S RECORD.

AS Bud Lawson strode across the frozen snow that covered the path from Decker's shack to the bunk-house, he was in anything but a congenial frame of mind—the way he kicked a piece of ice against which he stubbed his toe proved this—and the black look on his face told the other cowboys that something was radically amiss. Not that they needed enlightenment as to what it was, but Reckless took it upon himself to inquire.

"What's wrong, Bud?" he asked, and he winked slyly at the others.

"Who said anythin' *was* wrong?" Lawson demanded hotly.

"Wal, I'll tell ye, Bud," the cowboy drawled, "they's certain times in a man's life when he don't need no signboard on 'im to let other people know he ain't jest inherited a million dollars from a uncle he ain't never heard about, nor jest come from his mother-in-law's funeral."

"What ye drivin' at?"

"Ye know, Bud," and Reckless's tone dropped to one of utmost confidence, "ye look jest like some son-of-a-gun of a Mexican greaser hed stole that saddle ye got a few weeks ago from Chicago, or—or—"

"Or what?" Lawson challenged angrily.

"Or thet some lovely boy — a Eastern tenderfoot—hed swiped your best gal."

For an instant Bud made no reply. In the first place he was too angry to do so, and all his efforts were directed toward struggling for words to throw back in rebuttal.

But he could find none; a fact which only tended to increase his rage, and for an instant it looked as if something was about to happen.

"Look here, Bud," Bump spoke up, "they ain't no use gettin' so durned sore 'bout it. Thet won't help matters half as much as 'twill if ye takes us into your confidence, an' let us help ye plan some way of gettin' rid of this durned intruder. 'Tween all of us, if ye'll let us in on it, we'll fix him good an' proper."

"In what way?" Lawson inquired slowly.

The tone he used proved clearly that he did not relish the idea of taking the boys into the matter of his affections, yet to refuse their offer would mean to lose their sympathy. And as he realized that this was worth much to him, he felt that any offers that might be made should be considered.

"I got an idea," Bump told him.

"Wal, are ye so durned stuck on it thet ye ain't goin' to let it loose?" Lawson sneered.

"No, I ain't," the other retorted hotly. "An' if thet's the way ye feel, ye can dig out yer own ideas."

* *Began May* ARGOSY. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

"Tell us what it is, Bump," Reckless cut in, and before Bump could reply Bud snapped:

"Come on—out with it!"

Bump stared coldly from one to the other, then began:

"Wal, as you fellers all knows, they never was no Easterner with sand enough in 'im to keep from runnin' when he comes up ag'in trouble. Was they?"

"Never heard of 'im, if they was," one of the men asserted.

"Wal, then, here's the chance to prove it. An' ye know, Bud, they never was a true Western gal what didn't hate a coward, an' as Kit's a true—"

"Never mind all thet bush-beatin'," the other broke in angrily. "What's this great plan ye got to tell me? Out with it!"

Bump showed plainly he resented Lawson's words and manner, in view of the fact that he was doing him a special favor, but he continued, nevertheless:

"Hold yer tongue a minute. Ye see, thet there Monny'll be comin' back here soon—if he don't, I kin see where you goes clean crazy—an'—"

"Now look here!" Bud broke in, his rage getting the better of him again.

But Bump held up his hand for silence.

"What we want to do is to all crawl into our bunks," he continued, "an' pretend we was sleepin' all 'cept me an' you. We'll be settin' here playin' cards, an' after Monny gets in, you 'cuse me of cheatin'. That'll be a sign fer each of us to pull our guns. You shoot over my head, an' I'll fall over like I was shot."

Bunk broke into a hearty laugh as he added:

"I kin jest see thet tenderfoot runnin' fer Jim's like they was a pack of coyotes barkin' an' snappin' at his heels."

Bump ended his words with another laugh, in which the others joined. But the force of the joke did not as yet appeal to Bud.

"Don't ye see the p'int?" one of the other men queried.

"We'll all see to it thet Jim hears all 'bout it," Bump explained. "An' from him, of course, it'll git to Kit's ears."

"I know what *she'll* say when she hears 'bout it," another put in.

Suddenly Lawson's face lighted up.

"So do I!" he exclaimed gleefully. "And 'tween what she, an' Jim, an' us would tell thet cuss, he won't want to stay here on the Big D much longer than enough to git his things together."

He slapped Bump a resounding whack on the back, and added:

"Thet's a great idea of your'n."

So it was all planned out, and the three jumped into their bunks without undressing, while the other two began to play cards. At first their anticipation caused the moments to fly quickly, but as Monny still tarried, time began to drag, as did the game they were playing.

Bump's mind was fully occupied in figuring out just how Crawford would act, while Bud realized that each second that was passing meant that much more time the Easterner was spending with Kittie Decker, and his anger rose to a fever pitch.

"He's comin'!" Lawson suddenly exclaimed in a subdued whisper, as the barking of the coyotes sounded on the night air.

The men in the bunks hurriedly pulled the covers up around their necks, while the two at the table awaited the knock on the door they knew would follow Crawford's endeavors to open it—for they had locked it to prevent his walking in upon them before every arrangement was completed.

Then came his rap, followed by his calling to those within, and when at length the Easterner entered those in the bunks had their faces turned toward the center of the room, and appeared to be sleeping soundly, although in reality they all had their eyes half open to watch developments.

It all came off as arranged, up to the time of Bud's shooting over Bump's head, and as Bump rolled to the floor, and Crawford fired at Lawson, the three fully dressed men sprang from their bunks. As Bud sank down, not a groan escaped him. He just seemed to crumple up in a heap.

Immediately all was excitement in the bunk-house.

Bump sprang to his feet, and with the other three cowboys rushed to Lawson and lifted the apparently lifeless man to his chair.

Then Reckless turned upon Crawford, who seemed dazed by what he had done.

"Ye durned fool! What'd ye shoot fer?" he demanded.

"To—to give him what he deserved," Crawford replied, as he watched the other cowboys working over Bud. "But — but isn't Bump hurt?"

"Hurt!" Reckless sneered. "Hurt! Of course not. Bud shot over his head."

"Over his head?" the other repeated incredulously.

"Thet's what I jest said."

"But—but what for?"

"To scare you, of course. Can't ye see—"

Further words were cut short by the hurried entrance of Decker, who rushed into the room in a half-dressed condition, a revolver in each hand, which together with the look in his eye, proved that he meant business.

"Wot's goin' on here?" he demanded, as he pushed his way through the men who surrounded the unconscious cowboy.

For an instant there was no response—the ranch-owner had a way all his own of maintaining discipline on his place, and the men knew it.

Decker turned from one to the other, as he said threateningly and in a way that proved he was very much in earnest:

"I asks ye again—what's goin' on here?"

"The tenderfoot shot Bud," some one replied.

"Where?" Decker inquired, as he leaned over the injured man.

"The heart, I guess," Reckless told him. "That's what it looked like."

Decker ripped Lawson's shirt open, to gaze at his bare breast, but there was no wound in sight—no sign of where the bullet had entered his body.

Suddenly, as they were working over him, Bud opened his eyes to gaze blankly up into the faces of the men who surrounded him, and a weak smile spread over his face.

"I guess I'm done fer," he said feebly. "Yer tenderfoot got me thet time, Jim." Then he added weakly: "He's great on the draw, an' greater on the shot."

"But where'd he wing ye?" Decker demanded.

Lawson raised his hand with seemingly great effort, and, as his fingers came in contact with his bared chest, he gave a slight start.

"He—he got me—right here," he said, as he felt over his heart, and the tone showed plainly that he wondered at his being able to speak at all.

"Ye ain't shot in the heart," Decker assured him. "They ain't a scratch on ye. What are ye doin'—fakin'?"

Lawson raised his head so that he could view his chest, and as he saw no marks of a wound there, his eyes opened wide with astonishment.

"But—but I felt it," he insisted. "Right there," he added, as he tapped the skin just over the most vital organ in the body.

Crawford crowded closer when he realized he had not killed the man, and his relief was intensified when Lawson rose and strode across the room, apparently very much alive.

It was now Decker's turn to be angry.

"I dunno what this hull thing means, but durn ye, Bud Lawson, they's somethin', behind this fakin' of your'n, an' I'm goin' to find out what it is."

"Fakin'!" Lawson repeated. "I only wish I was fakin'. But I say I felt the bullet here, an'—"

He stopped as he touched his shirt, and a look of understanding spread over his face.

"Here's what it done!" he exclaimed in amazement, and drew from the pocket on the left side a small, leather-covered memorandum-book. As he held it near the light, a plain perceptible dent showed directly in the center of it.

"Am I fakin'?" he demanded excitedly.

"I knew I was struck," he continued, before any one could speak, "and it must have paralyzed my heart. I've heard of thet bein' done."

Then he turned to Crawford, who had been a silent but eager listener to all that had been said.

"Monny," he exclaimed, as he extended his hand cordially, "you're some shot, an' I got to admire ye for it. Ye kin draw quick, an' shoot straight, an' any one what kin do them two things is welcome on this here ranch. Boys,"—and he faced the others—"boys, Monny's one of us, ain't he?"

"You bet!" came from them all, and Decker chuckled to himself at the sudden turn of events.

"Ye see," Bud continued to Crawford, "we wanted to find out one thing, and we found out that, an' also a' extra one we wasn't countin' on. We faked up thet gun-play to see what ye'd do, an' how ye'd act."

He stopped long enough to give vent to a thoughtful chuckle, then went on: "We found out, all right, an' also that you're some shooter. An' only fer thet there notebook, I guess I wouldn't be talkin' to ye now."

"I'm so glad it was there," Crawford rejoined fervently. "And I *want* to be one of you."

"Ye sure are!" Lawson cried. "Didn't

I jest say so, and thet *makes* it so!" Then his voice lowered as he queried: "But where'd ye learn to shoot so good?"

"In New York," Crawford replied slowly, almost hesitatingly.

"Does they use revolvers much there?" Decker asked curiously.

The result of what was a mere chance shot had done so much toward altering the opinions of these men that, while Crawford was not given to prevarication, this seemed a case where it was not only pardonable, but necessary, so he answered:

"Oh, yes, a great deal. That is, among a certain set there. In fact, revolver practise is quite a fad at present, and is being taken up by a large number of people. I was one of the first, and—well, I *am* considered some shot in our club."

"Your *club!*" Reckless repeated.

"Yes," Crawford assured him, as he realized that he had got into the thing so deep that there was nothing for him to do but to plunge in deeper. "You see, the fad there has become so general that many revolver clubs have been formed. I hold the record in mine, and"—a self-satisfied smirk spread over his features—"I guess I've proven that I'm entitled to it."

"Wal, I guess ye hev!" and Lawson's words had behind them a certain emphasis that could not be mistaken. "I guess ye hev!" he repeated thoughtfully.

CHAPTER VII.

FROM HORSES TO GIRLS.

LONG after the rest of the boys were snoring peacefully, Monroe Crawford lay awake in his bunk, thanking the fate which had been so good to him as to permit that chance shot.

As a matter of fact, he was totally unfamiliar with a revolver, his entire acquaintance with firearms being limited to the slight practise he had had with a rifle. And now that one lucky shot had been the means of placing him on an entirely different basis with the cowboys, he was determined to bank on it to its full limit, hoping that in the meantime he would have the opportunity to become as proficient as these men now considered him.

There was even a certain marked reverence in the manner of the Chinese cook at breakfast next morning, and the cordiality of the boys was most pronounced. But whenever mention was made of the incident of the night before Crawford endeavored to pass it off lightly, and in this way only added to the respect of the others. They took it for modesty on his part, and figuratively placed him on a higher pedestal than ever.

He had just left the mess-house, and stood a moment talking with Decker, when a cheery voice called out "Good morning," and he turned quickly to see Kittie's smiling face.

"Good morning," he returned, and as the ranch-owner walked toward the corral Crawford stepped to the girl's side.

"Say, you *can* shoot, can't you?" she said, and she smiled her admiration.

"Well, so they tell me," and the Easterner chuckled, realizing that he had risen in her estimation, too.

"You're too modest," Kittie told him. "When I spoke about gun-play last night you passed it off so that I thought you were new at the game. But from what father tells me—"

"Oh, it wasn't anything, really. You see, I thought Bud was—"

At that instant the cowboy to whom he referred emerged from the bunk-house, and his face clouded a trifle as he saw the two before him.

"Bud, come here," Kittie called, and Lawson advanced, although plainly against his will.

"Came near cashing in last night, didn't you?" she remarked.

"Putty near," he was forced to admit.

"If you asked me for a piece of advice," Kittie continued, "I'd tell you always to know your man thoroughly before you try to mix things up with him. If you don't, you're apt to get hurt."

Then she added, her face wreathed in a knowing smile: "By the way, Bud, are you going to town to-day? Did you ask father?"

Her tone and look escaped neither of the men, and Lawson knew she had not forgotten his excuse for the intrusion of the evening before.

"I—I don't think—ye see, I changed my mind," was all he said, and, turning from them, he walked rapidly toward the bunk-house.

Kittie turned again to Crawford, and the latter realized more than ever just how pretty she really was, and the broad smile of admiration she now bestowed on him

showed an additional charm—a set of teeth that were perfect. Where the night before he had thought her one of the prettiest and most attractive girls he had ever met, he now decided she *was* the most beautiful creature he had ever gazed upon, and from that moment fell desperately in love with her.

"It seems good to have some one on the ranch who *can* shoot," she told him. "The boys are all fair at gun-play, but as erratic and uncertain at it as a half-broken pony. And when they're that way they might just as well be the worst shots in all Wyoming, as far as being sure of themselves is concerned."

Further conversation was interrupted by Decker's reappearance, and Crawford's actual work as one of the cowboys on the Big D ranch began.

"They ain't much doin' now," Jim told him. "Things is putty quiet on a ranch at this time of the year, so I'd advise ye gettin' sorter used to things while ye hev the chance. They's a few things ye oughter learn."

"I'm ready," the Easterner announced.

"Wal, then s'pose we gits ye 'quainted with sech things as a saddle an' bridle, an' —well, mebbe a bucker or two."

"Anything you suggest," Crawford agreed, but there was a noticeable lack of the self-assurance that had been so marked in his previous speech.

Decker took his pupil to the corral, and together they spent a good part of the day with "buckers" of various degrees of viciousness, with the cowboys as an interested audience.

The ranch-owner proved to be a careful as well as an efficient teacher, first mounting Crawford on a very mild form of outlaw; then, when the Easterner refused to be thrown from his back, sticking on for some moments, a more violent one was brought out.

This horse acted quite differently.

Crawford had hardly touched the saddle when he felt himself being propelled through space, to land heavily some feet away; and when he picked himself up he had within him a growing hatred of every four-footed animal. But he had already made a marked impression upon the cowboys with his supposed ability as a marksman, so he decided to show his courage and decision in sticking to the back of the bucker. As a matter of fact, he was far better acquainted with horses than with firearms.

Before the dinner-hour arrived he had succeeded to a degree that astonished the onlookers as well as himself, and their contempt that had been so plainly shown when he had arrived now changed to complete admiration, not only of his shooting prowess, but of his ability as a rider as well.

The afternoon was spent in familiarizing himself with various duties, and after supper he went over to Decker's shack to have a little chat and a smoke. But the old rancher proved to be in anything but a talkative mood, so practically all the conversation was carried on by Crawford and Kittie, and presently Decker retired to his room.

"I ain't feelin' very well to-night," he said as he rose. "But you stay an' talk to Kittie, Monny. Mebbe she'll let ye git a word in once in a while."

Decker chuckled as he left the room, and the fact that they were left alone did not upset Crawford in the least. In fact, his call was made with the only idea of spending a few moments with the girl. He had been looking forward to the opportunity all day. Even his assertion when he had entered that he thought he'd come over and smoke a pipe before turning in, although apparently addressed to Decker, was spoken with his eyes feasting upon Kittie.

"How do you think you're going to like ranching?" she asked.

"In this case, it's not a case of thinking," he replied with an expressive smile. "It's *knowing* with me now."

"I'm glad to hear that."

"Why?"

The suddenness of the question rather took the girl aback, and she answered slowly: "Oh, I don't know, but I suppose it's because you're so different from the other boys. You know, I like to talk to people who are more intelligent—who know more than I do myself. Then one can learn something from them."

"That statement is worthy of a deep thinker—one who lives to gather knowledge."

"Perhaps," was all she said, and an awkward silence fell, but a moment later Kittie broke it.

"Dad tells me you're some horseman," she remarked, looking up at him.

"Well, I managed to stick on," Crawford returned. "They only threw me once."

The girl made no attempt to conceal her admiration. Her whole face lighted up as she went on:

"You know, Monny, you're awfully different from the other tenderfoots we've had out here."

"In — in what way?" he asked, and leaned a trifle closer to her.

"Why, in every way. There isn't the slightest resemblance. In the first place, you're honest, and your face shows it; and that's more than I can say of some of the bragging ones who have been here. You're healthy and strong—you can ride, and last, but far from least, you can shoot."

Crawford winced a trifle at these last words. It hurt his conscience to know that this girl believed him to be what he was not. It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her how he was deceiving her, but on second thought he decided not to do so.

Instead, he determined to devote all his spare time to secret practise with a revolver, so that he could soon attain that proficiency which she now considered he possessed.

"Tell me about New York," she said suddenly. "*All* about it. And about yourself and your people, and—and the Eastern girls."

"I'll take that last part first," Crawford laughed. "And I can speak frankly because I have no sisters to defame when I tell you my opinion of the feminine sex there."

"Defame?" she repeated questioningly.

"Yes, because I certainly can't praise them. Quite the opposite, in fact. The girls there—speaking collectively, of course—are selfish to such a degree that it is positively disgusting."

"Really?" and her eyes opened wide in astonishment.

"Then they're conceited and self-opinionated," he continued. "Their one thought is dress and a desire to have more gentlemen admirers than their best friend. And the girl who has the most men trailing at her heels hasn't a shred of reputation left when her less fortunate acquaintances get through tearing it apart."

"I don't think I quite understand," Kittie said simply.

"No, I don't suppose you do," he told her; and as he spoke he gazed into her eyes so steadily that the color rose to her cheeks, and she dropped her head, apparently becoming greatly interested in the toe of her riding-boot.

"No one can who hasn't been one of them," he went on. "And I hope that will never be your misfortune. You must always remain just as you are now—honest, frank, and the prettiest girl in the whole world."

Then, before she could recover from the confusion his words caused, he added: "And the very best, too."

Suddenly she became herself again, and, looking up into his face, she smiled.

"You're awfully rapid when it comes to getting acquainted, aren't you?" she said.

But Crawford was too earnest to be turned aside by such light remarks.

"Kittie," he began, and she started a trifle at his serious look and tone, "do you think that a meeting must first ripen into acquaintance—acquaintance grow to friendship—and friendship to—well, love?"

"I—I don't know," and her confusion showed that she was totally unprepared for such a question.

"Neither do I, and I can only take myself as an example. *I* don't believe it. *I* believe love comes with first sight."

"Lots of people claim that," Kittie said, and there was a simplicity in her manner and voice that touched Crawford keenly.

"And they're right. I believe that for every Jack there's a Jill, and that when they meet they recognize each other." Then he added as he gazed into her face: "I knew you."

But Kittie was endowed with the usual characteristics of a pretty girl, whether she live in Lapland, New York, or Wyoming—a desire to play with an admirer, and she laughed heartily as she declared: "Of course you did, after dad introduced us."

"I don't mean that," Crawford broke in impatiently. "I mean—"

"Now, Monny, don't tell me your name's Jack and mine's Jill, because it isn't so," she interrupted, and her eyes flashed roguishly. "And besides, we're foolish to talk this way. You're an Easterner and I'm a Westerner, and there are many things that separate us—mountains, plains, rivers, and valleys. Our ways are different—"

"But I want them to be the same," Crawford declared fervently. "I want— "

"We don't always get what we want, Monny," Kittie told him. "If we did, we wouldn't appreciate it. It's what we work and struggle and fight for that gives us the most pleasure and satisfaction when we finally get it—if we do."

"That's very true," he admitted; "but don't you see, Kittie, I'm an Easterner by birth, but a Westerner by adoption? So that removes one objection."

"It sounds all right, but in practise it's all wrong. At present you're just like a Western horse that is shipped to New York. He really isn't any good till he's acclimated, and that generally takes a year. Do you understand?"

She looked up into his face, but there was an earnestness and strength of purpose in the latter that caused her to drop her eyes quickly again.

"No, I don't see it that way," he said slowly, and his voice sounded strangely hollow. Then he added in even a more solemn tone:

"Kittie, you've caught me, and you've hooked me well. Are you going to do like the fisherman does who goes after bluefish and gets a skate on his line?"

"Why—what—"

"He throws it back in the water."

"I—I really don't understand you."

"A bluefish and a skate are as different as an Easterner and a Westerner. Are you fishing for a Westerner?"

"I'm not fishing for anything or anybody," she retorted with much injured dignity.

"But—but don't you see—don't you understand—" He stammered, angry with himself that he had used a simile to which she took exceptions. "Hang it all, Kittie, I'm going to take you to New York with me some day. I'm going to have you all for my own. I want you—you're so different from the girls I've met, and—well, you understand, don't you?" And he looked up into her face almost pleadingly.

"I think I do," she replied frankly. "You're trying to tell me that you've fallen desperately in love with me—that I'm the only girl you've ever loved, or ever will love."

She paused an instant, then continued lightly: "Isn't it strange how even the bravest men can't seem to get those words off their tongues?"

"Kittie!" Crawford exclaimed joyfully. "Then you *do* understand! You know, and—"

"I know that if you don't go to bed now you'll not be able to get up in the morning."

The words and her manner took Crawford so completely by surprise that it robbed him of his power of speech, leaving him staring wide-eyed at her.

"You know, Monny," she continued. "You admitted that we don't appreciate what we get easily."

"But—but don't you see," he managed to stammer, "this is different — vastly different?"

"Not at all," she argued. "And as far as your making love to me, think of the fellow who had a forty-mile ride to make, and forced his pony to full speed right from the start. The poor little animal had only gone six miles when he dropped dead from overwork. The rider was left all by himself, so you see it doesn't always pay to push things too fast at the start."

Crawford couldn't take offense at her words—they were spoken so frankly, and such a pleasing smile lit up her features that he laughed good-naturedly.

"Perhaps you're right," he agreed.

"I know I am. So good night."

Crawford took the hand she extended, and Kittie made no objections to his holding it a trifle longer than is usual in society. Then he turned toward the door.

"Good night," he said, and the same parting words kept ringing in his ears as he crossed over to the bunk-house.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DISQUIETING PROSPECT.

FOR some days Crawford thought himself in a second heaven. He had mastered enough horsemanship to make him a real cowboy, and this, together with the respect the others had for his shooting ability, made him a sort of leader among them.

To add to his peace of mind, Bud Lawson seemed resigned to the fact that Kittie no longer favored him (Bud) in any way, and this fact seemed to rob him of much of his former bravado—so much so that when the other boys began to look upon the Easterner as their recognized head he raised no objections, but fell in line with them.

All of Crawford's evenings were spent in the little shack, and where at first he had endeavored to make violent love to Kittie, she had put him off so adroitly he now decided to bide his time, feeling certain that he already knew her real attitude toward him. Thus he grew to feel a sort of ownership in the girl.

And in many ways he was not without reason for taking this view of matters. Surely Kittie showed plainly that all her thoughts were of him, and whenever she went for a ride over the prairie Crawford accompanied her, provided the work on the ranch did not interfere.

He had already written two or three letters to his parents, telling them of all the pleasure he was getting out of the life in Wyoming—but avoiding carefully any allusion to Kittie—and his glowing descriptions gave them much satisfaction.

"How'd you ever come to want to go on a ranch?" Kittie asked him one evening.

This question brought Lockwood to his mind for the first time since he had reversed the feelings of the boys toward him, and the thought of his friend plunged Crawford in reflection so deep that he did not reply immediately.

"Of what are you thinking?" the girl asked curiously.

Crawford came back to the present with a sudden jerk.

"Why—you see," he answered slowly—"you see, I was thinking of the fellow who first gave me the disease that should be known as Westitis."

"So you caught it from some one else?"

"Yes. He had just been out here in Wyoming, and when he came back to New York he was enthusiastic over the country and the life. He and I were great friends, and he painted everything in such glowing colors that—well, I just couldn't stay cramped up there any longer. I *had* to come out here."

"Oh, I see," she laughed.

"So when father mentioned that he knew your father I made him write and arrange matters for me."

Kittie nestled deeper in the old chintz-covered chair.

"Tell me about this friend of yours," she went on. "What is he like?"

"Well, in the first place, his name is Lockwood," Crawford told her.

"A pretty name," she remarked.

"He's about my size—strong, healthy, quite good-looking, with a nice disposition, and—"

He broke off suddenly as he noted the expression of deep interest on her face, and there was a trace of pique in his voice as he asked quickly:

"But why are you so interested in him? Aren't you quite satisfied with—with—"

He was about to say "with me," but recalling the artistic way she had of turning his seriousness into a joke, added instead: "with my company?"

"Of course I am, foolish man," she said chidingly; "but I like to hear about the outside world and those who live in it. I'm so pitifully narrow—why, Monny, I don't know anything about the country beyond the horizon that we can see from the corral."

"Haven't you ever been in a big city?" he inquired.

"Well, yes, once—if you can call Cheyenne a big city. I went there with father a long time ago. I was a mere child, so I don't remember much about it. But go on about your friend."

"Oh, Lockwood's an awfully good fellow," he said carelessly. "And, in a way, I wish he were out here with me."

"Why the 'in a way'?" she wanted to know.

"I—I guess that *was* superfluous," Crawford admitted, but he knew it wasn't. As a matter of fact, since his arrival at Decker's he had never quite believed Lockwood's statements regarding his experiences in Wyoming; and now that he had established himself on such a firm footing it would have given him extreme satisfaction to have the privilege of lording it over him. As regards Kittie, he had come to consider her his personal property, so he waved aside any fears on that point.

"If he's any good at all I know father would like to get him out here," she said now. "Only last night he said he'd be short-handed for the round-up, and was wishing he could get one more man."

"Is that so?" Crawford remarked thoughtfully—he was weighing the advisability of suggesting Lockwood, particularly in view of the fact that his friend had stated that in the early spring he was going to Wyoming again.

"Yes, and I know father would take him now, just to be sure of having him then," Kittie went on. "Why don't you speak to him about it?"

"I think I will," Crawford agreed; and when he left, some time later, for the bunkhouse, the matter was still uppermost in his mind.

It required some consideration, though, and for some time he lay awake revolving it carefully in his mind.

In the first place, he felt certain that Lockwood had stretched the facts when he had related his experiences—his own re-

ception told him that—but yet there was a chance that perhaps they *had* been based on truth. And should this prove to be the case, there was the danger that Lockwood might usurp the place to which he himself had already risen.

Another objection was that Monny would have to take him into his confidence regarding the chance shot; and this settled it—he decided that Tom Lockwood was really not necessary to the successful conducting of Jim Decker's Big D ranch.

This conclusion reached, he turned over and went to sleep, and had forgotten it entirely when, on his way to the mess-house the next morning, Decker called to him.

"Come over after breakfast, Monny," he said. "I wants to see ye."

Crawford bolted his food, wondering what Decker had to say to him, but, as he reasoned it out, it was something concerning his attentions to Kittie. So he hurried over to the shack as quickly as possible.

"Monny," the ranch-owner began, "Kittie's been tellin' me thet you knows a feller who's been a bit of a cow-puncher, an' thet he might like to come out here."

"Why, yes, I did mention it to her," Crawford replied. "But I'm not sure he'd come."

"An' ye ain't sure he won't, nuther, are ye?"

"No, I'm not."

"Wal, I wants ye to git him to come. I got use fer another feller fer the round-up—in fac', I *got* to hev one, an' his bein' a friend of your'n, he'll be real company fer ye, 'sides bein' a lot of help jest when I need 'im."

"I—I believe he'd come—that is, I'm sure he's coming to Wyoming—he told me so himself—but of course I don't know what plans he's made. You see, he may already have made arrangements to go with some other ranch."

"Mebbe," Decker admitted. "Mebbe. But it's wuth findin' out. Leastwise, it is to me. I tell ye, I got to git a feller, an' if ye can't git him, do you know of any others there in Noo York ye could write to?"

"But do you really want a tenderfoot?"

"They's better'n nothin', and ye can't git no one out here now fer love er money. So I got to depend on you. Ain't there no one?"

"I—I can't think of anybody," Crawford replied thoughtfully, but his preoccupied manner was not caused by any brain-racking. Instead of endeavoring to recall the name of some friend who would want to rough it, he was still wondering whether it would be advisable to get Lockwood to come.

"Write him, anyway," Decker insisted.

Just then Kittie appeared, and, having heard the last part of the conversation, she said:

"Do it over here to-night. I've got the writing materials, and as father is going to town to-morrow he can mail it then."

"All right," Crawford agreed. "I'll write him to-night, as you suggest."

All that day he reasoned the matter to himself, and decided that after all it might be a good thing to have Lockwood come, even if it would mean the explaining of his chance shot. But, to make certain of his friend's secrecy in this matter, he would give out, before the latter's arrival, an exaggerated statement about how well Lockwood could shoot. In this way the two would be bound to the concealment of the real facts by a common bond.

And he also felt certain that, no matter what other plans Lockwood had made, he could be persuaded to come to Decker's.

That evening at supper he turned casually to Lawson.

"Well, Bud," he remarked, "there's a chance we may have another tenderfoot here on the ranch in a few days."

"Wot's thet?" Lawson queried quickly, and bristled up a trifle.

"Jim wants me to send for a friend of mine in New York, and I'm going to write him to-night."

"Is he a real tenderfoot?" Bump asked, with a knowing glance toward Lawson.

"Well, not exactly," Crawford replied. "He spent a few months last summer on a ranch out here, so he's not exactly a greenhorn."

"Kin he shoot?" Reckless queried, and he grinned wisely at Bud.

"I *think* he can."

There was a peculiar emphasis on the one word that was so significant it could not escape those gathered around the table.

"Then, jest take a day off an' tell Bud all 'bout it," Reckless laughed. "I 'member once hearin' some one say thet forewarned was a good thing, an' mebbe 'tis in some cases."

For an instant Lawson made no reply, but the look he cast toward the cowboys spoke volumes.

"'Twon't be long 'fore tenderfoots'll run

all the ranches out here if things keeps on like they's started," Bud growled at length.

"An' swipin' all our gals," Bump put in.

This was more than Lawson could bear. He sprang from the table and stalked out of the room, leaving behind him a half-finished meal and a chorus of hearty laughs.

"So this new feller kin shoot, eh?" Reckless queried as soon as the mirth had subsided.

"He certainly can," Crawford replied.

"As good as you?"

"Well, I wouldn't say that, exactly."

The Easterner had no desire to yield to any one the palm he had so unworthily won.

"No," he continued, "I'm free to say I'm much the better shot—that is, I'm always sure where Lockwood isn't. But at that I'd be willing to bet on him against any one around here when it comes to target practise."

For a moment the men ate on in silence, then Reckless glanced toward Crawford, and as their eyes met the latter thought he detected a twinkle in the other's.

"Look here, Monny, some day we oughter *hev* some target practise," he said. "You're sech a durned good shot, ye'd be a good teacher fer us boys, an' learn us the things 'bout shootin' we don't know."

"Thet's right," Bump put in. "We all wants to see ye shoot some more." Then he added quickly: "But at a target — not at us."

"I'd—I'd be only too glad to teach you all I know," Crawford stammered truthfully.

"Then, some day we'll arrange it," Bump went on.

"Yes—some day," Crawford agreed; and, as he had finished his meal, he rose to start toward Decker's shack. As he stumbled along the path he chuckled to himself: "'Some day' very often never comes."

Kittie was awaiting him, and the writing materials were spread out on the table:

"Everything is ready for the letter to Mr. Lockwood," she told him.

"An' write him a good one," Decker put in. "Make it strong. Let on to him thet this here ranch is sot right down in a regilar Garden of Eden, 'stead of the loneliest, bleakest, God-forsakenest part of Wyoming."

"I will," the other laughingly assured him, and his thoughts reverted to Lockwood's own description of Wyoming, and he knew he could not equal that.

He sat down to the task, and when he had finished it, and read the letter over aloud, he was really surprised that he had been able to put the whole thing in such an alluring light. He dwelt at considerable length upon the fact that he was practically the foreman of the ranch, as well as the best shot in the district.

"If thet don't fetch him, they's only one other thing thet will," Decker declared.

"And what's that?" Kittie queried.

"A team of oxen," the old man chuckled. "But I guess we won't need them. Now, give me thet letter, so I can mail it in the mornin'."

Crawford handed it over, and shortly afterward the ranch owner went to bed, leaving the young couple alone for their regular evening chat.

"I'm awfully anxious to see Mr. Lockwood," Kittie remarked absently.

"What for?" Crawford asked quickly.

"Oh, I don't know. Don't you see, I think people form a mental picture of any one about whom they hear a lot, and—and—then—"

"Then what?"

"Then sometimes the picture turns out to be all wrong. Funny, isn't it?"

"I fail to see the joke."

"Why, I didn't mean that there was anything laughable about it. But why do you look so cross? Your face is as black as a thunder-cloud."

"I can't understand why you're so crazy to see Lockwood, or why—"

"I'm really anxious to see if he's like the picture I've made of him in my mind," she interrupted. "And as you say he can shoot, you'd better look to your laurels, Monny—look to them."

CHAPTER IX.

SANDY APPEARS.

CRAWFORD didn't sleep any too well that night. Something told him that if Lockwood came he would bring with him some sort of trouble, but as to the exact brand he could not decide. So he hoped that his reply would state that the plans he had already made would prevent his accepting Decker's offer.

But as day after day passed without any letter from him at all, the fear gradually wore off until, in a way, Lockwood was forgotten.

Monroe Crawford still ruled the ranch, as it were, and was in the habit of taking long rides when the opportunity presented itself. And they were with a purpose.

He would gallop far out on the prairie, and when he had gone some miles from the scattered group of buildings which marked the Big D settlement, he would dismount, and after rigging up a target, would spend some time shooting at it.

But, strange to say, it made little improvement in his marksmanship — he was still about as bad a shot as could very well be imagined.

This fact gave him much worry, and he considered the matter from every standpoint in an effort to explain it. But all to no purpose. He was simply lacking in shooting ability, and could not overcome the fear that always possessed him when he held a revolver.

He had spent the whole morning in this way one day, and when he returned the boys were at their noon meal. They noticed that he was not as talkative as usual, but no one remarked about it.

Crawford was certainly depressed—far more so than was apparent on the surface. And he felt he had good cause to be.

After a morning spent in shooting at a propped up board, and failing to hit it with more than one shot out of five, he had come to the full realization of the fact that his success as a cowboy certainly did not lie in his accuracy with a revolver, and it worried him keenly.

Just at the completion of the meal, the rattle of a galloping horse reached those at the table, and they hurried to the door, to find there a plainsman who was to Crawford a total stranger.

"Hallo, Bud!" the newcomer called, as he sprang from his horse. "Ain't seen ye in a long while."

"Ain't seen you, neither, Sandy," Lawson returned, and he advanced toward the man, who was searching in his inside pocket for something.

"Got a feller here named Crawford?" the stranger asked, after nodding to the rest of the cowboys.

"Sure hev," Reckless replied, as with the others he crowded about the stranger, while Monroe kept on the outside of the circle.

"I was to town to-day, an' got a letter fer 'im," Sandy went on. "A letter from Noo York. So I jest thought I'd come 'round this way an' leave it fer 'im, an' at the same time say how de do to you boys. An' considerin' thet I ain't seen ye all in 'bout two months, I wasn't sure whether ye was alive an' kickin' or not."

"Wal, we's alive, but we ain't doin' much kickin'," Reckless replied. "Thet is, none of the boys is 'cept Bud, an' he's been kickin' so durned hard thet if he's ever put in shafts they'll hev to put a kickin' strap on 'im, or he'll smash the durned wagon to bits."

Sandy looked up quickly from his search of his pockets, and stared at Lawson questioningly.

"What's gone wrong, Bud?" he inquired in his slow drawl.

"Ain't nothin' gone wrong," the other growled.

"No?" Sandy said with a rising inflection; then he began to again search his pockets.

"Thet's what I said," Bud snarled. "Ye all heard me."

"Oh, yes," Sandy agreed, "we heard ye denyin' it, but I wasn't dead sure whether 'twas you speakin' or a coyote growlin' over a old chunk of last year's hoss-flesh."

At this juncture Sandy's fingers closed on the letter, and as he held it out Crawford stepped forward and took it.

"Thank you," he said, as he studied the envelope keenly.

"So yer name's Crawford, eh?" the stranger remarked as he stared at the Easterner from head to foot.

"You've got it," was Monny's reply, and without another word he turned on his heel and started toward Decker's shack, in the window of which he had caught a glimpse of Kittie, who now hurried to let him in.

"You've got your reply?" she queried eagerly.

"Yes—from Lockwood," and Crawford tore open the envelope.

"What's he say?" Kittie wanted to know after a brief pause, during which Crawford scanned the sheets hurriedly.

"He says that he'll be delighted to come, and—"

Monny paused an instant as he read on, then added in a tone of mild excitement: "Why, he's on his way here now! He says he'll arrive Thursday! That's tomorrow!"

"It surely is," the girl agreed. "How exciting!"

"Look here, Kittie," retorted Crawford,

"you seem awfully eager to see Lockwood. Why is it?"

"I've explained all that before," she contended.

"I know you have, but I want this thing fixed up right now."

"What do you mean?" she asked, and her eyes flashed in anger.

"I've told you how I feel toward you, and—"

"Monny," she broke in, and a firmness settled in the lines about her mouth, "you know what I've said about that. We're awfully good friends, so let's stay so."

"Friendship's a good thing in some cases, but there are others where it isn't strong enough. In ours, it's mighty insufficient."

"Then I'll have to tell you that it's *got* to be sufficient for the time being, at least." Then her voice dropped a trifle and there was a ring of sympathy in it as she added, "I'll tell you one thing, Monny."

"What's that?"

"That I like you better than any other person I've ever met."

"But—but that doesn't say you always will."

"Quite true, but I wouldn't worry about that, if I were you."

Crawford gazed at her joyfully, then started forward as if to take her in his arms.

"Then you—"

But she sprang nimbly to one side.

"Can't I ever teach you manners?" she cried laughingly. "You're just like a coyote chasing a calf that's got away from its mother."

"I *could* eat you," Crawford declared.

"But you won't. So run along now. You're not paid to spend your time with me. That's all right in the evenings, but not during the day. I'll see you to-night?"

"You bet you will!" he cried, as he dashed out at the door and started for the bunk-house.

CHAPTER X.

UPHOLDING A REPUTATION.

SANDY watched Crawford as he sauntered toward Decker's shack, and a light of understanding came into his eyes. Then he gave vent to a low whistle and faced Reckless.

"So thet's it, eh?" he chuckled.

"What's 'it'?" Lawson demanded hotly.

"It's him an' Kittie."

No one either affirmed or denied his statement.

"Wal, I'll tell ye, Sandy," Reckless said at length. "Any feller what's as clever with shootin'-irons as that there tenderfoot is, ye've got to give him the credit what's due him."

"Clever with shootin'-irons?" Sandy repeated. "Is he a shooter?"

"Is he a *shooter?*" Bump repeated, and then he broke into a loud guffaw. "Ask Bud."

Sandy faced Lawson.

"What's happened, Bud?" he inquired.

But that cowboy refused to be made a committee of one to explain matters, and only growled, "Ask Reckless."

"Wal, considerin' thet it's warmer in the bunk-house then it is here, let's move this hull meetin' there," Reckless suggested, and the others followed him inside, after first seeing to it that the visitor's pony was securely tied.

After they had all taken seats around the big stove, Reckless told of the incident which had proved to them just what a wonderful marksman Crawford was, and the laugh that followed at Bud's expense only tended to increase that cowboy's ire.

"Mebbe 'twas a chance shot," Sandy remarked.

"Chance shot!" Lawson sneered. "Wal, I should say not! Thet boy kin outshoot any one of us, four to one. I ain't no coward by a durned sight, but I got a heap of respect fer a gun in the hands of one who knows how to draw quick an' shoot straight. I'm some shot myself, but I ain't lookin' fer no mix-up with thet feller. I got a certain likin' fer the Big D ranch, an' I don't want to leave it by the hurry-up trail." He shook his head wisely. "I admits he's a hull lot more'n a match fer me."

"I guess *any one* here'll admit thet," Reckless put in.

"Ain't so durned sure of thet," Sandy drawled. "When ye says thet, ye includes me, an' I got a objection to *bein'* included."

"What ye mean?" Bud demanded.

"I means thet this here ranch never did hev no gun-pullers on it. Our boys could outshoot you fellers two fer one, an' ye knows it, 'cause we've proved it to ye plenty of times. Ain't thet so?"

"Well, ye-all kin shoot some, but—"

"They ain't no 'buts' 'lowed now," Sandy interrupted. "We fellers on the Diamond Star hez a repitation to keep up, an' we'll do it if it kills off half of us. We worked hard fer thet repitation, an' we ain't lettin' no one take it away from us 'less they got a better claim to it then we has. Look here, I'll tell ye what I'll do—me pussonally."

"What?" came from every throat in the room.

"I'll shoot a match with this here feller fer a hundred dollars a side, an' I kin tell ye, ye'd better bring along a few pocketfuls of money, 'cause our boys'll be there to make bets as fast as ye'll say the word. Is it a go?"

"Why, of course; we'll have to put it up to—"

"It's more'n a go," Sandy interrupted. "It's a challenge, an' if this here feller's willin' to accept, we'll pull it off quick, 'fore the round-up starts."

He chuckled as he added: "It's a pleasant way to make a few extra dollars, an' I could jest use 'em, 'cause I wants to buy a saddle I seen in Cheyenne when I was there last fall."

"Now, to be puffecly candid, Sandy," Reckless remarked in his slow, deliberate way, "I got a idea you fellers'll be throwin' yer money away. This Crawford's a wonder, an'—"

"Wal, considerin' thet it's our money thet's bein' thrown, an' also the fac' thet we likes to hev somethin' good to throw it at, I guess you ain't got no kick comin'. As I was sayin'—"

He stopped abruptly as Crawford entered the room, and stared keenly at the man with whom he was trying to arrange a match.

"Monny, this here is Sandy," Bud spoke up.

"Pleased to meet you," Crawford said, and he shook warmly the hand the stranger extended.

"Is—is yer friend comin'?" Reckless inquired, in an effort to break the embarrassment of the situation.

"He's due here to-morrow. I'm going to town in the morning to meet him."

"Is he a crack shot, too?" Bump queried.

Crawford flushed a trifle.

"Yes, he certainly is," he replied, after a second's hesitancy.

"As good as you are?" Bump insisted.

"Well, I wouldn't say that exactly. But take it from me, he's some shot."

"The boys has been tellin' me thet you're putty handy with a gun," Sandy put in, as he faced Crawford.

"Well, I *have* done quite some shooting in my time," the Easterner asserted in a tone which he tried to make appear as offhand as possible.

"Then ye'd hed lots of practise?" Sandy went on.

"Yes, because revolver-shooting is all the go in New York. Everybody shoots there."

"Then Noo York is somewhat like Wyoming, ain't it?"

Crawford could not help but detect the significant tone Sandy was using, and a growing alarm came over him as to what might be in the wind.

"In—in what way?" he faltered.

"Everybody shoots out here, too. An' I'm one of them."

"Then I take it that you're a marksman, too."

"Thet's jest 'bout wot I calls myself," Sandy chuckled. "An' bein' as, from wot the boys tells me, you are the same, I think we ought to find out who's the best shot of the two of us."

It only took Crawford a second to recover his self-possession, and he forced a confident smile to his lips as he said:

"Why, yes, that would be a good idea."

"We's been arrangin' a little match-shootin', Monny," Bud spoke up. "Sandy here thinks he kin beat ye at it, although we's been tellin' him jest how good ye are. But he ain't convinced, an' we wants to prove it to him."

"I—I see," Crawford stammered.

"So we're goin' to arrange it. The boys from his ranch allus beats us boys shootin', and I guess we'll prove to 'em this time thet they ain't the only ones in the world wot knows how to pull a trigger."

"But — but —" Crawford was vainly struggling for some excuse that would put such an arrangement off, for the present at least, and he added as a sudden thought came to him:

"But I never shoot unless there's a prize —something to make the victory all the more worth while."

"You two's goin' to shoot for a purse of one hundred dollars," Bump informed him. "An' we's goin' to bet every cent on ye we kin lay our hands on."

During this conversation, Sandy's keen gray eyes never left Crawford's face, and as Bump finished he pointed to the Easterner's revolver.

"Wot make gun ye got there?" he inquired. "Let me see it."

Crawford was now struggling for words that would voice some objection to the proposed arrangement, and his inability to do so only added to his nervousness and confusion. His hand shook so hard as he drew forth his revolver that it slipped from his fingers and rattled to the floor.

Bump reached quickly for it, but as his fingers closed on the weapon, a sneer spread over Sandy's face.

"It's two hundred dollars a side!" he remarked. "I won't shoot with ye fer less."

"I—don't you see, I haven't that much, so I'm afraid there'll be no match."

"Don't you worry 'bout that, Monny," Bud told him, and his tone was enthusiastic. "We'll raise the money fer ye, 'cause we knows thet all ye got to do is to go in an' win. We'll back ye fer any amount of money this here amateur wants to put up. We knows wot ye kin do, an' we's proud of ye."

Then he suddenly faced Sandy.

"Do ye want to raise the purse? If ye does, all ye got to do is to say so!"

(To be continued.)

The Hawkins Peril for Man and Beast.

BY EDGAR FRANKLIN.

The Amateur Inventor Outdoes Himself in the Widespread Nature of His Devastations.

IN the spring the country-house owner's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of paint.

Hawkins's place up in the Berkshires, you know, is next to mine, with a merciful distance intervening; and, of course, it was more than kind of Hawkins to volunteer his services in looking over the repairs on my property while superintending those on his own. In fact, it was so overwhelmingly kind that my wife was taken unawares and accepted the offer while I was out of the room for five or ten seconds, unable to defend our goods and chattels.

When I returned and learned the hideous truth my blood ran cold. Hawkins was down on his hands and knees on the parlor rug just then, trying to locate and point out the exact shades with which his own mansion was to be decorated. The basic color of the scheme seemed to be a swampy green, with trimmings of an arterial blood tint and saffron window-casings.

It was on Monday morning, I think, that Hawkins departed. Tuesday night I spent dreaming of our humble summer shelter, striped in royal purple and a spotted-white ermine effect, with vermilion doors and a sky-blue roof. Very early Wednesday morning I left home by stealth, steered straight for the station, and boarded the first train for our little county town in the hills.

Now, the county town is not many miles from our respective dwellings, and Hawkins, on the average, appears there about three times daily.

I had no mortal intention of meeting Hawkins and getting into a wordy battle with him on the subject of house-painting. Indeed, when I stepped from the train a little before ten my whole errand lay in keeping discreetly off Main Street, walking unostentatiously up to Park, and there interviewing Mills, the painter.

Mills has, I think, a hereditary craving for painting houses white, with nice green shutters, and I wanted to tell him to indulge it in my case, meanwhile peaceably accepting and disregarding any and all orders Hawkins might issue on my behalf.

I have always liked Park Street. It has big, old trees; it is wide and restful and quiet and little traveled, and after a few

dozen yards of it one takes to yawning deliciously.

So that I turned into Park Street with a pleasant little sigh. And then I stopped short with a gurgling gulp.

Because somebody seemed to have been monkeying with the serenity of that particular block by dumping upon its surface the world's supply of whipped cream!

That, at least, was my first impression, and it was not unwarranted.

Almost at my feet some one had built a board fence about eight inches high, from curb to curb across the street. On the down-town side of the little fence the aged brick pavement remained unmarred; on the up-town side, coming within perhaps two inches of the top and stretching the length of the block, there joggled and wiggled and wabbled a soft, squashy-looking substance that might have been like thin corn-starch pudding!

Its whiteness was absolutely amazing. In the brilliant spring sunshine my eyes began to spurt water almost upon the instant, for the stuff flared at one like a search-light. In fact, I turned away hurriedly and blinked at the quiet block below—and came face to face with about the sourest-looking man I have ever encountered.

For a second or two he stared at me through his smoked glasses; then, rather astonishingly, he rasped out:

"I am selling colored eye-glasses at cut prices to-day, sir. Step in."

Before I was quite aware of what was happening he took me firmly by the arm and led me into a little corner shop. It was gratefully dark and cool in there, though, and I looked around to discover that the place was a combined jeweler's and optician's establishment with wholly new fittings.

On the counter stood a pair of baskets filled with colored spectacles, the one with a sign, "Selling Out—50c.," and the other, "Going Out of Business — $1.50 value, 98c."

"These are all new stock," the acid voice informed me. "The prices are cut in two. Green or brown?"

"Well, I—"

"This store closes for good to-night. I —I opened it yesterday. Green or brown?" he finished, in a sort of choking snarl.

"But why—why are you—"

"Because when I leased this store there was a decent brick street in front of it," the oculist yelled violently at me. "After to-day there will be a block of that da—of that new style of pavement. It is an innovation, sir — such a thorough innovation that every property-owner on the block, and most of the residents of the neighborhood, have signified their intention of moving away at once. I can't do business in the middle of a desert. D'ye want green or brown?"

"Well, what is the thing, anyway?" I asked, rather impatiently. "Has the town gone crazy, or—"

"The town's gone crazy trying to save money. Just because this jackass offered to pave a sample block free, they've allowed him to—"

"Who's doing it?" I cried, as a light several shades brighter than the dazzling ooze without came over me.

"Some fool that lives in New York, and has a place somewhere up here. He—"

"I'll take a brown pair," I said hurriedly, and dropped the necessary dollar.

The oculist's two cents plunked mournfully on the counter, and he heaved a savage sigh.

"That's eight pairs of them I've given away this morning at cost to people who wanted to watch it," he observed. "I didn't do one cent's worth of business yesterday. And after to-day—"

That was about all I heard.

Somehow or other, duty was howling at me to take one good look at the block, learn whether it was really Hawkins who had undertaken to ruin the prettiest stretch of Park Street, and, if so, communicate with the authorities and have him removed for observation.

One squint up the dazzling path of blazing white, and I adjusted the glasses and hurried on to the spot half-way up the block where I had seen a blotch of red in the middle of the street.

And having covered the distance in some ten seconds, I stopped short.

It was Hawkins, fast enough!

His feet and legs encased in an ancient pair of hunting-boots, Hawkins was standing more than ankle-deep in the milky muck. He had acquired a red undershirt, too, and he was working in it with the sleeves rolled above his elbows; and a pair of big, dark goggles and an old felt-hat completed the picture.

Or, rather, completed the picture of Hawkins himself, for his labor was really cal-

culated to take attention from the inventor's personal decorations.

Hawkins was manipulating a giant hoe, with a blade as big as a washboard and a handle that was never an inch under fifteen feet in length. With mighty sweeps, he was dragging it from one curb of Park Street to the other, the purpose obviously being to leave a neatly graded surface after each stroke. And the purpose was failing, for about two seconds after each stroke the surface settled back to a perfectly level stretch of blanc-mange once more. The general effect was that of a man with a shovel trying to dig a trough across the top of a millpond, and—

The hoe had stopped suddenly just before me, and I looked up to find the two dark glasses of Hawkins's goggles pointing straight at me; and I heard:

"What the deuce are *you* doing here?"

"Well, haven't I a—a right to—"

"You have not. This street is closed."

The inventor mopped his brow and, I presume, glared at me through his glasses as he leaned lightly upon the handle of his prehistoric hoe with both hands.

"Oh, I know what you're here for," he pursued fiercely. "You wanted to see whether I'd thrown everything else aside and had that kennel of yours painted exactly according to your idea, whatever that may be. Well, I have not. I've been too busy."

"Thank—" I began fervently.

"And then some one told you about my work here, and you had to toddle right up and stick your nose into it," the inventor deduced further, and so savagely that I backed away a pace and sought to soothe him with flippancy.

"Before my nose goes into that stuff—" I began with a blithe laugh.

A purely animal growl of rage came from Hawkins. I stared at him and wondered whether the remarkable heat of the day had gone to his head, or whether the whiteness had started up some kind of mental snow sickness, or—

And just there I ceased to think, for the hoe had risen—and the blade was hooked behind my legs—and Hawkins was dragging back.

For one brief instant I remember hearing a chorus of boyish laughter behind. Then, apparently, I was within an inch of falling flat on my face in the awful ooze. Possibly I yelled; at all events, I gathered every muscle and jumped—straight into the stuff, because there was nowhere else to go.

I landed feet first. I tottered for a moment. Then I stood erect, waving my arms frantically — until brain and body settled down at once and I was standing within a yard of Hawkins, with something cold and wet swashing thickly over my shoe-tops, and certain remarks coming from my lips that have no place whatever here. And:

"Well, you wanted to investigate. Now you can see the whole show, can't you?" the inventor remarked scathingly. "Go on and invest—"

"You confounded idiot!" I yelled at him. "My feet—my shoes—"

Hawkins reached into his pocket and produced a twenty-dollar bill.

"Take this," he said with grim enjoyment. "It'll buy *you* about fifteen pairs, and it's worth it to see you getting what you deserve. If you'd only gone flat on your wretched nose, as I intended—"

I suppose it is extremely vulgar to offer physical violence to your fellow man; but I could feel my face whitening and my eyes popping and my fists clenching up as I shrieked:

"I'll attend to *your* nose and every other inch of you, if I hang for it! I'll—"

"Griggs! Griggs! Wait! Griggsy, old man! I—I—I beg your pardon!" cried the inventor suddenly. "Now—wait! Don't get excited like that, Griggsy. Can't you—can't you—take a joke?"

"Yes, I can take a joke, but—"

"Well, this is a joke—all a joke—every bit of it. Ha, ha, ha, ha!" The inventor hurried on. "You know—you—you always enjoy a joke."

My fists relaxed, and I groaned softly. I couldn't do it; it would have been too much like cowhiding a man just because he had convinced himself that he was William the Conqueror. And Hawkins's soothing voice was going right ahead, too.

"You know, I never meant to get you in here. The — the hoe slipped up and — struck you, Griggs. This—this hoe is too light, anyway." And, seeing that the danger had passed, he rambled ahead. "Griggs, look at it—the biggest thing of its kind that could happen, even in another ten centuries. Hawkinstone!"

"What?"

"Hawkinstone—Hawkins's stone—see? The pavement goes on like this. It is merely smoothed over by one man to each block.

It dries up and hardens in two hours, and it'll last for two thousand years. Think of it! It can't wear out. It can't deteriorate. Just look at this block. It took two men just four hours to mix all this and dump it on the street. Now, they've even knocked down the mixing-tank and gone away."

"Then some of this has been hard for two hours. Where is it?" I asked harshly.

"Well, you see, the infernal jays I hired made a little mistake in the amount of water —that's all. Hawkinstone is originally a powder—"

"What's in it?"

"The answer to that question is going to be worth about forty million dollars to the people who want to pay it," the inventor replied placidly. "It is a powder which, mixed with water alone, takes on the consistence of fresh modeling clay—"

"Or sour milk," I put in. "And that's all I want to know about—"

"*Hey, hey! Get back there!*" Hawkins remarked just then, as he whirled to face up the block.

I looked in the direction without much interest. Then I was forced to smile. For down the block, straight through the six or eight inches of wet stuff, a wagon was approaching, loaded with brick.

It's driver, apparently an Irishman, was staring stolidly at the prospect through narrowed lids. His wheels were already an almost solid mass of dripping Hawkinstone. His horse's hoofs, too, had picked up perhaps a bushel apiece; and as the large, *blasé* animal came on he was wholly occupied in staring down at them. And—

"Back that wagon straight out of here!" Hawkins thundered.

The driver looked at him.

"These bricks goes t' fifty-six," he announced loudly.

"Those bricks can go to—get back there, I tell you!" the inventor screamed. "Look at what you're doing! Look behind you! Look—"

The driver declined; instead, he glanced at the numbers upon the gate-posts; and, perceiving "56" in large numerals just at his side, he stopped some dozen yards from us.

"If you don't take that wagon out of here—" Hawkins began again as he made one sucking, noisy step in the fellow's direction.

"Av you lay wan hand on that horse, ye'll never lay two! I heard about ye comin' up, ye crazy loon. These bricks go here, an' you—back up there, Jimmy!" said the driver significantly as he pulled around.

For a little space speech was impossible for Hawkins. In that little space the wagon had been dumped. Furthermore, the horse had managed somehow to start at just the wrong moment, and something more than half of the bricks had soused out of sight into the sea of Hawkinstone instead of landing upon the sidewalk.

Further than this, the driver had turned to Hawkins and was speaking his mind—and there I stop. Strong men gasped aloud; women screamed; doors banged and windows slammed when that speech began.

It dealt with Hawkins's ancestry, back almost to Adam; it rambled down the ages, and finally reached Hawkins, and the driver was just warming to an exhaustive analysis of the inventor's character and qualities —when a new diversion appeared.

It was an automobile this time, and it took the corner at a racing clip and headed for the opposite curb. A hoarse cry escaped the chauffeur; the two men in the rear shouted aloud in blank amazement as the former tugged and pulled at levers and did a war-dance on his pedals. The machine came to a stop in the middle of the street; the chauffeur leaped down and looked around dazedly in the blistering glare.

"What in Hades do you call it?" I heard him say.

Then, simultaneously, his voice was drowned by the driver, and, Hawkins's attention being in the other direction, I started away.

The driver was getting down to business now. He had his heavy whip clutched tight, and he was wading down-stream regardless of his raiment. I didn't want to see it when it happened; I realized that Hawkins was too nearly petrified at the speech to move.

And just here I realized that walking through Hawkinstone was not like dancing on a waxed floor. It was curious, because I am reasonably muscular; but after the third or fourth step I positively could not lift a foot. I would have to stop and rest, and I did so just as Hawkins's voice came wildly:

"Come on, then. What's the matter with you?"

He was addressing the driver. I looked at the latter. He had stopped short, just as I had stopped short. Incidentally, the

chauffeur, who had evaded Hawkins, stopped short, too. And Hawkins was fairly shouting in gleeful relief:

"Get back there while you can, you foul-mouthed scoundrel! It's setting over there. You great hulking cur, trying to attack a man with a club like that. Get back, you cheap coward, and—"

The driver made one terrific lunge toward him.

Yet the driver remained right where he was. His feet seemed to have taken root in the Hawkinstone, and—

"I can't move!" the chauffeur shrieked suddenly as he threw up his hand and sent his wild gaze in every direction.

For the matter of that, neither could I. My breath seemed to stop—for my feet were as solidly planted in that fiendish mass as if they had grown there.

All in an instant the character of Hawkinstone had changed. The stuff around my ankles was no longer soft and mucky; it had hardened abruptly into a substance as hard and solid as granite. More than that, it seemed to be shrinking—or perhaps expanding. Where a second or so ago I had been merely wet and uncomfortable, my ankles were now gripped as if between the jaws of a vise.

Nor apparently did the phenomenon end there. Hawkinstone had been dull and velvety in the semi-liquid state. Just now it was glazing over like fine porcelain, with a surface as smooth and hard as plate-glass, and reflecting sunbeams to an extent that made me wink even through the glasses.

But this didn't seem to be worrying Hawkins. He was chortling at the driver still, with:

"Looking for trouble and you found it, eh?" He laughed pleasantly. "The next time you're told to get out, you'll get, won't you? So far as I'm concerned, you'll stay there till doomsday, too, and—"

"How about yourself, Hawkins?" I inquired.

The inventor turned grinningly to me. That is to say, he sought to turn. He ended by remaining where he was, waving his arms and gasping, and almost overturned by the sudden motion of his body.

For a moment he was perfectly rigid; then his voice came thinly and, I think, involuntarily:

"Why—why—I—thought it was just setting around the edges, Griggs."

"Well, it's set all over," I roared at him.

"I can't move!" the chauffeur screamed again. "I can't move!"

The inventor recovered his composure with a bound.

"Well, neither can the rest of us," he snarled loudly. "There's no use rousing the whole neighborhood about it, is there? It never acted like this in the laboratory."

"Say, is this your fault?" one of the men in the machine demanded gruffly.

"It is not my *fault* — no!" Hawkins snapped injudiciously. "If my pavement is half spoiled by a pair of fool yokels—"

"*I can't move!*" the chauffeur reiterated at the top of his lungs.

"Shut up, Wilson!" snarled the gentleman in the car. "We'll get you out and—then you can have your whack at him."

"An' av ye'll be so good as t' git me out furrst, sor, I t'ink I deserve the furrst swat at him, sor. I won't chate yer man, sor. I'll take just wan, an' thin we can go at him t'gither, sor," said the brick-driver, very politely.

The man in the automobile glanced down at his wheels, solidly embedded in fine china, and laughed viciously. Nimbly he stepped down to the Hawkinstone pavement.

And much more nimbly he slid and landed on the flat of his back and shot feet first to the curb, where he stopped with a crash.

Positively, it was enough to take one's breath away, that dumfounding slide. It took mine, certainly, and I think it took the victim's for a few seconds, because he lay there, staring at the sun and reaching upward as if to catch something elusive in the air just above his head.

Then his breath returned in abundant quantity; some superfluous cubic feet of it escaped in a roar. He whirled over on his face and made motions which imitated perfectly a man bent upon leaping to his feet. His feet struck the surface, and so did his hands. And after the gentleman had finally ceased bouncing up and down, and had unquestionably flattened out his watch and his cigars, he gave a perfectly exquisite imitation of a person swimming violently and still remaining in the same spot.

All in all, it was so utterly wonderful—that slippery quality of Hawkinstone and its effect—that the silence of death settled upon Park Street. All eyes—and there were plenty of them in different quarters—centered upon the unhappy man who had not been content to sit in his automobile and take Hawkinstone for what it was.

Having evidently seen the futility of the swimming performance, he was squinting wildly about now. His eyes rested upon the automobile, and a sort of unnatural cunning came into his face. Gently, he felt around until his feet braced against the curb. Then very, very slowly he managed to hitch up until he was upon his hands and knees.

He took another good look at the location of the machine. He began to crawl, on his knees and his flattened palms, inch by inch, inch by inch, toward the thing.

And inch by inch he went on, for minute after minute, until at last he dived forward and laid a frenzied grip on a spoke of the forward wheel. It sent him sprawling, to be sure, but he held on like grim death and dragged himself nearer — and managed to roll on to the narrow step—and his companion dragged him into the car and lapsed into a fit of hysteria.

The tension seemed to break at that. A frantic hand-clapping echoed all around us, and voices broke out. The chauffeur and the driver swore in chorus; Hawkins turned his goggles on me and nodded violently, and, I am bound to say, with enthusiasm.

"That surface is absolutely frictionless, Griggs!" he cried. "Why, that—that's a discovery even more valuable than the pavement idea, man! Think of it! Think of it, Griggs! A frictionless compound at last, after all the ages! A substance that will—"

"Well, so far as I'm concerned, the frictionless substance can go to blazes!" I said angrily. "Get me out of this!"

"You've got about as much interest in science—" the inventor began icily.

"Hey, you! Drop the science!" the chauffeur yelled at him. "How d'ye get loose from this?"

"Lave him where he is!" the driver shouted back. "We'll be gettin' ourselves out furrst, an' thin—"

He ended up with a grunt, for it happened that he was busy on his own account. He had leaned over and caught one leg of his horse, and his immense muscles were swelling and his face turning black, as he tugged to loosen the hoof from its prison.

The horse, to be sure, had elevated his head like a dog baying at the moon, and was screaming at the top of his equine lungs, but it didn't seem to matter. The driver tugged on, until I expected to see a hoofless leg fly into the air at any second; then, with a final gasp, he straightened up and slapped the unhappy animal's face, with:

"Hould yer tongue an' stay where ye are, thin!"

The horse bit at him unsuccessfully, and —Hawkins was addressing me.

"How do your—er—feet feel, Griggs?" he asked calmly.

"They feel like Hades!" I yelled at him.

"Well, do they seem to be tightly fixed?"

"Yes!"

"Um!" said the inventor, gazing at the spot where the Hawkinstone ceased and I began. "Rather a pickle, Griggs!"

"Not at all," I smiled, with a smile that should have melted chilled steel.

Hawkins brightened markedly.

"Well, you have a little sense after all, haven't you, Griggs?" he beamed. "I was afraid you were going to have one of those asinine temper fits!"

"Impossible!" I cried. "I never felt more tickled in my life! Of course, if I could land the sharp side of a fire-ax on your thick skull, it might add a little to the enjoyment, but—"

Hawkins was not listening.

"You see, Griggs, the funniest part is: this isn't in any sense serious—and these clowns seem to think it is?"

"No! There's nothing serious about being frozen solid in a block of stone at one second's notice!" I thundered. "There's nothing serious about standing here for hours or days, like something in a fairy story, till some one devises—"

"Why, nothing can happen to us here, you chump!" the inventor said indignantly. "That's the best of it. We're as safe as—what's that?"

In the side street, a heavy rumbling and *chugging* was audible, just around the corner. I stared. So did Hawkins. So, indeed, did everybody else.

And just then the heavy steam-roller of the county town loomed up.

"Don't turn in here!" Hawkins yelled.

The gentleman on the little iron saddle blinked at the porcelain street, but it did not seem to impress him markedly. He put one hand behind his ear and leaned forward questioningly — while the machine came on.

"I say, don't—turn—in!" the inventor screamed.

"Hey?" The machine panted slowly ahead; and its engineer bawled: "The boss said you'd need this up here, so—"

He said no more. The heavy front roller of the machine had struck the stretch of improved pavement—and I shut my eyes. Either there would be a crash, signifying that the Hawkinstone had smashed, or the thing would begin to slide, and—

There was no crash! Two or three terrible seconds settled that, for I heard a wild yell from the hoarse voice of the engineer; and to save my life my eyes would not have remained closed.

It was the end, and I must watch it—and I glared at the roller in time to see it strike the far curb and bounce back like a billiard-ball. It was shooting dead at the automobile—and I waited for the awful crash.

Oddly, it did not come. That possibly was due to the still revolving machinery of the roller itself, marring the shot. At all events, the whole several tons of roller paused for some two seconds in the middle of the street and whizzed around like a top.

Then, whizzing still, it slid at Hawkins.

And I knew it was over and looked at the white expanse just at my feet. Hawkins was going to reap at last the harvest of his inventions. Hawkinstone was to be the monument he left behind—and I was to be one of the decorations on the monument.

And just then a house whizzed past my very nose. There was a terrific crash just in front of the sour oculist's place. There was a dull boom — a prolonged howl — a roar of escaping steam. I managed to look in the direction.

The steam-roller, having covered the entire block in not more than twenty seconds, lay upon its side, wrecked. Farther down the street, its operator was galloping along an honest brick pavement, howling as he went, headed straight for the woods, where they found him next day, gibbering. And Hawkins—

"Well, what do you think of that fool, Griggs?" the inventor demanded calmly, as he stared at the sizzling remains of the steam-roller. "And I told him not to come in here!"

The driver had ceased hugging his horse, and the horse had ceased a frenzied neighing. The two men in the automobile released the wrestling grip they had taken on each other. The chauffeur was struggling up from the crouching position into which he had dropped—perhaps intending to seize the steam-roller and hurl it from him, if it threatened to strike.

On the sidewalk, willing hands were carrying away the limp form of a lady who had collapsed. For my own part, icy perspiration was literally pouring from the end of my nose, and every joint in my body seemed to have been loosened with sheer terror.

Yet Hawkins's own personal Providence had allowed those few tons of weighted roller to traverse the block without a fatality. And Hawkins himself was expanding his chest and clearing his throat.

"This, gentlemen," he began, "is simply a situation which we'll have to take calmly and philosophically. Personally," he had the sublime assurance to add, "it impresses me as distinctly humorous."

"An' oh, but the laugh you'n me'll have t'gether, whin I git me feet loose!" the driver put in, with a sinister exhibition of teeth.

Hawkins ignored him.

"Now, the real trouble—" he began.

"Yes! What is the real trouble, Hawkins?" a deep voice from the sidewalk inquired.

I looked. It was Howell. And Howell was just the person to be on hand. Howell, in our county town, is what he himself terms commissioner of highways. He is also the fashionable undertaker.

At all events, his word is law on the matter of streets and roads; and while wondering which branch of his business brought him there just then, I was glad to see Howell on the spot. He is a man who acts promptly and forcefully—and this was a time for action.

"What's the matter here, anyway?" he asked genially. "Seventeen people have telephoned down in the last ten minutes."

"The trouble is all due to the bungling interference of a set of idiots who have no more place on this street than you have in Timbuctoo! Had it not been—"

Howell was forced to turn away. The thoughtful oculist, possibly cherishing a forlorn hope of relief at the sight of him, hurried to his side and served him with a pair of smoked glasses. Mr. Howell donned them and surveyed the scene anew—and his mouth opened wide.

"*Are you all stuck in there?*" he gasped. "*Is it hard?*"

"Certainly! They—"

"But you said—"

"It hardened more rapidly than I had expected!" Hawkins broke in. "They—"

A blended yell of furious protest drowned

his words. Howell waited calmly until it died down. Then he spoke quietly:

"Just a little patience, gentlemen. I am in charge here, and I assure you that everything will be done for your relief as soon as possible." He turned to Hawkins. "Just how are we going to get them out, Mr. Hawkins?"

"Well, that—er—that is a matter—"

"Will it be necessary to take up the pavement?"

"Certainly not!" said the inventor flatly. "This was not put down to be removed on the same day. I won't have it touched, do you understand that, Howell? This is being done at my expense, and—"

"Nobody is going to injure your pavement," rejoined Howell, very soothingly indeed. "Nobody has the slightest intention of—"

His dignified bosom swelled benevolently as he spoke. With that ponderous, compelling tread of his, Howell stepped down to the street.

Then he sat down with a muffled "pung!" that shook the earth. His hat bounced into the air, and, being an intelligent hat, landed on the sidewalk.

Then, having seated himself, Howell began to spin. I think he made some eight hundred revolutions in the five or six seconds he held the spot.

That done with, he further edified a breathless audience by stiffening out abruptly. Hands stretched out over his head, Howell began to cross the street at a long angle, lying squarely on his back.

It was a wonderfully graceful trick for a man of Howell's build. It ended by his hands resting gently upon the curbstone across the way and several houses up-street. And when, after four unsuccessful efforts, Howell managed to crawl to the faithful sidewalk, he was a changed man.

With a dozen voices asking him whether he had fallen, he managed to retain composure sufficient to scream:

"*Now* the blamed stuff'll come up!"

"That stuff—" Hawkins had the hardihood to begin.

"That stuff'll come up!" thundered the commissioner of highways. "Take it from me, Hawkins. And it will come up now! And afterward—"

Howell said no more just then. Instead, he headed for the down-town end of the block and raced beyond the danger-zone. He crossed the street and pounded back to the spot he had left so amazingly; and having jammed his erstwhile handsome derby on his head, Howell turned to the thickening crowd and bellowed:

"Get me a crowbar from the hardware store there!"

It was in his hands almost as he finished speaking. With a glare at Hawkins he gripped the heavy iron, poised himself on the curb, and, lifting the bar high above his head, brought it down with an energy calculated to send it in full length.

The net result was that the bar sort of skidded off the surface and shot clanging across the street, just as people caught Howell and saved him from diving after it.

And there was not a mar upon the fair surface of Hawkinstone.

Many men would have stopped there. Howell did not. He merely turned and cried more violently:

"Now get me a *real* crowbar!"

Two men dragged one to his side, between them. It measured, perhaps, seven feet in length, and toward the business-end it was nearly as thick as a man's arm. The commissioner of highways merely glanced at it as he grabbed it. He spat upon his palms and took a grip, and I will swear that I could see his eyes shooting fire behind the glasses.

Some six or seven men clutched him tightly, as he leaned forward. The new bar went up. And the new bar came down. And when the new bar had descended ten times on the same spot without making even the suggestion of a dent, Mr. Howell straightened up.

His voice was calm, if thick, as he turned to Hanks, the hardware man, and said:

"Have you any dynamite?"

"Nope. I got giant-powder."

"How much?"

"Three kegs, maybe."

"Fuse, also?" said the icy voice of Mr. Howell.

"Yep."

"Bring all you have. Also bring the powder!" He turned to the crowd. "The rest of you, get out! You people that live here had better go along, too. I don't know just what's going to be wrecked, but the town will attend to any damage that may happen to the property."

Hanks departed swiftly. So, for that matter, did the crowd; and for a brief space, Hawkins stared at Howell. Howell, breath-

ing hard and tapping on the pavement with one foot, absorbed himself in trimming his nails with a jack-knife.

"You're not going to try—to try—" the inventor began.

"I am going to remove your pavement. Whatever happens is on your head—if you have a head after the pavement has been removed," said Howell, without emotion.

He turned nonchalantly and watched them place the powder kegs beside him. He examined some rods of fuse and nodded.

"He—he—he can't do it, Griggs," Hawkins assured me. "He—he wouldn't dare try it, and he couldn't make a hole in Hawkinstone anyway."

Mr. Howell said nothing at all. Instead, sighting the spot directly opposite the inventor, he went to it and jammed the heavy crowbar between the sidewalk and curbstone. He heaved back, and eight feet of curb came loose, allowing dirt to roll out on the whiteness.

"Hanks! You and your man drag this out of the way," said the commissioner of highways.

One shove, and the long stone glided swiftly down the gutter, borne upon the frictionless surface. Mr. Howell dropped upon his knees and squinted at the edge of the white mass. Then, with a smile of profound satisfaction, his powerful hand reached in and extracted one of the ancient paving-bricks.

It went back and extracted another, and another, and still another—and just about here the real purpose of the performance seemed to dawn on Hawkins.

"Are you digging out a hole under my pavement?" he demanded.

Mr. Howell glanced up at him, with the smile of a demon.

"No, I'm trying to scrape the grape-jelly off this bulldog's coat," he responded hissingly.

Then casting dignity to the winds, disdaining aid, the commissioner of highways dropped flat on the sidewalk and reached for more bricks. The old pavement had been in fearful condition, I knew; but the way the bricks came loose and were hurled out by Howell's enthusiastic hands was dumfounding. A good four or five dozen of them must have been lying around when he struggled to his knees and cried:

"Get me a good strong trowel now!"

It was handed to him, and Howell dug and dug, reaching far under the layer of solid Hawkinstone. And the inventor of the frictionless substance found voice again.

"Are you—are you going to try blasting—there?" he gasped.

"Yes."

"Howell!" The inventor's voice thinned to a squeak. "Go somewhere else!"

The commissioner of highways paid no attention at all.

"Go farther up the block!" Hawkins suggested.

"I'm not anxious to run any unnecessary risks of injuring that automobile," Howell said briefly.

"Well, go across the way, then!"

"That man and his horse and cart are fastened there."

"Then—here! Go over there!"

Mr. Howell glanced carelessly in the direction indicated.

"Nix!" he said. "There's a manhole cover over there!"

"But—start over that way, then!" Hawkins cried.

"That's right over the gas-main," Howell snapped, as he rose finally to his feet. "There!"

"But this thing is right opposite—it's almost under me—it's going to be, I mean—I—"

"I didn't put you there." The commissioner of highways scratched his head and contemplated the powder-kegs.

"You're going to kill me!" Hawkins shrieked. "Howell, isn't my life more valuable than manhole covers and gas-mains? Howell! I—"

"Not to me," said Howell brutally. "Knock those tops out, Hanks!"

One of them had already been removed. Humming lightly, Mr. Howell picked up the keg and dumped it into the visible part of the hole he had made. Humming still, he went down on his knees again and shoveled the mass of coarse black powder out of sight.

Intelligent Hanks poured down the second keg. Mr. Howell sent its contents after the first.

When it came to the third, packing was a trifle more difficult. Howell managed it, though. Carefully and thoroughly, he tamped the entire lot out of sight beneath the Hawkinstone.

With delicate attention to detail, he inserted two long fuses, whistling the while. He shoveled dirt into a neat wall, and crushed the blast a little farther home.

"Now, just slide that curbstone here gently," he directed.

Hanks propelled it to him. Together, they fitted it back into place. Together they danced on it, until it was quite solid once more. And Howell then stood back with a satisfied:

"*That* is going to be some blast!"

And he took a box of matches from his pocket and sauntered toward the far end of the fuse.

I believe that there was considerable shouting, near at hand and farther off. I think that the men in the machine and the chauffeur and the driver were all protesting together that they would really prefer waiting there a little longer and try being freed by some other means. For my own part, I contemplated filing an objection—and gave up the idea.

Howell, as a man, is very determined. In his official capacity he is still more determined. And having seen his official side case-hardened by his performance on Hawkinstone, I knew that to protest would be to waste valuable breath.

For breath was getting to be pretty valuable just now. With that enormous charge beneath Hawkinstone, Heaven alone knew what would happen to Hawkinstone's victims. Howell, plainly, contemplated finishing Hawkins alone; but it seemed far more likely that the rest of us—

"G-g-g-griggs!" wheezed the inventor.

I looked at him. His hands were clasped in my direction and his mouth was working mechanically.

"This is all your fault, Griggs!" he said. "If you hadn't distracted my attention at the wrong moment, I wouldn't be here now. But I forgive you, all the same. Promise me one thing!"

"What is it?" I asked.

"If—if by any chance you should be alive when this is over, swear that you'll never eat or sleep till you see that man Howell strapped into the electric chair?"

"Well, I may possibly have to ring in one light lunch and a nap during the trial—" I began.

"Don't—don't be flippant, Griggs! This is no time for—a-a-a-a-ah!"

The inventor's hands clutched the air. Then they shot out and pointed.

The sputtering fuse was actually down to three or four inches. The sidewalk was absolutely empty; indeed, but for the victims, the only face I could see was Howell's, peering from behind a tree at the end of the block.

My heart stopped absolutely. It was all over now. And I might better have refrained from flippancy. No man should face the great unknown with sarcasm on his lips. I choked and tried to think of a few thrilling last words. I glared at the fuse.

It was down to an inch or so now. In another few seconds, the sputtering would disappear, and—

There was a sudden sputter of light. Then, for an instant, the smoking spot vanished, sparks and all.

And simultaneously, without hearing a sound, I saw the long curbstone rise straight into the air. I saw the Park Street block split across from curb to curb. I saw the half which held Hawkins and me rise up on end, and—right there I seemed to depart in a billow of black smoke.

Oh, dear no! That is not the whole story. The whole story would take altogether too much space in the telling.

I should have to begin at the point where I revived on Graham's veranda, with Dr. Brotherton bending over me and asking me whether I could hear anything. I think I told him that I could not.

Then it would be necessary to go on and tell just what had happened—how the whole mass of Hawkinstone, having risen in two pieces, fell and smashed into two million pieces, big, little, and medium; how the driver and his cart, and the chauffeur and his machine were eventually separated uninjured from Hawkinstone.

A volume, too, could be consumed in the recital of just how the county town tried to collect something like a million dollars in damages from Hawkins, presumably intending to rebuild the entire town with the amount; and how it turned out that Hawkins, having tendered his services without charge, could not be held liable for any damages whatever.

Later, he confided to me that even the materials for his first and only batch of Hawkinstone had been furnished free by certain manufacturers to whom he had expanded on prospective business at one billion dollars per order.

The main thing is that Hawkins lived. And like a faithful dog, I attended to him and removed him from view before either the driver or the chauffeur were quite themselves again.

We found Hawkins lying with his feet embedded in the mathematical center of a square yard of Hawkinstone, eight inches thick, with just the shadow of his soles showing through the bottom. The block was on edge, and Hawkins was on his back, smiling vaguely as he recovered consciousness and singing in a far-away voice.

There were murmurings when it was discovered that he still lived. I thought of his wife and acted quickly.

A heavy wagon was just around the corner. I gave its driver ten dollars. Then, at five dollars a head, I induced six men to help me lift Hawkins into the wagon. After that, we drove rapidly down to the stone-yard on the cemetery side of town.

Willing hands there unloaded Hawkins and took him into a little hut and stretched him out on an uncompleted tomb. More willing hands went to work with cold chisels and mallets and chipped away for two hours before Hawkins was dislodged from his pedestal and enabled to stand erect, and finally limp to the station with me, red shirt and all.

And here is a curious afterthought. As I said, I considered Hawkins's wife when I rescued him. Yet since then, that lady has borne a heavy grudge against me, and a mysterious one. Indeed, it was only yesterday that I learned the cause.

It seems that Mrs. Hawkins can find no earthly excuse for removing from Hawkins's person a pedestal sufficiently heavy and well-fastened to insure his being stood in any desired corner with the certainty of "staying put."

And after profound consideration, I can see that I erred, and that she is dead right.

ON LAKE ITASKA.

I've heard the Wood Lake's bob-cat snarl,
  Above the songs the paddles sing,
The laughter of the Lac qui Parle,
  The loon's scream on great Koochiching.
But in my northland water wilds,
  My roving heart forevermore
Thrills with the soul-throb of a child's,
  At evening, on Itaska's shore.

Oh, life is but a little thing,
  In primal worlds of earth and air,
And man's bright birth-awakening
  Is shadowed by his death's despair;
But he has trod the gods' demesne,
  In dawn of an eternal morn,
Who, 'neath the lonely pines has seen
  The mighty Mississippi born!

Oh, river of my blood and kind,
  Sprung of the woods that are my home,
I've watched your spreading waters wind,
  In silent calm and rock-rent foam.
I've spanned brave Pepin's breadth of blue
  And dallied through your delta sands,
But still my proudest dreams of you
  Wait in that northern land of lands!

Athwart the gold path of the moon,
  My loved canoe drifts through the night—
Far, far away, the waiting loon—
  The moose-call from the wooded height—
A lazy brook that streams away,
  To roll in grandeur to the sea!
Father of Waters—child for ay,
  In that great North of you and me!

Chester Firkins.

In Quest of the Pink Elephant.*

BY ELBERT D. WIGGIN,

Author of "Nobody's Fool," "Not for Sale," etc.

A Story of Adventure in Africa, in Which the Reader May at First Mistake the Villain for the Hero, and Wherein the Former Gets Everything That He Deserves.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE story is told at the start by Mayhew, villain of the tale, who is in Cairo for his health, with $500 in his pocket, when he meets Frank Jackson with whom he frames it up to go in pursuit of a pink elephant, although Mayhew really means to give Jackson the slip after reaching Tubudu, where he has heard that there reigns a white queen, mistress of untold treasure, who is anxious to marry with one of her own color, her subjects being all blacks. Before starting they fall in with Colonel Darrell, a British cavalry officer, also bound in the same direction in company with his daughter Viola, and son Phil. A lion carries off one of the blacks, and Jackson is nearly slain by its mate, which Mayhew might easily have killed. As a matter of fact, he purposely hesitates to fire, and but for Viola Darrell happening along by chance and shooting the lioness down, Jackson would have been a goner.

For this Mayhew is treated as a pariah by the others, although Jackson sticks up for him more than the rest. At Artufa, where the expedition becomes a caravan, Mayhew bribes a camel-dealer to give him some information on the side, as Jackson will tell him nothing definite about their destination, and later on he sneaks a look at the oilskin-wrapped chart in Jackson's bosom. This determines him to leave the others and put in effect his plot, so he sneaks away during the night, a bundle containing a disguise among his effects. His absence discovered, Jackson leaves the rest and starts in search of his partner.

Out in the desert, he descries a cavalcade coming his way, recognizes them for foes, and determines to sell his life as dearly as possible. Suddenly he is amazed to see them make off in the other direction as rapidly as they had been advancing on him. He turns to note what could have occasioned the shift, and what he sees causes him to stand rooted in his tracks.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN THE AIR CLEARED.

THE coppery hue of the sky had changed suddenly to an inky blackness, across whose ebon surface twisted and writhed great, jagged serpents of lightning. But, more terrifying than that, the whole face of the desert seemed to have risen like a wall—a moving wall extending from earth to heaven—and to be sweeping down upon him with the wings of a cyclone.

It was a tremendous sand-storm, most dreaded peril of the desert.

As the only thing he could do, Jackson flung himself face downward on the earth, and covered his head with his coat.

Then, with an uproar as of a thousand infernos, the storm burst upon him in his defenseless position and overwhelmed him with its fury.

Even through the thickness of his coat the sand was driven with such force that it embedded itself in his face, and he felt as though he were being pierced with thousands of darting needles.

But this, he found, was only a precursor of worse in store.

With the full height of the tempest, the sand came no longer in grains or particles, but in whirling sheets, by the wagon-load—almost, it seemed, by the ton.

Jackson was battered, bruised, beaten down under the succeeding waves of it. Mountains appeared to be piled up on him. He felt himself engulfed, smothered, drowning in the stuff.

His mouth was full, his nostrils full, consciousness was just about to leave him, when a fresh blast of wind like some mighty hand scooped away the crushing weight above him and brought him to the blessed air again.

How deeply he had been buried during those few minutes Jackson of course never

* *Began April* ARGOSY. *Single copies, 10 cents.*

knew; but, judging from his physical sensations, he was confident that he must have been at least a dozen feet under the surface.

Had it not been for that final whisk of the storm which uncovered him, he must inevitably have perished.

He lay still a moment or two after he had emerged, in order to clear his throat and lungs, then feebly staggered to his feet and looked around him.

Where there had been hillocks before were now deep depressions, and where before it had been level ground were now fissures and gullies, or piled-up, grotesque masses of sand. The configuration of the spot he occupied was completely changed.

Beyond a very limited radius, however, he could not discern what effect had been wrought; for the air was still so full of flying dust and sand that he seemed to be surrounded by an opaque, yellow fog.

He strained his eyes to see if he could make out what had become of the hostile band of savages—whether they had succeeded in making their escape, or, less lucky than himself, had been wiped out by the storm; but he could gain no sight of them.

Still, he reflected, they might very readily be behind that curtain of hazy dust, perhaps even then be galloping back to seize him.

At the suggestion, the idea came to him that he must fly and try to conceal himself in some way; but Nature had endured all the strain that could be put upon her.

He succumbed before he had taken half a dozen steps, and with a groan fell limp on the sand. Too overwrought to move, he lay there with closed eyes and presently drifted off into a heavy sleep.

When he awoke the air was free of dust, the sun was high, and he felt like a new being. The fatigue and vicissitudes which Jackson had experienced would have laid the average dweller in civilization on his back for a week, but this young fellow had become inured to hardships, and a single night's rest was all that was required to restore him to full vigor.

As he awoke his mind naturally reverted to the threatening Tubudu warriors, and he sat up hastily to look out over the desert.

Then he blinked perplexedly and rubbed his eyes.

The foes he feared were nowhere in sight, but something far more amazing met his startled gaze.

Off in the distance he beheld, like scattering outposts, the waving tops of palm-trees, and behind them the dark line of the forest. He was close to the edge of the desert.

But how could that be, he asked himself? Traveling due north as he had been, it should have taken him over twenty days to cross the desert, and he had journeyed altogether less than two.

He took out the little compass he carried and glanced at it. The needle pointed straight to those amazing palms.

Was it, then, a mirage that he beheld? No; the day was brilliantly clear, and the sun not yet high enough in the heavens to evoke one of those deceptive illusions.

As he made his calculation he glanced up involuntarily toward the sky, and again his attention was arrested by a bewildering paradox.

What was the sun doing in the west at this time of the day?

There could be no doubt that it was morning. The clearness and freshness of the air was proof of that. His watch, which pointed to eight-thirty, was another confirmation. And then the truth suddenly burst upon him.

The meteoric disturbances of the day before had affected his compass, and instead of traveling due north, as he had supposed, he had been going along in just the contrary direction.

The palm-trees and the forest ahead, which yesterday had been veiled from his eyes by the murky light of the approaching storm and later by the clouds of dust, marked the very point to which he had been heading throughout his long journey.

In short, he was at the gateway to Tubudu and the haunts of the pink elephant!

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.

With the realization of his position, many things became clear to Jackson which had before been difficult of comprehension.

He understood now how he had happened so nearly to fall into the hands of a band of Tubudans; for he had thought it strange at the time that they should be three days' march out in the desert on horseback.

He gathered, too, why they had fled before the storm, instead of facing it, as is the usual custom with travelers through the desert; it was because they hoped to reach the shelter of the timber before the whirling gusts of sand should overtake them.

Finally he thought he saw the reason he had failed to find any trace of me. Indeed, the discovery that he himself had really been traveling south only confirmed him in his notion that I must have gone off on some sort of a bughouse dash to the north.

Had it been feasible, I believe he would even then have turned around and gone trapesing back over those leagues of sand in the effort to rescue me; but even his fanatic spirit had to recognize that such an attempt would be futile.

With but the scanty supply of food and water I had taken with me, I must inevitably perish long before he could now overtake me, if indeed I had not already fallen a victim to the sand-storm; while he himself was in equally poor shape to prosecute the search. To undertake it was nothing short of suicide.

No; by a strange chance his philanthropy had been frustrated, and he had been brought without his will to the country of his quest. There was nothing left for him to do but take advantage of the strange misadventure.

He covered that day the fifteen or twenty miles which lay between him and the commencement of the forest, reaching it by sundown without especial incident, and resting that night for the first time in many days on a carpet of soft, green grass, instead of in a hollow in the sand.

The second day he began to reach foothills and a more rugged country, and by the end of the third he was in plain view of the rocky mountain crags inhabited by the fierce Tubudans, and from which they sallied forth on their marauding forays.

Now, although he had never intimated it to me, Jackson was quite as well informed concerning the character of the tribe he was going up against as I was; and ever since he had begun to approach their boundaries he had moved with extreme caution.

That night he lit no fire, but, merely sustaining himself with some fruits and nuts and a draft of water from a neighboring spring, crept into a hollow log and fell asleep.

An hour or two later he was awakened by the thump of horses's hoofs, and, reconnoitering warily, saw a large war-party—the same, he guessed, as the one from which he had so narrowly escaped in the desert—file into the little glade he had chosen as a camp, and proceed to dismount.

His head popped back into the hollow log like that of a turtle into its shell, and he lay as still as a mouse, scarcely daring to breathe.

Fervent were his prayers that this might be only a temporary halt, and the party soon move on again; but he was destined to disappointment.

Within a few minutes the blaze of a camp-fire cast its dancing light over the scene, and he could hear the bandits picketing their horses and settling themselves for the night.

A squad of them set to work gathering dry wood and piling it up beside the fire; and when two of the party laid hands upon the very log in which he lay and started to up-end it, he gave himself up for lost.

But the log with his weight added to it proved a little too heavy to handle, and they desisted, with a grunt.

Jackson's hair, which had risen like porcupine quills, slowly returned to his scalp; but he was morally certain that it must have turned snow-white in the interim.

The two men who had been baffled by the log then sat down on it for a rest, and fell into conversation.

One of them, evidently a new recruit to the band, spoke a sort of Sudanese dialect, and him Frank found it not at all difficult to follow. There was, too, strangely enough, something in the fellow's voice which he recognized as distinctly familiar, yet which he was unable to place.

The other, a pure Tubudan, he found it extremely hard to understand, but by listening closely he managed to get the gist of what was being said.

The discussion, it turned out, was in regard to the disposition of certain prisoners which the party had succeeded in taking that day, and which they were carrying back with them.

"What is to be done with them?" questioned the man with the Sudanese accent. "I thought it was the custom in Tubudu always to kill all captives as soon as taken."

"Not any more," returned the other; "and there is great grumbling in the tribe over it. But Queen Verata has learned that thus suitors were being kept from her, and she has issued an order that henceforth all white devils captured shall be paraded before her to see if perchance one may strike her fancy.

"Have small fear, though, brother." The fellow gave a guttural laugh. "I see it is

fresh meat you are hungry for, and I have little doubt you will get it. Neither of these men will suit the queen's taste, I am sure, for one is too old and the other too young. Besides, the girl is sure to fall to us. Oh, yes; be not afraid. We will be feasting on them by to-morrow night."

Crouched down in his retreat, Jackson's eyes slowly widened in horror.

Three prisoners — one old, one young, and one a girl! That description surely could apply to but one party.

At the imminent risk of detection, he wriggled his head and shoulders out of the log, and stared anxiously around.

Yes; his fears were only too well-founded. For, plainly visible in the glare of the firelight, he could see, securely bound and propped up against a big tree at some little distance from him, Colonel Darrell, Phil, and Viola.

CHAPTER XV.

A PLAN OF RESCUE.

JACKSON gazed toward the three prisoners in consternation. Viola, to say nothing of her father and brother, in such a fearful plight!

A dozen questions flashed through his brain at once. How could it have happened? When had the attack been made? Had any of them suffered injury?

But his chief idea was that he must contrive in some way to effect their rescue.

Easy enough to say, but quite another thing to accomplish.

Closely guarded as they no doubt were, and with the savages strolling about in every direction, how could he reach the captives? He was one man against fifty.

A desperate impulse did, indeed, come to him to creep out of his retreat and make a dash across the glade to the Darrells, trusting to the surprise of his appearance to create such confusion that he would have time to cut the bonds of the prisoners and get away with them in the darkness; but he concluded to try that only as a last resort.

There was a possibility that one of the three might be wounded and unable to make the necessary sprint, or all of them so stiff from being tied up that they could not run.

Besides, even with all conditions favorable, there was scarcely a chance to get away, since he and the Darrells were ignorant of the surrounding country, while the natives were of course familiar with every foot of it.

While he lay considering the pros and cons of the undertaking, he was suddenly recalled to the risk of his own situation by a rustle of footsteps in the underbrush close at hand, and he dodged back into his log just in time to escape the sharp glance of a chieftain who came striding past.

This fellow, who was evidently the person in authority over the band, and who had been inspecting the arrangements of the camp, seated himself on Jackson's log, and calling up his subordinates, began to issue orders.

As well as Jackson could make out, he, felt reasonably secure from any attack so close to home, and was inclined to impose very light sentry duty on his followers.

"We have had a hard journey, my children," he said, "and to-night we will take our rest in order to appear at our best before the queen to-morrow. Only three of you will I require to guard—two to watch the pass in the hills below, and one to look after the prisoners; the rest of us will sleep."

His unseen listener could hardly restrain an exclamation of satisfaction as he heard this arrangement.

With all the camp asleep but one man, the task of rescue, which before had presented almost insuperable obstacles, now became vastly simplified.

True, there would be two more men posted at the pass, a natural gateway up into the mountains a mile or so below, and their only avenue of escape; but he calculated that when it came to encountering them he would have the colonel and Phil with him, and the odds upon his side.

Of course, even with the pass gained, there was still ahead two days' flight through the forest, and on the other side only the barren stretches of the desert, while they were utterly without supplies of any kind; still, Jackson's buoyant nature took no heed of these conditions. He already saw all obstacles surmounted, and the party once more back in safety.

If it were not to be so, he argued, things would not have started to turn out so well for his plans.

He saw the hand of destiny in the events which had led him astray and brought him here in the nick of time to his sweetheart's assistance.

Of course, to get her and the others away and travel with them to some point of safety meant the abandonment of the scheme which had led him so many weary miles. He must give over his quest of the pink elephant at the very moment when success loomed up as a possibility; but to that fact he never gave a thought. His one concern was to save Viola.

Therefore, summoning all the patience he could command, he hugged close to his retreat until the heavy breathing all around convinced him that the Tubudans had taken their leader at his word, and were sleeping at a record rate.

Then inching cautiously out of the log, he crept back into the underbrush, and so made his way warily around the circuit of the camp.

Through the leaves he could see the sentinel pacing to and fro, alert and vigilant, with ears cocked for every sound; and each time a bush rustled unduly with his passage or a twig snapped under his hand, Jackson would hold his breath, expecting to hear the fellow give an alarm.

At last, though, he reached the big tree to which the prisoners were fastened, and, crawling up behind it, whispered softly: "Hist!"

Colonel Darrell started slightly at the sound, but immediately controlled himself, and maintained the same impassive attitude as before.

The moment the sentinel's back was turned, however, he muttered a quick admonition under his breath to Phil and Viola, bidding them show no surprise or elation at anything they might hear, but to hold themselves in readiness for instant action.

Then, with a natural movement, and as though merely seeking an easier position, he edged over toward the side of the tree as far as his restraining cords would permit, and clasped and unclasped several times his shackled right hand.

Jackson understood; the old soldier was indicating a means of communication.

"Good," he whispered. "Now I am going to ask some questions. Clench your fist once for 'Yes' and twice for 'No.'

"Are any of you wounded or disabled?" he then inquired.

To his relief, the answering hand decisively closed twice.

"If you were released, do you think you could make a dash for escape?"

The response to this was slower. Evidently the colonel was in some doubt. Finally, however, he signaled a hesitating "Yes."

Jackson pondered a moment. There was manifestly going to be too much risk with the plan he had first devised. To get away with any degree of certainty, it would be necessary to rid themselves of the sentinel.

With that, a daring expedient popped into his mind.

"Call that guard over to you on some sort of ruse," he directed, "and get him to bend down to hear what you have to say. In the meantime, I will cut Phil loose, and the two of us will grab and down him."

It was a hazardous proposal; for a single shout from the sentinel, or the noise of a protracted struggle, would undoubtedly awake the entire camp; but after a brief reflection, the colonel signaled assent, and managed to convey to Phil what was expected of him.

Wriggling up close, then, Jackson stretched his arm around the tree-trunk, and, with a couple of slashes with his hunting-knife, had the boy free for action; while the colonel, as soon as everything was in readiness, called over the unsuspecting guard, and asked for a drink of water.

Purposely, however, he mumbled his words so that the fellow had to bend close to understand him; and, choosing his opportunity, Jackson leaped forward and, clutching the man's throat in a throttling grasp, bore him to the ground.

It was lucky, though, that he had shown sufficient forethought to provide himself with an ally; for, taken by surprise though he was, the burly savage put up a strenuous fight, twisting and turning in the other's grasp like an eel, and heaving his powerful shoulders in the effort to get away with the force of a bucking bronco.

Indeed, if young Darrell hadn't speedily lent a hand, he would undoubtedly have got the best of the argument; but with two opponents piled on top of him, he was finally choked into submission, an improvised gag thrust into his mouth, and his limbs tightly tethered with the cords which had just been cut away from Phil.

Powerless, then, for further harm, and only able to glare the hate and fury which consumed him, he was rolled back out of the way into the underbrush, and Jackson, still panting from his exertions, addressed himself to the task of releasing the others.

His maneuver had been successful in every respect; for not a single one of the savages had stirred.

Still, there was no sense in tempting fate too far. Satisfied that Viola, although stiff from her confining cords, would be able to hobble along after a fashion, Jackson turned to the colonel, and urged that they lose no time in taking their departure.

But the old soldier shook his head.

"Not without those two boxes," he insisted, pointing to two leather-covered cases which Jackson recognized as a part of the equipment carried all the way from Nairobi. These, with the rest of their supplies and belongings, lay piled up as loot beside the sleeping chieftain.

The younger man could hardly believe his ears. To get those boxes without awakening their guardian would be almost impossible.

Were all their lives to be risked, he demanded impatiently, for the sake of mere property—no matter how valuable it might appear to the owner?

But the colonel was not to be dissuaded by either argument or reproach. Not a step would he stir, he declared, until the cases were in his hands.

CHAPTER XVI.

DRIVEN TO COVER

JACKSON was mad all the way through at Colonel Darrell's cranky, pig-headed behavior.

If the colonel had been the only one concerned, he would promptly have left him and his precious boxes to whatever fate might befall them; but Viola, he knew, would stick by her father at any cost, and it was, of course, impossible for him to desert her.

Therefore, he yielded with no very good grace to the old man's behest, and since the others, owing to the constraint they had been under, were physically unequal to the task, took upon himself the job of recovering the desired property.

It was a work requiring lightness of foot and guarded wariness of movement, and even Jackson, with all his agility and catlike tread, ran a decided risk in attempting it.

Furtively he tiptoed in and out among the sleeping warriors, occasionally stopping with his heart in his mouth as one or the other of them stirred or shifted a position.

At last, though, he reached the slumbering chieftain, and sustained a further shock to find that one gigantic arm was stretched out over the pile of loot in such a way that it was impossible to get what he wanted without disturbing the black.

It required all the determination which Jackson possessed, but finally he nerved himself to the point of stooping down and very gently removing the guarding arm.

Just as he got it away the huge chief rolled his head, gave a snort, and half opened his eyes.

Frightened almost to death, but retaining his presence of mind, Jackson dropped quick as a wink to the ground and stretched out like the rest of the sleeping party. The chief rolled over, grunted once or twice, and then subsided once more into repose.

Scarcely daring to believe in his good luck, Jackson lay a few minutes longer until assured that his dangerous neighbor was again sound and fast; then he arose and resumed his ticklish undertaking.

He was shaking in every limb, and he kept looking toward the chief as one might eye a powder-keg with a lighted fuse stuck into it; but he had gone too far to back out.

Gingerly he pulled the two leather-covered cases from the pile; and not only that, but also recovered the Darrells' three rifles and a supply of ammunition.

True, it was necessary to make two trips to convey all this stuff back to the big tree and his waiting companions—two trips under a staggering weight and hurdle-racing over the prostrate forms of bloodthirsty cannibals—but, as Jackson expressed it to himself, one can get used to anything if he only makes up his mind to it.

At any rate, the deed was finally accomplished, and the party ready to set off, Jackson noting with satisfaction that the three prisoners had so occupied themselves in limbering up their muscles in the interim that they were now in fairly good trim to travel.

"There are two men posted at the pass below," he said to the colonel, starting to outline his plans as they hit the trail; "but the three of us ought to be able to handle them without any difficulty, and we will then have a clear road ahead. We should, I figure, be well out of these hills and down to the forest country before they can think of starting in pursuit."

But once more the old cavalryman balked on his hands.

"No." He shook his head with a quizzical smile. "You can do as you like, of course, Jackson, and if your route lies that way we shall be glad to help you eliminate these two sentinels at the pass; but as for myself, I stay up here in the hills."

"You will stay up here in the hills?" demanded Jackson almost incredulously. "With these cannibals right on your heels?"

"Yes," replied the colonel.

"And your son and daughter—will you expose them also to such peril?"

"That is for them to choose. They are free to go or stay, as they may elect."

Phil and Viola spoke up with one voice.

"We will stick by father," they said.

"Of course." Jackson threw out his hands toward the colonel in a gesture of impotence. "That is what I knew they would say. But," he questioned bitterly, "how can you bring yourself to accept such a sacrifice, knowing, as you must, that to remain here is nothing short of suicide?"

Many other things he said by way of protest and remonstrance, but the Darrells remained unmoved.

"Oh, well"—Jackson finally shrugged his shoulders—"I see there is no use in arguing. You are set in this crazy purpose; and if you stay, so do I. But I must say—"

He broke off abruptly, with a startled exclamation, and threw back his head.

"Hark!" he cried.

Upon the still night air had suddenly broken out behind them a succession of shrill whoops.

At this young Phil gave a quick gesture of chagrin.

"It is the tied-up sentinel!" he said. "I was afraid that gag wouldn't hold. He has managed to slip it somehow and is giving the alarm."

"Yes," added Jackson, "and what's more, the whole mob will be down on us in less than no time. It looks as though our decision had been made for us; for it would be no use to try to get through the pass now, with the two down there on the alert and ready to receive us. They would easily be able to hold us back until such time as the others come up.

"Here," he urged, pointing to a steep slope upon the right leading to a rocky crag which formed one of the sides of the pass—"up this way! We can at least withstand them there, and although they could very shortly starve us out, we may be able to make terms with them. It is our one hope.

"Come!" he urged, springing forward, for the sounds of the pursuit were now plainly evident. "We must not delay a minute. Drop those old boxes and everything else but the guns, and make for the summit at top speed!"

"No!" The colonel backed up his refusal with a determined shake of the head. "Those boxes go with me at any cost. I have no time to explain now." He turned quickly toward Jackson. "But the preservation of those cases means more to me than my personal safety."

Of what avail to argue at such a moment with mulish obstinacy of that sort? Jackson did not even attempt it. Impatiently shouldering the heavier bundle of the two, he extended his free hand to Viola and hurriedly began the arduous climb.

The colonel and Phil, carrying the other box between them, followed after. There was no further interchange of conversation. Breath for the time was too precious to waste in words.

Up, up they scrambled through the spiky aloes and cactus-bushes, heedless in their haste of the rents to skin and clothing caused by contact with the impeding thorns and brambles.

They gained the summit, though, before the savages came up, and even had an opportunity to look about and select the most tenable position for defense.

The colonel glanced over their situation with the eye of an experienced campaigner, and nodded his gratification.

The pass below them seemed formed by some mighty convulsion of nature which had thrown up on either hand, like guardian pillars, these two towering crags.

From the one they occupied, one could look far away over the forest and lowlands, and even on a clear day catch a glimpse of the distant desert.

Three sides of the peak were sharply precipitous, and the fourth could only be approached along the narrow ridge which they had followed, and across which, just below them, ran a natural breastwork of huge boulders.

"Why, three men could hold back an army of trained troops here." The colonel rubbed his hands as he spoke. "You could not have chosen a more impregnable site."

"Oh, they can't get us here," Jackson admitted gloomily; "but what good does

that do? Neither can we get away. We're bottled up tight and fast; and we won't have even the satisfaction of a scrap. Those savages are too smart to risk an attack; they'll simply sit down and wait for us to starve or surrender.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CALL FOR HELP.

"YES," repeated Jackson, "as I see it, we've run ourselves into a nice little trap. Look; you can tell for yourselves what the answer is going to be."

As he spoke, the savages came bursting out of the woods with wild whoops, and rushed forward tumultuously toward the slope.

In the brilliant moonlight, they had no difficulty in following the trail of the fugitives. It was plain as print—in fact, a good deal plainer—that the party had ascended the crag.

Before any of them had gone any distance up the ridge, however, the chief, with an imperative shout, recalled the eager band, and, gathering them around him in a circle, issued a set of orders, the purport of which was easy enough to understand from his gestures.

Ten or twelve men were told off to go back to the former camp, and bring down the horses and equipment, while the rest were set to work clearing out the underbrush, building fires, and otherwise establishing themselves.

The intention to lay siege to the place was evident; but had there been any doubt on the point it would have been dispelled by the actions of the crew, who every few moments interrupted their tasks to dance exultantly and point to the top of the crag with shouts of mocking derision.

They knew, as Jackson had said, that they had but to sit down quietly and wait for results. In the end, their escaped prisoners would either have to starve or surrender.

So the night wore away, and by the time morning broke the watchers above could see that the camp was fully settled and guards so placed as to preclude any chance of a successful sortie from the crag.

Nor was there any chance of dislodging the enemy from their advantageous position. Phil and Jackson had both tried it with their rifles during the night, but soon discovered that it was merely a waste of ammunition. Their shots fell far short of doing any damage.

"Quite a strategist, that black chieftain," commented the colonel calmly, as he looked down on the scene below in the clear morning sunlight. "With the conditions he had to meet, I couldn't have handled matters any better myself."

"No, I don't believe you could," retorted Jackson witheringly.

He was not feeling in any very amicable mood toward the colonel; for he could not help feeling that but for the latter's perversity and stubbornness they might now be well through the pass and down in the lowlands.

The colonel, however, seeming to read his thoughts, shook a dissenting head.

"No, my boy," he said, with a quizzical smile, "I think you will find out we are far better off up here than we would have been if we had followed your plan and gone down into the low country.

"We are practically safe from attack," waving his hand toward the breastwork of boulders, "and," indicating a little spring which bubbled up close at hand, and ran off in a silvery rill down the slope, "we have one of the first requisites for withstanding a siege, plenty of clear, fresh water.

"Furthermore," he added, "in one of those boxes of mine which you were so anxious to leave behind, is a supply of emergency rations which I prepared against just such a crisis as this. It is all compressed stuff, not as palatable, perhaps, as canvas-back duck and terrapin, but there is ample to keep us from hunger for ten days or even longer."

Jackson opened his eyes a bit at this piece of intelligence; but he was still far from being appeased.

"Ten days?" he sneered. "Or ten weeks, for that matter? How is that going to help us? If you imagine that these savages are going to get tired and leave—"

"I don't imagine anything of the sort," said the colonel quietly. "I merely consider that ten days ought to give reasonable opportunity for our rescue."

"Our rescue?"

Jackson stared at him. Was the man going insane? Here they were, a detached party up in the wild country thousands of miles from civilization, yet he spoke calmly of the possibility of a rescue.

"Yes," the colonel repeated, "our rescue. You probably don't know it, but there is or should be an expedition under command of Major Goodchild headed this way at the present moment. They were due to leave Halfa on the 25th, and it was my purpose to cooperate with them and join them in the desert.

"You must know," he proceeded to explain, "that although I represented myself as a retired officer traveling on private business, I am really engaged on a government mission.

"For a long time the British authorities have been anxious to put a stop to the rapine and brigandage which they were confident was being carried on from Tubudu; but the difficulty has been to secure sufficient grounds on which to act so as to satisfy the home government, and prevent our punitive measures from being regarded by other nations as a mere land-grabbing scheme.

"We knew, of course, that the Tubudans were attacking and looting the caravans of British subjects; but as they never let any one escape to tell the tale, we lacked the requisite proof. Caravans would simply start out to cross the desert, and never be heard of again.

"Moreover, the rascals were wily about their nefarious work. They never interfered with any expedition which was of sufficient strength to give them a battle, or where there was any chance of an authentic report of their doings being carried back to civilization. Small or weakly-protected parties were their especial prey.

"Finally, Major Goodchild and I worked out a plan whereby to cope with the situation and put a stop to the long series of depredations.

"Under the guise of heading a private expedition, I was to start out from Nairobi with one or two companions, and heading in this direction, serve as a bait for the Tubudans, pretending to flee from them when they sallied to the attack, but really leading them into the hands of Goodchild, who, with a strong force, was to leave Halfa on a fixed date and be prepared to meet me.

"As the enterprise was one of some peril, and I had to have absolute and unquestioning obedience, I took along with me only my own son and daughter, although I was willing, since you desired it, that you and your partner should accompany us as long as our ways coincided."

"But where did your scheme fail?" inquired Jackson, deeply interested. "How did you come to be captured? Remember, I know nothing as yet of your adventures. Did this Major Goodchild slip up on his end of the proposition?"

"No." The colonel glanced down a shade ruefully. "Our troubles are all my own fault. I should have recognized that that camel-dealer at Artufa was an arrant rascal, and have been more upon my guard."

"The camel-dealer at Artufa? What had he to do with it?"

"Everything. I knew when I went to him that he was suspected of being in league with the Tubudans, and of notifying them whenever suitable parties were about to pass their way, and I was well satisfied to have it thus, for I never believed for a minute that he would be deceived by the ruse you had proposed of first traveling to the northwest.

"But,"—he grinned in somewhat sickly fashion—"the scoundrel overreached me."

"Overreached you? How?"

"By the simplest trick in the world. The second night after you left us, we fled back into the wooded country from a sand-storm on the desert, and in the resultant confusion and darkness, his villainous driver managed to get to our tea and dope it. Then, while we were all three sunk under the influence, he skipped out with the camels, and when we awoke we found ourselves in the hands of the Tubudans."

"And where is Major Goodchild with his expedition all this time?" sharply demanded Jackson.

"Undoubtedly scouting back in the desert, on the lookout for me. Our agreement was that he was to remain out at least ten days on the chance of my having been delayed."

"But you spoke of his coming to our rescue. There is no likelihood of him coming back here into the mountains, is there?"

"None," assented the colonel; "unless we manage in some way to send him word of our plight."

At this Jackson gave another impatient exclamation.

"Send word of our plight? A healthy prospect, isn't it?"

He waved his hand toward the three sides of the crag falling away sheer from the edge, and offering no sign of foothold for even the boldest climber; then pointed to

the encompassing band of warriors at the foot of the slope.

"A mole burrowing underground is about the only kind of a messenger you could send out of here," he observed gloomily, "and even he would have a pretty stiff job of it."

"I wasn't considering sending a messenger," rejoined the colonel.

"Oh" — with a sudden suggestion — "you're figuring, perhaps, on signaling with smoke, or rigging up a heliograph?"

He shook his head critically.

"It won't work, colonel. The distance is too great for either plan."

"True," nodded the other; "so don't waste any further time in guessing, but open that other box of mine, and see for yourself what I propose to do."

Naturally, Jackson promptly obeyed, but when he had loosened the straps, and thrown back the cover, he was still in almost as much of a quandary as before.

"What is it?" he asked perplexedly, as he lifted out first a long, narrow bundle. "Looks to me more like a jointed steel fishing-rod or a collapsible hat-rack than anything else."

Then, as he dived still farther into the box, he straightened up with a gasp.

"By heck!" he ejaculated. "It's a portable wireless apparatus. Oh, I see now why you were so bent on bringing it with us. What an ass, what a bothersome donkey, you must have thought me, for continually sticking in my fool objections!"

The colonel passed lightly over these shamed apologies.

"Yes," he said, "it is a portable wireless. The means I had arranged for communicating with Goodchild, although I never thought it would be so urgently needed.

"However," he added briskly, "the sooner we get it into operation, the better. Viola, you stand down by the breastworks in order to guard us against surprise; and let the rest of us get to work."

Accordingly, they set to, and under their united efforts the thing was in shape in a surprisingly short time—the "jointed steel fishing-pole," with its attached wires, extending up like a slender wand from the crag, the battery and coherer in position, and everything in readiness.

Then the colonel, adjusting his headpiece, seated himself on the provision-box before the instrument, and sent out call after call insistently along the mystic Hertzian waves.

Eagerly they waited for a response; but although they tried again and again, none came.

"Our range is short," muttered the colonel, "and Goodchild may have journeyed farther out into the desert than I expected. We shall simply have to keep hammering away at him until we get an answer."

So, keep hammering away they did; but day after day passed, and still no reply came. The expanse of air outstretched from their eery remained voiceless.

Worn under the constant strain of vigilance, for the savages, with feints and pretended assaults, never allowed them to relax for a moment, unnerved by the long series of disappointments, each hour brought more and more gloomy conjectures as to what could be the matter.

Perhaps Goodchild had misunderstood the arrangements, and turned back to Halfa before the time agreed upon? Perhaps he had started out too soon? Perhaps he had never started at all? Perhaps—most likely suggestion of any — he had been overwhelmed by the sand-storm in the desert, and had perished with all his men?

Yet, hoping against hope, they still kept pounding out the desperate call for help, and still waited vainly for an answer.

A week passed, ten days, twelve; and finally on the thirteenth the colonel announced gravely that their rations, short as they had made them, were exhausted to the last crumb.

At last they were facing a crisis.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEFORE THE CHIEF.

MEANWHILE, I, too, was having adventures of a rather startling character.

Let me go back now to that night in the desert, when I stole away from the sleeping camp, after possessing myself of a copy of Jackson's map, and try to recount some of the things which befell me.

I traveled a mile or two due north, as I have already related, dropping my handkerchief, and otherwise striving to leave a plain trail; then veering sharply about and taking infinite pains to leave no tracks, I headed for the southwest.

Dawn found me well beyond the camp, and out of any possibility of being sighted;

but in order to make assurance doubly sure, I kept plugging along, until the heat of midday made it necessary for me to stop and roll myself into a little burrow of shade under the lee of a sand hillock.

Legging it over the sands, I had already discovered, was a very different proposition from riding smoothly along on the back of a camel; but even so, I was well content.

I was free of uncongenial society, had no one to think of except myself, and was at last within sight, so to speak, of the goal which I had so long planned to reach.

With the map I had copied from Jackson's chart, there would now be no difficulty in reaching Tubudu; and spurred on by this idea, I was soon on the march again, and making progress which would have met even the commendation of Colonel Darrell.

Most of the night I walked, guiding myself by the compass and the directions laid out on Jackson's chart, and before the heat compelled me to desist next day, I had left the desert behind me, and was luxuriating in the "shade of the sheltering palm."

I felt that it now behooved me to assume the disguise I had contemplated, and accordingly, with the aid of a dye I had long before procured from an old Mohammedan woman in Cairo, guaranteed to be "fast," I soon transformed myself into a very presentable blackamoor.

It was the easier for me to take on the part, since I am naturally dark, with black hair and eyes, the former crisp and curly enough to pass for "wool." In fact, my nickname at school, owing to these personal characteristics, had always been "Nigger" Mayhew; and since this narrative is in the nature of a confession, I may as well admit that our family is not without a "touch of the tar-brush," one of my ancestors three or four generations back having married, according to report, a West Indian quadroon.

Therefore, as far as looks went, I had little fear of arousing suspicion; nor did I really anticipate any trouble with the other end of my imposture.

Remember, I had been going over for weeks the story I intended to tell, until I had it thoroughly fixed in my mind, and as I am a pretty fair mimic, I had learned to sling the peculiar guttural dialect of the Sudan so that it sounded like the real thing.

If I made any slips in accent or the occasional use of a word, I trusted to the unfamiliarity of the Tubudans with the tongues spoken farther north to cover up any discrepancies.

My own clothes and accouterments, all except my rifle, cartridge-belt, knife, and water-skin, I carefully concealed; and then, my preparations complete, I took my bearings and resumed my way.

The point at which I had emerged from the desert was a little west of that where Jackson later came out, and where the trail —if it can be called such—started, leading up into the mountains; so it was well along in the afternoon before I reached the spot.

My progress, too, was a bit slow, owing to the extreme heat and heaviness of the atmosphere, and I was glad to rest, when a consultation of the map secreted in my loincloth showed me that at last I had reached the turning-off place.

I threw myself wearily down on a little patch of dry grass, panting like a dog after a hard run, and gave myself over to utter relaxation.

But as I lay there gazing out toward the desert shrouded in its peculiar coppery haze, I was suddenly brought to my feet, trembling in every limb.

Whether it was a vision, or, as I am now inclined to believe, a trick of reflection and refraction due to the singular atmospheric conditions, I do not know; but I distinctly beheld, apparently not ten feet away from me, the figure of Frank Jackson magnified to gigantic size, and with his rifle leveled directly at my heart.

For a moment the apparition lasted while I continued to gaze spellbound toward it; then the thing was blotted out in a great wave of blackness, and the desert began to seethe like a huge, boiling caldron.

Was it a warning which had been sent me? Had Jackson perhaps perished, and was his spirit now preparing to haunt me, his false friend?

I had small time, however, to speculate upon such contingencies; for just then the storm broke.

Of course, back in the woods, I did not get the full force of it; but it was bad enough.

I was almost blown away by the wind, was pelted by successive showers of sharp sand and pebbles, blinded by the vivid flashes of lightning which shot athwart the inky pall covering the earth, deafened by the terrific claps of thunder.

And then in the very midst of the turmoil like the phantasmagoria of a nightmare,

came a whirl of galloping hoofbeats, and out of the gloom dashed a band of savage warriors.

Almost before I realized what had happened, I was roughly seized and taken prisoner; but it was impossible in that uproar of the elements to carry on a colloquy, or even to make one's self heard, so I merely submitted quietly, and kept my peace.

The tempest, however, was not of long duration, subsiding almost as quickly as it had commenced; and with its conclusion I was dragged before the chieftain of the party, a huge negro, black as ebony, and whose rather grim face was rendered still more unprepossessing by the loss of one eye and the deep scar of an ancient wound extending from his forehead to his chin.

At last I was face to face with a leader of the Tubudans; and upon my adroitness in the next few minutes would depend whether I would have a chance to carry my adventure further, or abruptly end my career then and there.

CHAPTER XIX.

TESTED BY FIRE.

It was an interview I had long anticipated and schooled myself to meet; yet I will not deny that my heart was beating fast as I stood before the scowling chief.

Suppose that keen eye should see through my disguise and detect the imposture? Suppose my answers should fail to suit his liking? Suppose he happened to be out of humor, and ready to gratify any caprice?

In either case, my shrift bade fair to be short. My destiny at that moment really hung on the turn of a hair.

In the interval that we faced each other before he spoke, I took quick occasion to study the man.

I have the ability to read human nature pretty accurately, and after the second glance my trepidation ceased. I felt fully competent to cope with him and get the best of the argument.

It was a whimsical idea, but he reminded me of nothing so much as an old black tom-cat—one of those heroes of innumerable back-fence encounters, with a ragged ear, a broken tooth or so, and fur scratched and torn. His lithe frame, in spite of his years, his big shaggy head, his gouged-out eye, and malign expression, all served to carry out the resemblance.

His character, I decided, if I judged him aright, was also distinctly feline—cruel, crafty, and suspicious, delighting in carnage for the mere sake of killing.

From this quick estimate, I took my line of action. To appeal to him, I must make myself out a pitiless fiend, a monster in human form.

As I reached this point, he ceased his inspection of me, and snarled some remark at me in the gracious manner of an angry tiger.

I could not understand him very well, but I gathered that it was an inquiry as to where I came from; and I answered with a vague wave of my arm to the northward, and an intimation that I did not care to be too explicit in naming the locality.

"Why not?" he questioned with a touch of interest.

I hung my head and pretended to be confused.

Finally I blurted out: "I have enemies there from whom I have fled, and who, if they find me, will surely kill me."

"Why do they seek you?" he demanded.

"It is my three brothers," I explained. "They injured me, and I swore to be avenged; so I laid plans to slay them and their entire families. Kill their wives and children I did, also my own mother and two sisters; but they, the dogs, escaped my fury, and now are banded together under an oath to hunt me down.

"Thirty-six persons in all, I killed," I announced proudly. "I stayed my hand neither for age or sex."

This was rather laying it on with a trowel, but I could see from the gloating expression of the chief's face that I had caught his fancy with my tale of wholesale slaughter.

"My brothers gave me hot pursuit," I continued, "and in order to escape them, I was driven to the desert; there was no place in my own country where I dared to lay my head. Besides, I had heard stories of a stern and warlike tribe living down in these southern mountains, ruled over by a woman, but waging battle under the command of a skilled and valorous chief. At my home the mere mention of this chief and his tribe causes strong men to shiver and turn pale like children. They are said to be tigers in a fight, unconquerable and undefeated."

Watching him out of the corner of my eye, I noted with satisfaction that the subtle

touch of flattery had not altogether failed of its effect.

"I, too, am a fighting man," I went on, drawing myself up to full height, "and I told myself that if I could join this brave band, I would not only be free of the enemies who hang upon my track, but would also have plenty of the kind of work my soul loves.

"Can you direct me, then," I asked, "to this great chief? He is the leader of the men of Tubudu."

The old, one-eyed villain hesitated as though considering.

"Tubudu wants no cowards," he said at length; "and you are one by your own admissions."

"Not so," I denied hotly. "I do not fear these brothers of mine. Singly, I would meet them, but they are three to one, all stronger than I, and the man who accepts such odds is not brave. He is a fool."

The chief pondered again, looking me over thoughtfully. Then he suddenly clapped his hands and raised his voice.

"This rascally Sudanese is a liar and a spy!" he cried. "Give him to the torture, and then kill him!"

Then, as having no further interest in the matter, he turned contemptuously on his heel and strode away.

Immediately I was seized by a couple of burly brutes and hustled over to a neighboring tree, where I was bound and a pile of dry grass and branches heaped about my feet.

One of the savages struck fire from a flint, and lighting a twig, stood ready to touch off the inflammable stuff.

It was certainly a ticklish situation, yet I cannot say that I was scared in the least degree. The whole affair bore too strongly the aspect of a mere ruse to test my courage.

Therefore, I smiled scornfully at their formidable preparations.

"Do your worst, dogs of mountaineers!" I railed at them. "Give me double measure. I will show you how a brave man can meet whatever fortune sends him!"

The result showed that I was right in my conclusions; for just as I began to wonder if they might not be in earnest after all, and to question whether I had not been piling it on too thick, the chief dispersed his torturers with a gesture, and striding over, cut me free.

"You are a man after my own heart," he exclaimed, rubbing his big, flat nose against mine in token of friendliness. "I will take you into my band with pleasure; for I am the chief of Tubudu whom you seek."

"Then I have a secret to impart to you," I said, pretending to be greatly surprised; "for I did not propose to come to Tubudu empty-handed."

I drew him to one side, and lowered my voice.

"There is a party of whites out on the desert," I continued, "not half a day's journey distant from here. It is a small caravan, easy to be overcome, and I have followed them many days, and marked their direction, so as to be able to lead you to them when I met you."

He started and eyed me keenly.

"How many in this party?" he asked.

"Four. An old man, his son and daughter, and a younger man who travels with them."

I had intended to make no mention of myself, but something in his glance caused me to reconsider.

"There were originally five whites in the caravan," I rather hastily amended; "but the fifth, also a young man, strayed away from the others two days ago."

"Ah," commented the chief, "I can trust you fully now, for I see that you tell the truth. I knew of this caravan already, from information sent me by my friend the camel dealer at Artufa, and I was also warned by him that this young man, the fifth member of the party, would leave the others at about this time. We have been on the lookout for him now for two days."

The camel dealer at Artufa! I understood at last the reason for the lying counsel that treacherous hound had given me. It was to deliver me unprotected into the hands of these cannibals.

I allowed my companion to gain no inkling of my feelings. Instead, I laughed.

"You have been on the lookout for him for two days?" I repeated. "That was a bad waste of time."

"A waste of time? What do you mean?"

"Two nights ago he fell asleep on the desert." And I gave a significant leer. "And I was close at hand."

"You killed him?"

"What else would you expect? It is his rifle and cartridges which I carry. This is his knife with his name scratched on the handle."

The chief looked at me searchingly.

"Lead me to the place," he said. "I want to see his body and make sure you are telling the truth."

"His body?" I shrugged my shoulders. "There may be some charred fragments of bones out on the desert. I was hungry, and he made good meat."

The old scoundrel looked at me admiringly, and again insisted on rubbing his nose against mine.

"Ah, you are one of us indeed," he said. "You will make a good member of the tribe, my son."

CHAPTER XX.

MESSENGER TO THE QUEEN.

It had been the chief's idea that the man they had seen and chased in the desert was the member of the party he had been forewarned would probably stray away—in other words, myself.

But when I explained to him that it must have been Jackson out in search of me, he readily accepted the solution.

We both agreed that the wanderer must inevitably have perished in the sandstorm, or otherwise he would have come on to the shelter of the trees; for of course we never reckoned on the strange combination of events—the divergence of his compass, the fog of sand, and all the rest of it—which had blinded Jackson as to his locality and concealed from him the fact that a refuge was so close at hand.

The savage leader was delighted, though, when he learned that the strength of the caravan had been decreased by two instead of one, and was all eagerness to set out at once for the attack.

We sallied forth immediately, therefore, and as I was able from my chart to guide them directly to the colonel's route, we sighted the party after two or three hours of hard riding.

I say we sighted them, although I personally could see nothing, and I have since learned that they saw nothing of us; but the keen eyes of the savages had a farther range of vision.

Then, too, I was shown a sample of savage strategy. The chief, dismounting and bending close to the ground, rapidly approached the camp, meantime howling from time to time like a jackal.

It was a prearranged signal with the treacherous camel-drivers, and, upon hearing it, these latter dosed the tea which the Darrells were accustomed to drink just before retiring.

The rest I have already told in the colonel's story. We took the three captive without the slightest difficulty, and set out upon the return march. Two nights later we camped in the forest glade, one day's journey away from the tribe's mountain stronghold and the residence of their queen.

During this time I had managed to become rather chummy with a member of the band who, although a black, was not a born Tubudan, but, like myself, adopted into the tribe.

He was of a shrewder, keener sort than the others, and, I noticed, kept studying me from time to time in a puzzled fashion.

Finally, the night we camped in the glade, he broached to me the subject of his speculations.

We had fallen into conversation, I remember, while gathering fire-wood, and, seated on a big log, I put several questions to him. Then, presently, when we had drawn a little apart from the rest, he put one to me in return.

"Look here," he said, "why have you come to Tubudu?"

I started to repeat the story I had told the chief, but he shook his head with a laugh.

"I heard all that," he protested; "but I am less dull-brained than these man-eating Tubudans, and I know you were not telling the truth.

"Come." He extended his hand. "You and I are outlanders, strangers among this people. Let us be brothers. Tell me your real reason for coming, and perhaps I may be able to help you."

I felt that the fellow was sincere in his offer; but I was not giving my project away to anybody, so I tried to dissemble.

"Well," I said, "to give you the actual facts, I am out to get hold of the pink elephant."

His eyes almost popped out of his head, and he nearly fell over backward in his astonishment.

Then he clutched my arm in a quick, cautioning grip.

"Never let anybody else hear you say that!" he counseled me under his breath. "It is well that it came only to my ears who am not a Tubudan. Had you spoken those words to any one of them, from the

chief to the lowest member of the tribe, that instant you would have died!"

"Is this pink elephant so sacred, then, that it is not to be mentioned?" I asked.

"Sacred?"

He rolled his eyes, and started to explain more fully; but at that moment he was interrupted by a summons from the chief, and left me, with the promise that he would tell me more at the first convenient opportunity.

The duty for which he was called turned out to be that of guarding the camp, and as the rest of us were ordered to repose I saw that I would have no chance to talk to him again that night, and therefore rolled up as comfortably as possible and went to sleep.

When I was awakened by the shouting and turmoil around me, I found that the prisoners had escaped.

At first everything was naturally in confusion and uproar; but the chief soon had us straightened out and on the trail, and in a very short time we reached the foot of the crag where the fugitives had taken asylum.

"Ah," exclaimed our leader, with a wide grin of satisfaction as he noted the situation, "we have them safely trapped. There is no escape from that place. When their provisions give out, they will have to come down; all that is required of us is to sit here and wait.

"Word must be sent of this to the queen, however," he added. "She will be expecting us to-morrow, and must be informed of the reason for our delay."

He paused, and cast his eye over the band, and his glance chanced to fall on me and the warrior standing at my side. He singled us out with a wave of his hand, and, giving us the message he wanted carried, charged us to lose no time in taking it to the queen.

"Or, stop a moment," he hailed me, with a ferocious chuckle. "That carrion who allowed our captives to get away is still lying bound up in the woods. I have noticed that you and he have become extremely friendly; so stop and kill him as you pass."

I raised my hand to my forehead in token of obedience, then hurried off up the trail to join my companion.

On arriving at the glade, I bade him go on slowly while I attended to the job entrusted to me. He proved rather loath to consent, but I finally won my way and pushed back alone to where my unlucky comrade lay in the underbrush, the gag worked free from his lips, but still tightly bound as the fugitives had left him.

A glint of hope came into his eye as he saw who it was that had come to him.

"The chief has sent you to kill me, eh?" he questioned. "Well, I do not deserve death. I did not lapse in my vigilance; the prisoners had assistance from the outside. A strange white man helped them."

"A strange white man?" I smiled my incredulity. "How, then, did he come? On wings? I am afraid you were dreaming, my brother."

"No, it is true," he insisted. "However, that makes no difference, since it is you that have been sent to carry out the chief's sentence. Being brothers sworn, you will, of course, spare me?"

"Surely," I nodded. "I have it all planned out to get you away, and at the same time deceive the chief. But before I cut your cords and acquaint you with my scheme I want you to answer me a few questions."

"About the pink elephant?" he demanded.

"No," I returned impatiently. "What do I care about the pink elephant? I want to know where the queen's great store of treasure is concealed."

"Ah?" His eyes widened with comprehension. "I thought that was what you were really after, and if I knew I would tell you and share the spoil with you; for that is what brought me to Tubudu, and has kept me in the tribe two long and weary years.

"But alas!" and he shook his head, "I have never been able to find out the hiding-place. That is known only to two others besides the queen—Bonga, our cruel chief, and Saffa, her principal adviser."

He was so evidently speaking truly that I saw it was no use to press my inquiries further. I should have to find out the secret for myself.

"All right, then," I said. "If you don't know, you can't of course tell me. All that is left to me is to release you from your bonds and send you on your way."

I drew my knife as though to cut the ropes about his chest, but instead, with a quick turn, I drove the keen blade to his heart.

I felt that I could not afford to disobey the chief and possibly get myself into trou-

ble on his account; and, besides, the fellow was too sharp-witted to suit me. He was apt to nose out my purpose, and maybe cause me difficulties later on.

Better for me in every respect that he should be out of the way. Nevertheless, as I have said before, I am extremely tender-hearted, and the poor chap gave me quite a turn at the last.

Indeed, I shall never forget the look of surprise, incredulity, and reproach which flashed into his eyes as I gave him his death-blow.

"Brother!" he gasped in accents which were the very epitome of biting scorn; then his head rolled over on one side, and he was dead.

I was really quite unnerved by the unfortunate incident, and left the glade with a sense of deep regret that I had been forced to do it.

By the time I caught up with my fellow messenger, however, I had recovered my usual equanimity; for my spirits could not fail to rise with the reflection that at last the way was clear to Queen Verata. By to-morrow I should see her, and not only see her, but be received in audience.

CHAPTER XXI.

MY LONG-SOUGHT IDEAL.

I CAUGHT my first glimpse of Tubudu toward sunset the next day.

Perched on the peak of a rocky eminence, it occupied an imposing site; but that was the only thing imposing about it.

The place itself was merely a ragged collection of squalid huts similar to those in any African mountain *kraal*, with a larger structure of the same architectural character at the upper end to serve as a palace.

The whole was surrounded by a rude stockade of logs decorated at the tops in many places with grinning human skulls, while over the gateway waved a tattered and dirty white banner bearing the crude representation of a pink elephant.

Rendered discreet by the tip of my late brother in arms, I passed no comment on this insignia; but silently followed the example of my companion and made obeisance to it.

Then the gates were opened to us, and still panting from our climb up the rugged, boulder-strewn pathway, we entered.

It was well for Tubudu that it possessed the sanitary advantage of pure mountain air. Otherwise, plagues and epidemics would undoubtedly have long since wiped out the population; for a more filthy, malodorous place had never in all my life so offended my eyes and nostrils.

As I followed my associate through the irregular streets, I was constantly obliged to turn aside for piles of refuse and decaying garbage, while the glimpses I caught of the dark, evil-smelling interiors of the houses made me resolve to be rather chary as to the hospitality I accepted.

How a graceful, exquisite creature such as Verata had been described to me could exist in such an environment, I could not imagine; and my wonder was still further increased when I reached the palace and found it little improved in point of either tidiness or comfort over any of the other dwellings.

The only comparison which seemed at all to fit the case was that of some beautiful white lily growing out of a muck-heap.

Then, too, as I reflected, the only part of the palace I had seen so far was the judgment-hall or audience-chamber, where the crowd came daily, and where we had been directed to await the queen's pleasure. Probably her private apartments were kept on an entirely different scale of order and cleanliness.

Still, I must confess that what I saw was a distinct shock and disappointment to me; not so much on account of the dirt—I had lived too long in tropical and oriental countries to lay much stress on that—but on account of the cheap and tawdry character of the fittings.

I had expected to behold something of barbaric magnificence—rich, if tarnished, hangings, a golden throne possibly inlaid with jewels, gorgeous featherwork decorations, and stuff of that sort.

But here was only a big, bare, barnlike enclosure, with a leaky thatched roof and a dirt floor trodden hard by the scuffling of many shoeless feet.

The walls were of upright poles chinked with mud, and were unembellished save for a few ragged draperies of gaudy calico.

Instead of the gold and jewel-inlaid throne, there was a cheap, cane-seated American rocking-chair such as one would see on the porch of a country farmhouse; and, to complete the picture, there was stationed beside it a worn and battered old phonograph dolefully wheezing out that

sprightly air, a reminder of my childhood, "Henrietta, have you met her?"

In this depressing place, and with that depressing tune going on and on, we had to wait for a good two hours, until Verata, with feminine procrastination, was ready to receive us; but I kept up my falling spirits by picturing to myself how well repaid I would be for everything, when the beauty did finally deign to show herself.

And at last the weary period came to an end, as all things must, and the guards about the lower door proclaimed with loud shoutings and frantic gesticulation the coming of the queen.

Everybody in the place flung themselves prostrate, with faces pressed to the ground, and I, of course, followed suit.

But when, after a moment or two, I heard the sweeping rustle of trailing robes, I could no longer restrain my curiosity, and peeped through my fingers.

I had evidently looked too soon, however, I told myself; for Verata was nowhere in sight. The only person visible was a woman I judged to be "mistress of the bedchamber," or "keeper of the royal robes," or something of the sort—a huge, misshapen creature, capable of tipping the beam at fully two hundred and fifty pounds, and with a face like a full moon, all wrinkled and creased into rolls of fat.

Her complexion and arms, which were bare to the elbow, were like brickdust in hue, and her thin, taffy-colored hair was streaked back in wisps from her wide forehead.

She wore what might be described as full evening costume, her gown, as I afterward learned, having been made by native workwomen from a fashion-plate taken with the loot of a caravan at one time, and representing the style of about 1879.

Taken all in all, she was about the most ridiculously grotesque figure that my eyes had ever rested upon, and I watched her in a sort of fascination, wondering the while where Verata could have found such a mountain of flesh, and to what possible use she could put her.

The ponderous old dame, however, seemed to have no idea that she was in any way absurd. She switched the train of her gown along with quite a society air, and held her head up proudly as she waddled past the row of salaaming guards.

Across the floor she proceeded, and plumped herself down in the rocking-chair, which creaked under her weight.

Then somebody gave a shout, and all rose to their feet yelling a sort of Tubudan "Hail to the queen!" at the top of their voices.

Then the horrible truth broke upon me. This awful caricature was none other than Verata herself.

True, she had been described to be as supremely lovely; but I had forgotten that, among the African blacks, fat is the one standard of beauty.

(To be continued.)

The Taming of Lem Hawks.

BY BURKE JENKINS.

Old Shed's Story of the Bad Man in Tight Cinch Gap, Involving an Account of What Happened When He Asked for a Match from a Greaser.

"WHICH the way Lem Hawks could shoot up a place in the old days was some reemarkable!" chuckled Old Shed, unthumbing his belt and rubbing at an imaginary smudge of the well-oiled bar.

The stranger bought a cheroot and the yarn unraveled:

Yer see, I was young myself at the time, bein' some slim and coltlike, and, if I do say it m'self, quite cut-upshious and what might be called easy on the trigger. The which is said merely to show how I knows the more intimater history of this same Lem Hawks.

Fact is, it was the very year I started this here Twin Star Emporium that Lem ambles into Tight Cinch Gap on a little wheezy roan, an' the outfit he sports in the way of personal artillery makes him the envy plumb. Them two pearl-handled six-guns a glinting in his buckskinned

fists were shore commanding and admirable as he rid that critter up to the bar behind the which I ladles out the red.

"Gents," yells Lem, heartylike by way of a personal knockdown, "I'm a doing of this here benighted burg the honor of going to live here—feeling, as it were, my app'inted duty to have it said that thar's *one* man, anyway, in Tight Cinch."

This same being his modest introduct, he orders licker for all, engages my best room (the one over the bar), kicks a half-breed into looking out for his nag, and becomes a citizen.

In them days you couldn't 'a' struck us nicer; 'cause we-all was just a busting with a general feelin' of freedom such as goes along with exuberant youth, Tight Cinch itself not being a two-year-old yet.

So by the end of a week Lem mounts to the notch of town bad man, with admiration and worship according. And this same pinnacle o' glory he occupies till the railroad got run through here.

Funny, ain't it, how railroads and order come simultaneous? Anyhow, here's how it fell out with us and Lem.

Y'see, in the wild days there wasn't a buck of us as had a cent as wasn't daily chanced at faro; and interests, thereunto, was somewhat commoonal. But, come the railroad, and we-uns began, little by little, to kinder acquire some semblance of real possessions. I added a room or two occasional to the Emporium for passing strays in the way of drummers; and then, again, and mighty important, I met up with Sal, the getting of the whom made me redooce to one drink a hour.. And the other boys according.

In other words, Tight Cinch was gettin' from wildcat shootupdom to tame, family-tied, and plumb docile married gents.

All except Lem. And mighty occasional he'd open out in that linguistic way o' his'n and tell us what he thought of us. We just knew he was right, and, at first, we'd hang our heads plenty effete; but, by and by he began to punctuate his views with lead pellets some careless; and when he finally spoilt Dick Salter's trigger finger (taking the nail off neat), why, we just constituted ourselves a committee and read him some quiet talk.

Course, under our shirts, we thought the world of Lem; but us property-owners began to feel the want of some law and order in the region.

Well, the way he took that talking to was some characteristic. We had hit on a Saturday night when every one was in town and hereunto congregated as being most fitted for the thing; and I'd drawn the short straw, and was thus cut out to read him the spiel.

"Lem," says I in as hefty a tone as I could muster, "we here assembled citizens of Tight Cinch are firm agreed that you got ter some restrain yourself in the matter of—"

And that's just as far as I got; for, with the cheerisomest kind of a chuckle, Lem just unlimbered his artillery and began to shoot out the lights. And, furthermore somehow, there was such a feelin' o' glee in him we-all kinder actual enjoyed the joke.

Leastwise he was shore getting away with the play, when the door of the Emporium opens plenty quiet and a gust of winter wind made the last undoused light flicker unsteady.

Lem's back was to the door, him a facing of us-all thataway, and the instinct of the real gun-sharp makes him whirl a pivot on the feeling of that draft. Men didn't like any one behind 'em them days.

But he shore didn't shoot none whatever. Instead, his Colts just went limplike in his two hands, and his face took on the goldarndest kind of look. Fact is, I never did see a "first sight" affair get such a grip on a human.

For the why? And who was it? Nothing but the most powerfulest factor in this here world—a weak and wobegone wisp of a woman.

That's all. But this here specimen was shore all there.

Black-haired she was and supple, like a catamount, with eyes that drilled at you from longish lashes. And there was a glide to her walk with a swing at the hips that made talk of her being Spanish some way. But what got us the most was the easysome way she plumb ignored the glint of Lem's shoot-irons, and just made over to me.

"I want the worth of that in some flour, salt, and bacon. Also a couple of cans of condensed milk," she said velvety, the while she passes me over a battered Mexican dollar.

Not a heavy breath broke the pin-drop-pin' silence as I weighs out the things—plenty overmeasure, you can bet; then, with

a whirl of a final sweep of the eyes over us all again, she gathers up the bundles under the shawl she wore.

Right behind the bar she came, brushes past me, and exits sudden and decided by the back door behind me.

The whole incident seems that uncanny, nothing would have made us sure of the realness but the look on Lem Hawks's scarred old face.

Finally he gathers a bit of blood back into his cheeks and asks quiet: "Who is she, Shed?"

I've heard that kind of tone three times in life. 'Twict it was just before a killing.

So I answered back equal soft: "I never saw or hearn tell of her before."

Then Lem whirls on the bunch.

"Any of you coyotes know her?"

Not a man had so much as sot eyes on the slip of a woman.

And that ended it for a minute. Lem shoves his weepons holsterward and sinks into a corner behind the stove. No comments follow; the poker game is started; and most of us downs an extra hooker. All except Lem.

II.

I RECKON it must 'a' been near some ten minutes after that the front door swung open again, and there come into the glow of that one lamp a slinky sort of a half-caste Mexican.

He gave a hasty glance around, a searching sort o' thing; then changes attitude entire, and stomps up to the bar and orders a drink. None of us had ever seen the greaser before, but *being* greaser thataway he don't cause any comment.

That is, not until he's about to raise his glass to his lips. For, just at that elevating like of his eyes, he catches sight apparent of somethin' out the winder and beyond in the moonlight. And, sir, he don't continue in the downing o' that drink.

That's what makes attention comes a galloping his way—fer a greaser to sot down a full glass. The which this cuss did plumb decided and immediate.

Then he unjerks a bag o' coin and slings me a two-bit piece. The which accomplished he exits plenty sudden, and I don't suppose none of the rest of us would 'a' paid any further attention, if it hadn't 'a' been that Lem gets some sort of a hunch over there where he'd been a brooding in his corner.

But no sooner the door slaps behind the low-down peon than Lem gets up and crosses over to just that same position the which the Mexican had when he stopped a drinking.

And, after one look out yonder, he grumbled a pretty cuss, and stomps out as sudden as the greaser afore him.

Well, sir and gentlemen, that there does begin to wake us up some—there following instanter a general stampede for a look out that winder.

First, a skirting the whiter glint of the trail and walking plenty fast we made out Lem. Ahead of him, but apparent not expecting any one behind, there keeps a dodging from one side the trail to the other and keeping to shadows that there greaser. And plumb erratic as his course is, he's making good time.

Then away on ahead atop of a knoll that the moon shines plenty hearty on, we spies a bundled-up female figger. 'Tain't no blind puzzle any longer.

III.

Now, the rest of the story I can't give on plumb personal evidence; but you can just bank a red it ain't much out the way I tell it, my authorities being some authentic.

Here it was then: The greaser following the girl and Lem following the greaser, each unbeknownst to the other. And furthermore, Lem hadn't ever clapped an eye on either till that same night.

By the time Lem reached the knoll, both the woman and the Mexican were down in the hollow beyond, and the slippery cuss had almost caught up to her. Lem thinks maybe he'd better spring some sort of play, but he soon discovers that the feller ain't intending to overtake her just yet. He's just dogging.

So Lem jogs on behind as long as he can keep his temper in. But final it gets too much for him, and he gets on his toes and soft-shoes it on the run.

Maybe the woman's a hundred feet ahead when Lem tackles.

I never could understand why Lem preferred to use his hands instead of a Colt; but, anyway, the same he did, clapping a choking hug on the feller's throat. But, somehow or other, a white man never

seems to full value a knife, or to be enough askeared of it.

So it's a mighty nasty slash across the choking forearm that makes Lem slack up sudden on his grip. And then it is that, thanks to his blade, the greaser frees from the clutch, rolls a yard to one side, catches the hiding of a clump of 'squit, and makes a clean getaway. And, the next morning, as we found out, he recovered his hidden pony and his trail leads dead decided for the Rio Grande.

IV.

At the sound of the scuffle the woman turned in plenty of time to see the knife-play, and just as Lem is doing his best to stop the blood with his neckerchief, he finds her beside him.

"Oh, he cut you badly!" she cries, and then and thereupon she appropriates the ends of that kerchief from Lem's hairy paw. Three shakes later that there slash is tied up regular hospital fashion; and from same second Lem don't feel any pain —none whatever.

Instead, he just lets himself settle, sink, and slide into the dead lowest depths of love loco.

"Why, little woman," says he from some soft place he's got way down in his chest, "that there ain't nothing 'tall. What's just a disturbing me is that I didn't have gumption enough to unhook a chunk o' lead into that coyote of a greaser."

The girl's attitude changes entire, a full anxious look coming aflash over her.

"A greaser—a Mexican, you say?" kinder catchin' in the throat like. "Then I'm lost!"

And plenty pathetic she looks it. Leastways it's just all Lem can do to keep from having a sympathetic lump in his throat.

"Not much you ain't lost," gushes out the old scout. "And anything, ma'am, as Lem Hawks can negotiate is yours a plenty."

"Thank you, sir, but I guess I'd better take my chances alone." Then she hesitates some. "Yes," she continues, "that's better. Good night!" And she turns up the trail.

Lem stands a minute bewilderedlike; then goes a stridin' after.

"Usual, ma'am, I'm mighty good at obeyin' orders; but here's one time I exceptionizes. I'm right here with you till you get safe home, wheresoever that same might be."

"*Home!*" she answers in a tone midway between sarcasm and a gulp. Then she flashes Lem one of those bewilderers of a look.

"Can I trust you?" says she. And then goes right on a answering herself. "Yes, I'll do it. I *do* feel terribly nervous, and I believe you'll keep a closed mouth."

Now, I'm just a leaving it to you to guess Lem's feelings as he stomps along that there moonlit trail the which she sticks to for maybe like it's a mile farther.

Then she broke off sudden from the regular way and takes it plenty sudden through some underbrush. She zigzags for another quarter mile, and then brings up slap before the craziest kind of a half-dugout, half-shanty. Lem finally recognizes it for the abandoned shack of a derned sheep-herder we boys had vamosed the year previous.

"Not meanin' to be onpolite, ma'am," chomps out Lem, "but do you mean to let me onderstand that this here's where you *live?*"

"It's all I've got," she replies quietlike; then opens the ramshackle door and leads into the dirt-floored room.

Lem takes one look around that lonesome hole and then something that had been a kinder choking him busts sudden, and out he comes with it:

"Little woman," says he, "it ain't as though I didn't know just how plumb young this here friendship of our'n is; but facts bein' such as they are and me a sensing you're in trouble like, I just got to make myself some hair-triggerish, so to speak."

"What—" and she slinks away from him a bit.

But Lem's fair unlimbered by this time and goes on:

"Ma'am, neither the one of us ever sot eyes on the other before, but the simple second I saw you back there at the store—well, ma'am, you see—here it is—I'm Lem Hawks, mighty bad and mean some ways and plenty rough; but I'm dead clean other ways. An' you see, I got as good a little wickiup as is in Tight Cinch, and, furthermore, I've just begun to strike pay-dirt; fact is, I'm a savin' some. And now, like as if so be you—that is—"

She steps sharp right up to him, puts both her hands stretched out to the shoulders of

his ole blue shirt, and looks him deep in the eyes just as if she was seein' somethin' she had missed a mighty long time.

Then, without a word, she fetches a hefty sigh and catches Lem by the hand. She picks up the tin lamp she had lit when they come in, and leads him to a corner.

Back she jerks a bit of burlap-bag, curtain sort of contraption, and the light falls plumb decided on the chubbiest kind of a face of the sleepiest kind of a baby.

Lem gives a back-spring and the wind whistles through his teeth on the intake o' breathing; and, more natural than the breath, his good hand flops to the butt o' his gun.

"Gawd!" he grits it out, "why *didn't* I end that cuss back there?"

But that shore was a bad play; for she drops his hand like as if it were white iron. Then ice came into her tone as she backs from him and sums up:

"That peon back there on the trail who was following me was one of my husband's men who has doubtless ridden across the border to find me. You see, I couldn't stand it when the other woman was made *too* noticeable. I stayed as long as I could for the baby's sake, and, besides, even the *don*, my husband, seemed to care for *him*."

"An' you have managed, ma'am, to lug that there child on a slick getaway clear across the old Rio?"

"Yes; a mother can do much. So it is, you see, how it must stand with me. I must fight it out alone—my baby boy I will have; but you can help me in one way, if you will."

"I can? How?" answers Lem.

"By not telling a soul where I am hiding."

"An' is that absolute the *only* way, ma'am?" Lem is a struggling over the chill that's beginning to catch him.

She looks up at him, eyes a brimming.

"No," she whispers. "I don't see any other way; do *you?*"

Lem feels a sort of tightening, so to speak, across the chest. He just grabs her hand a minute, then lets it go.

One whirl he makes it on that high-heeled boot o' his'n and out into the night he staggers.

V.

WELL, sir, fer three days Lem liquors quiet enough. I bring him the stuff to his corner, where he's morosing of it.

But hell opens on the fourth evenin'. Seems as if he'd just been a raising the pressure gage a purpose so's to have it plenty high when he starts out on badness.

Course, we-all don't know nothing about the gal eepisode at that time, so's we can't make no allowances.

It happens, thereunto according, that by the time Skylight Ike's bull-dog's tail goes for a target and the bottle-necks 're all getting too blamed jagged to handle, and the door-knob's got three dents in it, and a glancing bullet spoils my watch-fob (which the same fob cost me six-bits of a drummer)—why, I say, we opens a plumb quick and decided committee and gives a verdict plenty unanimous. The which verdict it's for me to give Lem, which I then and there does immediate.

"Lem Hawks," says I, impressive, "we-all, hereunto assembled, has just reached a decision as touchin' on to yourse'f and your attitoode in this here promisin' town o' Tight Cinch.

"This here comin' city, having already passed through the wild-oats-days, is plumb of the opinion as to not wanting to return to the same era o' quick-shooting.

"The citizens, therefore, have decreed—after good consideration and after having given you plenty o' time, to patch up your manners — we've just dead decided that you're just a trifle too warm for our locality. So, and according, forthwith, and hereupon, we-all hereunto assembled have decided to act as a sure and certain escort of you and your hoss to the Rio Grande, after passing over the which, though there ain't nothing personal in the thing at all — but we just kind of intimate that there's a windmill right in front o' this here emporium and rope's mighty cheap nowadays. Savvy, Lem?"

So it was I put it as genteel and sweet as I could.

"In other words, you Old Shed coyote you, it's me for Mex, and swing if I show up again!"

"Well, now, Lem," says I, "you puts it dreadful coarse like, but your words does credit to your onderstanding. And just let me appendage the remark that we mean just exactly what we're talking about."

"Well, boys," cried Lem in a whirllike of a mood, "let's have a good drink all around. As for me, I don't care a continental tinker's whipwillow where I go or when I start."

And that very sundown we all was a singing out so-longs to Lem Hawks as his roan pony dabbles his forelegs into the old Rio, preparatory to fording the same.

Now, a followin' Lem in continuin' the yarn, it's maybe about a hour after dark he decides to pitch camp by way o' rolling up in his blanket (him not being any too familiar with the Mexico trail to travel much nights).

So Lem is a craning his neck around looking for a likely spot when he sees a little gully that looks promising, especially as there's some mean wind a blowing. He quits the trail and hits it for the same.

Down goes his blanket, and he unbuckles his saddle-bags, digs out some sow-belly and biscuits, and unhooks the fry-pan. Then he fishes into his pocket for a match. None! And it shore looks bad for Lem's supper—likewise breakfast.

It must 'a' been something close on to instinct that makes him palm his ear for a sound—and then he's sure he's heard it. And the sound was the thumping of a smart-going cayuse back up the trail he's just left to one side.

"A chance for a match," chuckles Lem delighted, as he mounts plenty alacritous and beats it back on to the trail, just in time to intercept the other rider.

Said other rider he makes out very well in the moonlight. The feller sits the highest kind of a spirited nag mighty well. And he's Mexican all through, that feller.

A silver-trimmed outfit glints splendid from high-topped sombrero to jingling spurs. And, moreover, night though it was, the rider shows up plenty haughty, just as though there was blood in his veins he's some proud of pumping through his heart.

But Lem don't like his face any too well when he rides out in front of him and asks for a match.

"I haven't *got* a match!" snaps the Mexican shortlike, as he tries to swerve his lively nag by Lem.

"Aw, come now, stranger," answers Lem ingratiating, "I ain't no hold-up. I just want what I'm a asking for, and no more. I calculates to bed down near-by, and I ain't got no fire."

And so being as the feller sees he can't get past any other way, he makes a move to dig down into a pocket when, his hand being thereunto occupied, the wind catches at the wrappings of a bundle he's been a hugging to his chest all this time.

Now, this here bundle being thus unto uncovered, and the moonlight helping some, it ain't nothing but a flash o' greased lightning required for Lem to do some recognizing.

There, before him, in the hidalgo's arms, was that same chubby, dimpling little chunk o' humanity he'd seen that woman croon over back there at the shack, all bundled up in that same burlap sacking—and this was the *don!*

Lem always was quick on action. Fact is, that's just why we outlawed him. So, this time, he acts plenty sudden.

With one swoop of his right arm he gets a firm grip on the baby, and the move is just that quick and onexpected it succeeds. But Lem hadn't counted on his tired nag.

So when he'd dug his spurs plenty energetic he finds that the *don's* cayuse is a hefty sight better and fresher.

It must 'a' been that the Mexican was afraid to use a gun on account o' the youngster, 'cause when Lem looks around it's steel again he sees a glinting. But this time Lem's too quick to feel its edge. He ducks and the blow falls short.

And that miss of the *don's* means more. For he had put such a mighty lot o' beef into it that he swerves jest that trifle too far in the saddle and a prairie-dog hole does the rest.

The hoss staggers; over slips the Mexican, his foot gettin' fast hung in the stirrup.

Ever see that sort o' thing happen? 'Tain't a oncommon pleasant sight, I'll vum. Leastways not when the hoss is as wild an affair as this one.

So Lem just stood his place there in the trail and watched the runaway. An' after ten minutes he starts to find what he don't want to look at.

Alongside a cottonwood is the body, where it had got wedged and torn loose the stirrup leather.

Now, Lem ain't much on undertaking, so he just leaves things as they are. And, besides, he's got aplenty to some cogitate thereon.

That there wailing little cuss at his chest is bringing forward a problem, as Lem sets on back to his blanket and pans. He tucks the baby into the cover plenty snug, and all that night Lem tries to dope it out as to what's his move.

If he does come back with said urchin, there's a rope a waiting for him. On that

score we had shore been plumb decided. An' if he don't—well—you see, don't you?

VI.

It's just about opening-time the next morning when Dick Salter busts in on us.

"Boys," he yells, awful excited, "at sun-up I was a doing some fence-riding down by the Rio when I see that there Lem Hawks a vi'lating the law and order o' this here community. He's done come back over to Texas!"

Well, you can be almighty shore we wus riled. And there ain't no man as can rightly blame us.

So it wasn't ten minutes after that we'd measured off a hunk of nicest kind of rope, and there was shore something doing in the way of saddling a posse.

Everybody was now and then a glancing up the trail, natural-like enough; but shore thing there warn't one of us as expected to see jest what we did see in the next few seconds.

First, from outside a clump of bushes just beyond the corral there shows on the frantic run the little woman; and I never did see more wildsome terror than was on her.

"My baby boy!" she was a crying, "he's stolen him from me!" And down the little gal went in the dust of the road.

And then came the thumps, thundering plenty strong, from down the trail.

It was Lem, and he was a grinning most tickledsome.

"Here y' are, ma'am," he chuckles delighted, the while he passes over the gurgler to her. "An' now, boys, the quicker you make it, the better fer me."

Right then, somehow, that there hanging sort'er lost some of its zest, and I ain't a going to say another word about how we-uns tumbled.

All I have got to say is, though, that we ain't none of us ever regretted that there magnanimous act o' clemency; for of all the doggonedest, settled-downedest, law-abidingest citizens there *is*, just you-all command me to Lem Hawks.

That's him out the winder there now—the one a leading that little shaver. We made him sheriff last election.

SUMMER WINDS.

Up the dale and down the bourne,
  O'er the meadow swift we fly;
Now we sing and now we mourn,
  Now we whistle, now we sigh.

By the grassy-fringed river
  Through the murmuring reeds we sweep;
'Mid the lily-leaves we quiver,
  To their very hearts we creep.

Now the maiden rose is blushing
  At the frolic things we say,
While aside her cheek we're rushing,
  Like some truant bees at play.

Bending down the weeping willows,
  While our vesper hymn we sigh;
Then unto our rosy pillows
  On our weary wings we hie.

There of idlenesses dreaming,
  Scarce from waking we refrain;
Moments long as ages deeming
  Till we're at our play again.

George Darley.

In the Name of the King.

BY ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE,

Author of "In Treason's Track," "The Spy of Valley Forge," "The Sword of the Emperor," etc.

Why Dirck Dewitt Was Sent by Charles the Second from Old England to New Amsterdam, and the Thrilling Adventures That Befell Him Under the Dutch and Among the Indians.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

THE story is told by Dirck Dewitt, born in New England, but sent to New Amsterdam as a spy by Charles II of England to ascertain the lay of the land with respect to the British attempting to wrest the New Netherlands from the Dutch. On board the ship Stadtholder, Dewitt loses his heart to Greta Van Hoeck, who seeks to make him reveal his purpose in sailing to the New World. He is about to comply when her brother Louis appears, between whom and Dirck there is no love lost. Later there is an explosion on board and Dirck is tossed into the sea, from which he is rescued in mysterious fashion while he is unconscious, to find a sprig of Mayflower in his hand and the memory of a sweet face bending over him. In New Amsterdam, he makes a favorable impression on Governor Peter Stuyvesant, who appoints him his secretary and later sends him on an errand among the Arareek Indians. He is saved from a rattlesnake by a maiden who turns out to be the same one who rescued him after his shipwreck. She tells him she is the daughter of the exiled regicide, William Goffe. She takes Dirck for Dutch, and when he must needs tell her he is English, she makes him prisoner with his own gun and takes him to her father among the Indians. When he tells her that his gun is unloaded and receives a warm greeting from a white-bearded man who meets them, the girl turns scarlet with mortification and blurts out: "I hate you! I hate you!"

CHAPTER X.

THE FUTURE OF AMERICA.

WILLIAM GOFFE turned to the young chief at his side.

"Macopin," he exclaimed, "chance has thrown a welcome guest our way. This is a friend of other days who once aided me right loyally. Accept him as your own friend for my sake."

The chief, with a kindly dignity, raised his hand to his brow; then extended it, palm upward, to me.

"I greet you," he said in excellent English. "Our poor home is yours."

Even as he spoke his eyes strayed past me and rested for a moment with strange tenderness upon the girl.

"You have already met my daughter, I see," said Goffe. "Blanche, did he tell you he and I were olden friends?"

"No, sir," returned the girl shortly. "Nor did you mention it when we picked him up in the ocean." And she made as though to move onward to the huts.

"Picked him up in the ocean!" echoed Goffe, detaining her. "I do not understand."

"It was this gentleman," she went on, trying to master her chagrin, "whom we—whom you—rescued from the débris of the burning ship."

"No," cried Goffe. "And yet — well, 'tis not strange I did not recognize him in the moonlight. The man we picked up was smooth-shaven and wore his hair in court fashion. Now, in forest garb—"

"Yet *you,* Mistress Goffe," I put in, "recognized me to-day when you met me, bearded and in trapper dress."

"It fell to my lot," she evaded coldly, "to dress your hurts that night while my father minded the helm. He scarce had a glance at your face. I was unable to avoid seeing it plainly and for a long time."

"Young eyes," supplemented Goffe, "see more than old ones. By daylight I can still make shift to use mine with the best of them. But after dark I find my vision sadly wanting. A step toward old age, I

suppose. Yet," he went on, "the papers that fell from your pocket in the boat bore the name 'Dirck Dewitt.' That is a Dutch name. And you were an English Colonist in the days I knew you."

"You knew Mynheer Dewitt?" asked the girl, curiosity overcoming indignation. "You knew him and called him 'friend'? And yet you did not know his name?"

"Names counted for less at that crisis than deeds," returned Goffe. "Whalley and I had but just smuggled ourselves into Boston. Every man's hand was against us. We made our way to the hills above Hadley, in the Massachusetts Bay colony. The hue and cry was at our heels, a price on our heads. We hid in the caves above Hadley village."

"I remember," she murmured, pressing his hand. "'Twas the year before I came out from England to—"

"To turn your back on comfort and home and share an old man's exile," he finished gratefully. "Whalley and I hid in the caves. And there we were like to starve, for we durst not enter the village. One day a settler's son, hunting among the hills, found our hiding-place. He learned our sorry plight, although he asked not our identity. And daily for a month he brought us food."

"It was well," approved the young chief, Macopin, with a grave nod.

"We had long chats with him in those days of hiding," resumed Goffe. "And ere he left that part of the country he arranged to have provisions and clothing and arms sent to us. I have never forgotten. And to-day I meet him here—hundreds of miles away from the caves of Hadley. It is rare good fortune."

"Months later, sir," I said, "I went through Hadley again. There I heard a strange tale of an attack by the Pequots upon the villagers during my absence. The folk were ready to fly in panic, when you appeared among them, sword in hand, led them to the rout of their savage foes, and then—vanished. An old Cromwellian soldier in the village recognized you as General William Goffe. It was thus I learned the name of the man who had so oft and so entertainingly talked to me."

"I am sorry," whispered a penitent little voice in my ear as we all moved up the slope toward the huts; "I am sorry I said I hated you. And—and I am sorry I called you a spy."

She was so little, so childlike, so appealing, I had much ado in refraining from lifting her up bodily and kissing her, as I might have done to some winsome forest baby.

"Mistress Goffe," I answered gently, "it was *I* who should be craving pardon for the scurvy trick I played you about the rifle. Believe me, I wish it *had* been loaded—"

"If you talk that way," she interrupted, her momentary penitence giving place to a flare of spirit, "I shall be sorry, too, that it was empty. Or that I fired my own rifle at a mere snake instead of saving the charge for a better purpose."

As I replied lightly I caught the eye of the young chief, Macopin, fixed on us in a troubled, almost lowering, look.

It was at the camp-fire that night when Goffe, Macopin, Blanche, and I sat together before the chief's own hearth, that I spoke openly of my errand and of all the hopes and plans that were mine.

Goffe, to whom I had broached the subject before supper, had vouched for Macopin's loyalty and wisdom. He loved the handsome young chief, so lately raised to the head of his tribe. And he bade me profit by his counsel and aid.

So it was that I told him my story. Goffe sat upon a felled log, across the fire from me, listening gravely and tugging sometimes at his long beard.

Blanche sat at his feet, her head against his knee, the firelight playing fitfully across her eager little face. Macopin, in his place at the end of the hearth, heard me in grave silence, his eyes now and again straying furtively toward Blanche.

None interrupted until my tale was done. I described my interview with King Charles, my journey across sea, my employment with Stuyvesant, the object of my wilderness wanderings, and outlined my reasons for believing that England's present rule of the Colonies would mean America's best welfare.

When I had finished there was a brief pause. Then Goffe spoke.

"The idea is good," he declared. "It is feasible, and it will unite all the Atlantic colonies. Who can say what that union may not mean in future ages? It is for the future of America that you are working, Dirck."

"The future of America," repeated the

chief slowly. "The words mean much to you. And, since I am your brother, I offer you my aid. But what is the 'future of America' to me and mine? To the people who for countless centuries have ruled this land? The future to us stretches out dreary and barren as a rainy sea. The white man's gain must ever be our loss. And one day our homes shall forget the very name of 'Indian.' Still," rousing himself from his gloomy reverie, "what must be must be. He is a fool who stands up against the tornado of destiny. Do you ask any help?"

I nodded, distressed at the bitter hopelessness in the savage's tone.

"Then," he went on, "in a small way I can aid you. That you reached this spot at all, through so dense a mass of the tribesmen who are hostile to white men, is a miracle of fortune. You could scarce count on as good a venture during your return journey. I will go to New Amsterdam with you. My presence will serve as your passport through my people. I will even appear before your governor to confirm your tale of their hostility and to vouch for the Arareeks' neutrality. Is it well?

"It is well," I made answer. "From my heart I thank you."

Blanche sighed softly to herself. At the slight sound Macopin turned quickly toward the girl, seeming to divine her thought.

"It grows wearisome for you," said he, "to dwell ever in the wilderness, far from the laughter and social pleasures that are a part of cities and of youth. If it is your wish, and if your father will grant consent, join our expedition. My mother shall go along to care for you. At New Amsterdam you shall meet other maids—yes, and men, too. And, perchance, their amusements and innocent follies may serve to make good holiday for you."

The vision that rose to my mind, of the wild forest girl, tanned, loose-haired, in her half-Indian garb, moving among the prim, capped-and-kerchiefed damsels of the Dutch city, was dispelled by the eager, childlike joy wherewith she greeted the suggestion.

Her father gave reluctant consent. To hide his pleasure at the happiness he had afforded her, Macopin turned to me.

"You speak of the report," he said, "that you are about to send your king. How shall you get it to him? A packet thus addressed, despatched on a New Amsterdam ship, would—"

"Give me credit for a scrap of judgment," I interposed, nettled by what I chose to think his superior tone. "That was arranged ere I left England. The packet is to be addressed to 'Mynheer Troup, Cronstadt, Haag.' 'Tis the name of a secret agent of England's Dutch ambassador. Troup will bear it to the ambassador, who hath royal order to send it by courier direct to his majesty. One week from the day the report reaches him a British war flotilla, under Colonel Nicolls, will leave Southampton for 'special service.' That 'service' will carry the flotilla straight across seas until Nicolls casts anchor off the Battery fort."

"And," the chief persisted, "your report. "You have it safe?"

"Naturally. 'Tis complete now, save for my news of the Indians. So I dare not leave it where prying hands can touch it. 'Tis locked safe in the drawer of my desk in the White Hall. And—"

"In a *desk?*" cried Macopin, almost lifted out of his customary grave calm. "In a house where many men congregate?"

"And why not?" I asked crossly. "The desk is locked."

"Locked!" he almost groaned. "Are there none who can force locks? Or is it past reason that your governor, in search of some paper of import, should bethink him that such paper might be in his secretary's desk, and order the desk opened?"

"'Tis most improbable," I scoffed; nevertheless, feeling a little chill of apprehension.

"Also," he pursued, "you spoke of a foe. One Van Hoeck, with whom you fought, and whom later you supplanted as secretary. His hate might well set him to searching for cause against you."

I smiled in lofty contempt.

"None in New Amsterdam suspect me," said I. "They deem me a zealous supporter of Stuyvesant. Why should they search the desk of such a man?"

He lifted his black eyebrows, but made no reply. And at the moment a vagrant thought turned me white.

Greta Van Hoeck knew I was not what I seemed. She had wit. She might readily piece together what I had told her into a fabric of suspicion that would set her brother on my track.

In a breath I banished the thought as unworthy. Greta would surely never sink to so vile an action. No woman could bring herself to put in jeopardy the life of a

man who had never harmed her. To bolster up my wavering self-complacence, I continued:

"Chief, I am not wholly a fool. I have taken what precautions were needed. I am seldom tricked."

He made no answer; but rose and, walking past me, moved toward his hat. Then, as if changing his mind, turned back and approached me again. In his hands were a little bundle of letters and a purse.

I recognized them as my own purse and as the letters that Goffe had picked up in the boat the night of my rescue and had that very evening restored to me. Both had been in separate outer pockets of my tunic.

"Where—where found you these?" I demanded in open-mouthed amaze.

"I took the liberty of removing them from your pockets as I passed by you just now," he answered quietly. "You see, the best and wisest of us may sometimes be 'tricked.'"

"But—"

"Be glad that I am not Van Hoeck, your enemy," he continued, "and that these papers are not your report. I ask your pardon for playing so idle a trick upon a guest. But for all of us it is well never to underestimate a foe."

Goffe's hearty laugh dispelled my tendency to anger.

"Macopin," he explained, "is a medicine man as well as a chief. Thus from babyhood he has been trained in sleight-of-hand. Be not angry at him, Dirck. The lesson will do you no harm."

Impulsively I held out my hand to the young chief.

"You were right, sir. And your rebuke is just. I spoke like a schoolboy, and you reproved me more gently than I deserved. I ask your friendship."

"It is given," he exclaimed, his grave face lighting with kindly feeling. "And now let us make ready for the morrow's journey. For I am none too easy in my mind concerning that same report of yours."

And a tinge of his own uneasiness once more stung me like white hot iron.

CHAPTER XI.

TWO WOMEN.

THE "levee" of Governor Petrus Stuyvesant at the White Hall, New Amsterdam, was in full swing.

The great council-room was filled with burghers, officers, and women, all in such extremes of fashionable attire as the sober Dutch colony afforded.

For these monthly levees were the chief social features of New Amsterdam life. He who was not bidden thereto might as well regard himself as an outcast from colonial society.

As I entered the room, clean-shaven, my hunting garb exchanged for a coat of peach-blow satin, white silk small clothes and hose, gold-buckled shoes, and a throat-fall of Mechlin lace—my advent caused a right gratifying little stir throughout the company.

It was my first public appearance since my recent return from a "perilous journey through the hostile wilderness," as the governor's congratulations worded it. Also, I was known to be in high favor with his excellency because of the results of that same journey.

For, according to him, it had been my intervention alone that had prevented the Arareeks from joining the anti-Dutch federation. So I was, for the instant, a local celebrity.

We had reached New Amsterdam the previous day. Macopin, his mother, and Blanche had been lodged in solemn state in a suite of apartments at the old tavern facing upon the Bowling Green.

After making hasty visit to the governor and telling him the result of my trip, I had gone in guilty haste to my desk in the secretarial-room of the White Hall, had unlocked it, and rummaged for the packet holding my report to the king.

With a sigh of relief, I found it untouched. Macopin had accompanied me. With a slight gesture, I showed him that the seals were still intact. He made no comment, but moved away and looked out of the window.

I had worried foolishly over the matter ever since the chief's warning. Now the reaction was so keen I doubt not that it must have shown in my face. For, glancing up, the packet in my hands, I found that Louis Van Hoeck, from his own desk in the far corner, was eying me with evident interest.

"Some good fairy," he sneered, "has placed a parcel of wish-gold in your desk while you were gone? You gloat over yon packet as though—"

"Some routine papers I had mislaid," I answered coolly, "and which I rejoice to find again. For," I added, with perfect truth, "I wish to send them by to-morrow's ship to Holland."

I sat down and plied my pen right vigorously, completing my report. Then, resealing it and addressing it to "Mynheer Troup, the Cronstadt, Haag," I put it back in my desk and turned the key.

Van Hoeck, who had been writing busily, looked up again.

"I, too, am writing for to-morrow's postship," he said. "But I knew not that *you* had so important correspondence with Holland. I understood—"

"'Tis of personal import alone," I said lightly, pocketing the desk key. "Now I am off to get shaven and find change of clothes. A good night's rest will freshen me for to-morrow's levee."

I left the room, chuckling to myself at my former fears as to the report's safety.

My work was done.

As I entered the great room, next day, for the levee, Stuyvesant beckoned me across to him.

"This frill-and-folly gathering will end in an hour or less," said he, "and I have called a council meeting here at the levee's close. I forgot to speak of it to you. Also, make Chief Macopin remain for the council. Our deliberations may impress him. He and the maid you brought along will be here presently. Invitations were carried to them last night by my own orderly."

I moved away, and found myself the center of a youthful group that clamored for news of my forest exploits. As I talked at random, answering questions and parrying repartee, Greta Van Hoeck's eyes suddenly met mine amid the maze of faces. To my secret wonder, the sight no longer filled me with the old madness of infatuation. Ere I could analyze my change of feelings, she spoke.

"Louis tells me," said she, "of your triumphal entrance to the city yesterday. He says you bore as captives a veritable Falstaff army of tatterdemalions. An Indian chief, in full war-paint and wampum—"

"Indian chiefs," I interrupted, "do not wear war-paint on friendly visits. And wampum is—"

"And a hideous old witch of an Indian squaw," she continued, unheeding; "also a ragged, tousled-haired gipsy wench who—"

"Who thanks you most humbly for the description," spoke a clear young voice at my elbow.

Blanche and Macopin had entered the room unnoticed, and had reached my side just in time to catch Greta's words. I went scarlet with mortification, and others in the group looked genuinely horrified. But Greta's face changed not a whit. Gazing down at Blanche with a cool superiority, she said:

"I scarce thought you would hear me, Mistress Goffe. For I did not suppose you would come to the levee."

"Why not?" asked Blanche innocently. "One goes to all sorts of promiscuous places when one is holiday-making."

"I meant—" began Greta, a shade less composedly.

"Oh, pray do not apologize," smiled Blanche; "you knew no better."

A suppressed titter ran through the group. Greta's rose-and-cream complexion deepened a shade or so, and her eyes sparkled. Yet she made one more daring effort at superiority.

"I meant," said she, "that, coming from the wilderness, you would feel sadly out of place in such an assembly as this."

"I do, indeed," agreed Blanche sweetly. "In the wilderness rudeness to a guest is an unpardonable offense that is never committed."

"Your wilderness rules," snapped Greta, losing all her coolness when most she needed it, "seem as out of place in civilized society as does your wilderness costume."

"*Civilized* society?" echoed Blanche doubtfully.

"Yes. 'Tis doubtless your first visit to—"

"Oh!" cried Blanche, with a little laugh. "How stupid of me! You were referring to New Amsterdam social gatherings as 'civilized' society? I see now. We always regarded New Amsterdam as an outpost of civilization, you know."

"You in the wilderness regarded—"

"Oh, no. I was thinking of mine own dear old home—London. When last I appeared in what you call 'civilized society,' 'twas at the royal palace in London, at a state ball. I bethink me now of a certain gawky Hollander—a Dutch embassy attaché—who came to the ball and roused much mirth and some pity by his boorish, provincial ways. In that gay, polished atmosphere he seemed like a stray donkey in

a flock of peafowl. Poor man! His name, *mejuffrouw*, if I recall aright, was Van Hoeck—Louis Van Hoeck."

Greta's face was purple. Scarce would I have recognized the lofty beauty of old in this baited creature. But Blanche was as cool and unstirred as a Damascus blade—and as deadly.

"How strange," she went on amusedly, as though changing a tiresome subject—"how strange is the effect of weather upon different women's hair! This morning's rain, which has tightened *my* locks into ringlets, seems to have dragged *yours* out into stringlets. I have been walking about this funny little town of yours to-day. 'Tis a quaint village, with its fifteen streets and its hideous squat houses. 'Twas laid out after the pattern of Holland cities, I am told."

"If you like not our ways, and if you scoff at our homeland," stormed Greta in a last flash of resistance, "why come you here?"

"At the invitation of Mynheer Dirck Dewitt," returned Blanche. "I and mine protected him from stinging reptiles and treacherous beasts in the wilderness. I had foolishly hoped he might be able to do as much for *me*, here. But—"

"Oh!"

In that monosyllable of utter impotent fury Greta Van Hoeck gave up the futile struggle. She strode away, glaring to left and right, at faces whose covert amusement seemed to madden her tenfold.

With a smile of utter innocence, Blanche turned to me.

"Was it not vastly amusing?" she asked.

"Yes!" I groaned. "It was—not! I have fought ere now for my life, and at various times I have encountered sundry other perils. Solemnly do I assure you that I count them all as naught compared with the battle I have just witnessed."

"'Witnessed' is the correct phrase," she answered; "for I note you took no share in it."

"I was afraid," I admitted. "Frightened past words. Ne'er again can I boast that I know not fear."

"And yet—"

"Spare me," I entreated. "You have done enough slaughter for one day. Turn not the sword-edge of your tongue upon a helpless man."

We had moved somewhat apart from the rest, into the embrasure of a window.

She looked up at me with an utter change from her former bright, icy mien.

"I have made you suffer," she said softly. "I am sorry."

"Nay," I cried reassuringly, "I was but in jest. Surely you understood that? The only 'suffering' I felt was that my guest should have been thus spoken to under the Governor's own roof. Yet what could I do? A man I could—and would—have challenged. But a woman—"

"You do not take my meaning," she broke in. "I made you suffer, I fear, talking to her as I did. You love her. Is it not so?"

Through my surprise at the simple, direct question ran again that same vague wonder. For, all at once, I knew I did *not* love Greta Van Hoeck. Indeed, I marveled—infatuation being fled—that ever I had fancied I loved her.

But how could I tell this to another woman? Perchance it would have been the correct thing to say. But I could not do it.

"There is no bond—no tie whatever—between Juffrouw Van Hoeck and myself. She regards me as the dust beneath her feet."

"I fear she does," sighed Blanche, "and, if she cared not for you ere this, she *loathes* you now."

"Now? But why now any more than—"

"A woman would understand," she answered, as though unable to explain to any one so stupid as a mere man. "She hates you. Saw you not the backward glance she cast as she hastened across the room toward her brother? You witnessed her public humiliation. You were its indirect cause. She—"

"She went across to her brother?" I interrupted, looking about me. "I see them not."

"They have left the room," said Blanche, without even turning to look. "Be on your guard, Master Dewitt! Neither of them loves you. From what I can read of faces, those two are not content to hate passively."

"Why said you that I—loved her?" I queried.

"Because, as we came into the room, I heard a burgher remark: 'Yonder is Secretary Dewitt singeing his wings once more at the flame of the most arrant, heartless flirt that ever crossed seas.' And—"

"Who said that?" I demanded hotly. "No man shall speak thus of me and—"

"I will not tell you," she retorted. "Nor shall you rage like any stage hero when you

are supposed to be entertaining me. Fie, man! Where be your instincts as host?"

"Forgive me," I growled, half penitent, "I—"

"And now," she went on, "tell me who some of these gaudily clad folk are. Or—first," she corrected herself, glancing out of the long north window, "tell me the names of the places where Macopin and I wandered this morning. For example—yonder twelve-foot wooden palisade, with its sharpened stakes and its two gun-mounted turrets. Is it a fort?"

"No. 'Tis the city wall. Northernmost boundary of New Amsterdam's actual borders. The lane alongside it is the Wall Street, and—"

"Then, to northward," she went on, "we came upon so pretty a lane, with a stream running alongside it, and girls washing clothes in the water. Look! From here you can see the linen drying on the hillock just below the lane. 'Twas like a quaint old picture."

"I know the place," I answered. "The maidens of New Amsterdam do all the city's washing there. At the path's foot is the ferry to Breucklen. The ferryman comes when summoned by a horn hung below on the bank, and, for three stivers, rows one across to the Breucklen shore—an hour's journey if the tide runs strong."

"We passed the ferry on our way back from our walk. We came along a crooked way that bent in half-moon fashion. A laughable street—"

"The Parel Straat (the Pearl Street)—our largest highway," I said. "Saw you the fort, with its twenty guns, by the Battery sea-wall? The church behind it is St. Nicholas's, where the Very Rev. Everardus Bogardus—"

"And there, just before the end of the Parel Straat, we saw a most horrible city jail!" she broke in, with a shudder. "With gallows and stocks reared in front of it. A gruesome sight. There!" she concluded. "I think I have wooed you from your black temper. I will force you to play guide chart no longer. Here comes Macopin. He does not look happy."

CHAPTER XII.

MINE ENEMY.

THE chief moved toward us, crossing the room with its fast-thinned crowd, and moving with a regal grace that made the others look like yokels.

He still wore his native garb, though Blanche, on reaching town, had exchanged her half-savage costume for a simple gown and kerchief.

"Brother," he asked as he reached us, "did you send your report by the post-boat that sails to-day?"

"I did," said I, "as I told you I should: I placed it in the post-bag an hour agone. It is on its way to the ship, doubtless, by now. The vessel sails at noon sharp, since the tide serves at that hour."

"A moment since," rejoined Macopin, "I saw the port messenger come here for the post-bag. It is but five minutes' walk to the ship. In ten minutes or so, if the sailing hour is not changed, the report should start on its journey overseas. And your work will be done."

I fancied I detected an odd note in his deep, grave voice; but I replied:

"Yes, the work is done. I trust the packet's wrapper will not tear during the voyage. For, underneath the covering whereon is inscribed Troup's name and dwelling-place, the inner parcel is addressed to King Charles himself. Yet, why should I worry? 'Tis safe."

Macopin scarce heeded me. Turning to Blanche, he said:

"The guests are leaving. And the council, to which I am bidden, is assembling. Perchance it would be well for you to return to the tavern."

His almost expressionless voice seemed ever to take on a subtle gentleness when he addressed the girl. I wondered at it; for, to Indians, women are usually inferior beings, unworthy of regard.

The last guests departed, curtsying or bowing low to his excellency as they backed through the wide doorway. Presently the doors were closed, and Stuyvesant stumped pompously across to the chair of state that had been drawn up at the head of the long table.

A long-faced clerk rose and droned forth the council roll, each member replying and taking a seat at the table as his name was called.

"De Hart, Leisler, Loockermans, Phillipse, Steenwyck, Van Cortlandt, Dewitt, Van Hoeck," intoned the clerk. Then he halted, and said again:

"Van Hoeck?"

As the second call came Louis slipped into

the room. His thin face was flushed, his eyes shining with a strange glow.

"Here, master clerk," he replied, settling into his place and smiling across at me. I had seldom seen the man smile. Never at *me*. And the expression carried about as much friendliness as an oath or a kick.

Macopin, who had left my side a little earlier and had been strolling aimlessly about the corridors, now came in and seated himself respectfully on a stool near the window.

Stuyvesant looked up with a glower.

"Mynheer Van Hoeck," he rasped, "when I do men the honor to admit them to my council, I expect them to show their appreciation of that honor by being punctual. Pray do not force me to speak of it again."

"I crave your excellency's pardon," returned Louis, his sallow face betraying no such sullenness as it usually showed when he was crossed. "My sole excuse was that I was vigilant on your excellency's business. I beg leave to lay before this council a most urgent—"

"Later, man! Later!" snapped the Governor. "Who are *you*, to take precedence of your betters? Sit down, I say! You shall be heard in due time."

Reluctantly, Van Hoeck took his seat. Yet, though twice snubbed, he gave no sign of feeling the rebuff. That queer inward elation seemed still to buoy him up.

Stuyvesant was in one of his harshest moods to-day. 'Twas ever so in wet weather. Perhaps he suffered from neuralgia. Perhaps, as men whispered, at such times he felt a tingling and ache where his lost leg used to be. In either case, on these occasions he was about as pleasant a companion as a sick bear.

"Now then, *mynheers*," he said, after the routine business had been attended to, "we will take up the case of Heeren Meyln and Kuyter. These men now lodge in the city jail, by my warrant. They protested formally against certain features of my just rule. When I bade them tear up their silly petition and ask my pardon, they threatened to carry the matter before their high mightinesses." (The recognized title of the Holland States General.)

"I explained to them," boomed Stuyvesant, in growing wrath, "that to complain against one's Governor is high treason. I added that if I really believed these two men really intended to lodge complaint against me to their high mightinesses, I would hang the pair of them from the highest tree in the New Netherlands. Then I clapped them into jail until their senses should return."

He paused, glared about him from under his beetling brows, then went on in stiff formality:

"I have set this lamentable case before you, gentlemen, that I might learn your full and unbiased opinion of the matter. Well, well!" he shouted, as none replied. "What say ye? What say ye? Are ye all dumb? This is a council of free speech."

"I move that the council, as a whole, indorse his excellency's wise and merciful action," piped a fat-faced man far down the table.

The motion was gravely seconded and carried. Stuyvesant nodded grim approval, then began to sort out his papers in evident search for some document.

"Master clerk," he demanded, "what did you do with the notes you took on Secretary Dewitt's expedition among the Indians?"

"'Tis in my office, your excellency," replied the clerk. "I will go fetch it."

"While we wait," decided Stuyvesant, glancing around the board in search of some new cause for ire, and chancing to meet Louis Van Hoeck's eager gaze, "while we wait, we will e'en hark to this precious 'most urgent' business of Mynheer Van Hoeck's. Speak up, man! And make it brief."

Louis arose and walked toward the table's head, until he stood beside the Governor's chair. A red spot blazed in each of his yellow cheeks.

"Your excellency," he began, drawing a thin packet from inside his coat, "I am no informer, but I have the interest of Holland and of the New Netherlands at heart. And when I see those interests imperiled by a spy, I deem it my duty to speak out."

"What's all this pother about 'spies?'" snorted Stuyvesant. "And what is that thing you're sticking at me? What is it, I say?"

"A paper that I entreat your excellency to read," answered Van Hoeck. "It tells its own story far more eloquently than could I. Read—and judge for yourself the fate that should be the writer's."

I half rose from my feet. My throat was sanded with utter terror. For, even at that distance, I easily recognized the packet he held. Its gray parchment covering, its

oblong form, the untied tape and broken seals that had bound it—all were as familiar to me as was my own name.

It was the packet containing my full report to King Charles. His majesty's own name stood forth upon the inner covering, to be seen so soon as the inner wrapper should be removed.

Mine enemy had bided his time, and at the last he had bested me. I guessed the story. Greta, in her blind rage, had gone straight to Louis with the tale that I was on secret business, whose discovery spelled death. She had doubtless repeated my mention of the king.

With such a clue to go upon, Louis could not but have remembered my ill-hidden eagerness over the packet in my desk. From the mail-pouch he had abstracted that packet. He had broken the seals, learned the contents of the report and had brought the damning evidence straight to Stuyvesant.

Now, too, I understood his smile, his refusal to take offense. My life was forfeit. I could feel the rope about my neck.

Yet I was not minded to die so easily. To have staked heavily and then to lose without an effort was not in any man's nature. Forcing myself to cool self-control, I strode forward.

"By your excellency's leave," said I calmly, reaching for the packet that Louis was seeking to force into the Governor's hand, "as your secretary, permit me to take charge of this bit of correspondence, whatever it may be."

"Good lad!" approved Stuyvesant; "you are ever taking bothersome details off my shoulders. Glance over the thing and give us the gist of it."

My outstretched hand had touched the precious packet and my fingers had almost closed about it. But before I could secure my grip Van Hoeck had snatched the treasure back with a cry that was almost a screech.

"Hands off!" he yelled. "Hands off! You—*spy!*"

Here was my chance. Simulating righteous rage, I whipped out my sword and sprang at him.

"No man shall call me that vile name and live!" I shouted.

I hoped by a lucky blow to strike the packet from his hand and to seize it as it fell. But he was too quick. His own sword was out in a trice, and in his left hand the paper was held safe behind his back.

A bellow of outraged dignity from Stuyvesant, and a full dozen men had thrown themselves between us.

"Dewitt! Van Hoeck!" gurgled his excellency, almost speechless. "Zounds, blackguards! What mean ye by drawing blade in our own council chamber? I have hanged men for less. Lay your swords on the table, both of ye. You are under arrest!"

"Is a true man to stand by meekly when he is called a spy?" I raged.

"The charge is truth!" yelled Van Hoeck, in far more genuine fury. "I hold the proof of my words."

He brandished the packet before Stuyvesant's face.

"Read it!" he implored.

Then I made my false move. Misjudging the distance, I gave a clutch at the packet. My face must have shown my wild eagerness. For, as I missed the hold I sought, Stuyvesant's loud rage gave place to a sudden grim calmness.

"Back all!" he ordered. "Dewitt, return to your place. Van Hoeck, give me the packet. There is something wrong here. I mean to learn what it is."

Held down in my chair by a half-dozen stalwart burghers I could but watch in cold despair as slowly the Governor tore open the horrible document and glanced at its inner covering.

CHAPTER XIII.

FATE TOSSES THE DICE.

THEN my taut muscles relaxed. I had thrown the dice—and lost. The game was in Fate's hands now. I was beaten.

Stuyvesant had broken the inner wrappings of the packet and had gathered up the loose sheets of writing. He was already poring over the first page, his near-sighted little eyes close to the paper.

My captors, when they found I no longer struggled, eased their grip on me and watched Stuyvesant's purpling face for further developments, as he read on in silence.

Louis Van Hoeck, between two men who still held him, was watching me with a cold, malignant triumph, such as few men could bestow on their worst foe.

The others waited breathless the bursting of the storm that grew and gathered so fast in Stuyvesant's tempestuous countenance.

Macopin alone showed absolutely no concern. With true Indian stoicism he sat gracefully on his three-legged stool, looking with civil interest down through the long window into the Parel Straat below.

'Twas no concern of his what might befall me. That was very evident. He had warned me. I had vaingloriously chosen to disregard his warning. Now, what cared he that I must pay full rates for my folly?

I sat there, trying to brace myself to be cold and brave when I should be denounced by Stuyvesant and dragged off to the gallows. I am glad to remember it was less the thought of my forfeited life that gripped at my icy heart just then than a crushing grief at the failure this discovery would cause to all the high hopes and ambitions I had formed for my dear country's future.

I had played for an unborn nation's welfare. And I had lost. What mattered my petty life compared to that numbing blow?

And thus—while Stuyvesant glared his incredulous, infuriated way through page after page—endless centuries of time seemed to drag on. It was by no means the lightest part of my anguish, to realize that my folly in half telling a woman a secret that was not mine to tell, had caused my downfall.

There was a deathly, tense silence throughout the room. A stillness broken only by his excellency's stertorous breathing, and by the crackling of the successive sheets of paper as he turned them.

At last—after an eternity—the Governor finished the last page and looked up from the reading. His face was empurpled, apoplectic, even to the crown of his bald head.

His eyes bulged like those of a man in a fit. The great veins on his forehead stood out black. I have never beheld such rage.

His gaze swept the room, then presently rested on me.

"Dirck!" he mumbled, almost incoherently.

I rose to my feet, folded my arms and looked him in the eyes. Macopin should not tell his fellow savages that a white man flinched at facing death.

Stuyvesant gulped, sought for words, then cried in a spasm of half-inaudible anger:

"Dirck! I did wrong in ordering you to throw down your sword! I should have let you spit the cur like a trussed fowl!"

"Your—your excellency!" I babbled, my stoic calm knocked to flinders, my brain in a whirl of crass amazement. "I—I do not understand."

"Nor does any decent, loyal man!" he bellowed. "Lad! Know you what is in this packet you struggled to take—at my command — from this scum of the Dutch canals?",

He pointed a wrath-shaken forefinger at Louis Van Hoeck, as he put the question. Louis, utterly aghast and dumfounded, managed to sputter:

"Your excellency! You have read it, and yet you—"

"Peace!" boomed Stuyvesant. "Gentlemen," he went on, trying to steady his voice, and wheeling to face the curious burghers, "I will enlighten you in a very few words. Mynheer Louis Van Hoeck is a man who came to me highly recommended. I gave him a post of honor in my own official household, as you all know. And I treated him with all kindness. How hath the beast repaid me?"

"Your excellency!" protested Van Hoeck. "In showing you that report I did but what seemed my duty. I—"

"Listen, gentlemen!" thundered Stuyvesant, silencing him with a fierce gesture. "I have done all this for Louis Van Hoeck. In payment here is what he hath written, and which—by what twist of a disordered brain I know not—he hath chosen to beg *me* to read ere he sends it to Holland."

"*I* wrote it not, your excellency!" shouted Louis. "'Tis in his own handwriting, and signed with his own name."

"If I have cause to bid you again to be silent," snarled the Governor, "a squad of the fort guards shall enforce the order. The whole thing is in your own hand, Van Hoeck, and signed by you. Whom you seek to involve by the charge of 'spy' I know not. Nor do the words of a discredited informer like yourself carry a feather's weight. Listen, gentlemen, and I will read this noble screed to you."

I stood agape. I doubt me if any could have said which looked the more thunderstruck—Van Hoeck or myself.

I felt in a tangled nightmare through which I could see no light. Then Stuyvesant, his great voice still shaken by ground swells of passion, read:

> To their High Mightinesses, the States General, at Amsterdam, Holland. From their humble and loving servant, Louis Van Hoeck. Greetings and these:

Pursuant upon the secret arrangement entered into between your High Mightinesses and myself, before my departure from Holland, I have joined the service of Petrus Stuyvesant, your Governor of New Amsterdam.

I have watched him closely, as you bade me, and have studied the sentiments of the people toward him. I have also been enabled to look into the most private phases of his government.

I find in brief that all your High Mightinesses' ideas concerning the man were well founded. More, the half has not been told you. Arrogant, brutal, unjust, grasping, he is the most hated man in New Netherlands.

The poor hate him for his haughty contempt of them; the rich for his unjust curtailment of their rights and privileges. The arbitrary laws he has enacted for the restriction of trade have cut down commerce here, antagonizing the Indians, and have checked exports and turned away much wealth from your colony.

I respectfully suggest the immediate recall and public disgrace of this ignorant, incompetent tyrant. Subjoined, you will find full reports, proofs, and specific incidents in support of what I have here outlined. Your obedient subject and employee,

LOUIS VAN HOECK.

Stuyvesant, dropping the letter as though it were some venomous thing, picked up the first of the attached sheets and began to read it.

But I did not hear. Sick, weak, trembling at my escape, I turned away from the table and leaned against the window embrasure, seeking to revive myself with deep breaths of the cool, damp sea-wind.

How my deliverance had come—by what miracle—I could not guess. I could not understand one detail of the suddenly twisted, apparently impossible situation.

For the instant, it was enough for me to know not only that the noose was lifted from around my throat, but that America's future was not yet shattered; that there might even now be hope of my wondrous plan's success.

As I stood there, trying to get control of my racked nerves, and breathing wordless thanks to God for my deliverance, a low, almost inaudible voice beside me whispered:

"Brother, have I done well?"

I glanced about. The only person near me was Macopin. Still seated stolidly and gazing into the street he did not seem aware of my presence. Yet, looking closely, I saw his thin lips move ever so little. And again I heard that soft whisper:

"You bore yourself bravely—for a white man."

"Macopin," I muttered, almost as low as was his own voice, "I—I do not yet see how—"

"The tall maid with the corn-silk hair and the pink face," he continued, "went to her brother in rage. I heard not their words. But they went from this room together. And I followed. To the post-bag the man went. They drew out your report, tore it open and both read it. Then Van Hoeck thrust it into his bosom and came hither."

"Yes?" I whispered.

"I had seen him place a packet of his own into the bag earlier this morning. From the care he used, I judged it was of value. I took it forth, passed him in the hallway, and took back your packet."

"He allowed you—"

"Brother," he answered, with faint reproach at my stupidity, "did *you* 'allow' me to take your letters and purse when we met at my Pomp-i-ton village? Yet I took them. And you knew it not."

I bowed my head in acknowledgment of my own denseness. And he went on:

"I took from him your packet. Yet, loath to make him lose so good an impression on the Governor, I wrapped the broken covering around *his* packet and replaced it in his coat. That is all."

"But mine? My report to the king?"

"I placed it in another wrapping and wrote on it the name and place you had spoken of—'Mynheer Troup, the Cronstadt, Haag, Holland.' And I slipped it into the post-bag just as the messenger came from the ship."

The boom of a small cannon sounded far to southward.

"The Staaten Eiland block fort saluting the post-boat's departure!" I murmured. "Heaven be praised! The ship has sailed. And my report is aboard it! Macopin, how can I ever thank you?"

"Hush!" warned the Indian. "His excellency is finishing his reading."

I straightened up and faced back into the room. Stuyvesant was rolling out the final sentences of the last page. From him I looked at Louis.

Van Hoeck was crouched stiffly forward in his chair, his eyes glaring, his lips twitching. He looked like a man in the throes of a fit.

I verily believe he was for the moment

incapable of conscious thought or action. Bethink you how this must have struck him:

He had written, sealed, and posted a report to the States General, whose secret agent in America he was. Then he had taken from the post-bag mine own report to King Charles; had opened it, read it, and thrust it inside his coat. When he had drawn it forth a few minutes later it had changed by miracle to his own packet. Yes, had changed, although the outer wrappings were still the same!

Remember (you who read these lines as I pen them a half-century later), this was the age when witchcraft and "demoniac possession" were believed in as thoroughly as were any natural phenomena.

The fear of the supernatural was graven deep into his twitching face, and had so seized upon his very soul as to paralyze him. Thus he had sat inert, stricken, while his report to the States General was read aloud by the States General's bitterest foe.

"Old Silver Leg" seemed to take the same grim pleasure in reading Van Hoeck's detailed denunciations as does a cross child in biting on a sore tooth. And it had much the same effect on his choleric temper.

Finishing the last page, Stuyvesant folded the collected sheets neatly, replacing them in their wrappings; then, with a mighty wrench, he tore the parcel in two.

"Gentlemen," he remarked, "in case there be among you any more snakes in the grass—spies of the States General—let me herewith express my contempt for them and for you."

Dropping the torn papers to the neatly sanded floor, he ground them under his silver-hooped leg.

"I am Governor of the New Netherlands!" he roared, lionlike in his wrath; "I am master of life and death in this colony. And I stand accountable to no man—to spies nor to their high mightinesses themselves! Understand that, one and all! I am as a father to you all, while you remain my dutiful children. To him who conspires against me, I am as the hand of vengeance itself. Louis Van Hoeck, stand up!"

The wretched informer looked piteously at the Governor and even strove to obey. But the temporary paralysis still gripped him and the numb limbs refused their office.

Two officious burghers hauled him to his feet. He hung limply between them. In spite of myself, I was fool enough to feel a thrill of pity for the fellow.

Even Stuyvesant noted his plight, and doubtless set it down to helpless, cowardly terror. I alone of them all knew the man had no more cowardice in his nature than has an adder.

"Louis Van Hoeck," said the Governor, "it is the sentence of this council, voiced by me, its Governor, that you—"

Van Hoeck, summoning all his slow-returning strength, drew forth a slip of parchment. It dropped from his palsied fingers onto the table in front of Stuyvesant. The Governor picked it up and glanced at it.

"A safe-conduct from the States General!" he snarled. "What care *I* for that?"

None the less, I noticed that he did not go on to pronounce sentence. Revolt against the States General as he might, neither Stuyvesant nor any other Dutchman of his day dared outrage the sacredness of that body's safe-conduct.

To relieve a situation's embarrassment, the Governor turned to me.

"Dirck," he said, "once more I wish I had let you kill the cur. The safe-conduct protects him and makes him immune so long as he may care to tarry in the New Netherlands. I would you had slain him ere he produced it. Has your loyal clever brain no suggestion of a way out of this muddle?"

All at once, and before I could reply, Louis Van Hoeck became galvanized into life. Lurching forward, he shook an accusing arm at me.

"Excellency!" he cried wildly, "if I be discredited or not, I brand this man as a traitor! As a spy in the pay of England's king! You *shall* hear me!"

CHAPTER XIV.

"A WOMAN SCORNED."

THE man's vehemence, breaking, as it did, through the helpless paralysis that had so enveloped him, struck upon us all with an uncanny force. Louis took advantage of the second's astonished pause to shout again:

"There has been witchcraft! Vile, black magic, that has turned the spy's report in-

to the strange words you have just read! He *is* a spy! I ask—I *demand*—leave to prove it."

Stuyvesant, recovering from his amaze, broke in:

"Tush, fool. You are caught fairly in a trap. Why increase your baseness by seeking to drag an innocent man into the toils? Dirck Dewitt, too, of all men. At his life's risk he hath proven his loyalty and honor."

Right as I felt myself to be in the course I had taken, yet hot shame filled me at the Governor's rough words of praise. But I had scant time to reflect on them. For Louis again cried:

"I do not ask you to take my unsupported word—"

"The word of an informer!" scoffed his excellency. "The word of a hired secret agent of the States General! We thank you, *mynheer,* most deeply, for not insisting that we accept it as truth."

"It *is* truth!" yelled Louis. "And you shall hear me!"

"'Shall' is an odd word," said Stuyvesant coldly, "to use in speaking to your master. Let us have an end of this! Leave my council chamber and—"

"*No!*" declared Louis. "I appeal to your own law, which says: 'Every dweller in the colony shall have, on demand, the right to free speech.' I have a complaint to make, a formal charge to bring. As Governor of the New Netherlands, your own decree forces you to hear me."

"Else there will be a new grievance in your list for their high mightinesses?" sneered his excellency. "It is well. You have cited my law and have appealed to my justice. No living man shall say that Petrus Stuyvesant waived righteous law and justice, even in dealing with so low a thing as yourself. Speak on, but be brief. The room's air will be the sweeter when you are gone."

"Your excellency," I interposed, rising and bowing formally to the Governor as Louis made as though to begin, "as I understand it, this maniac accuses me of certain unknown crimes. He hath already publicly shouted to you all that I am a 'spy.' And I have been forced to endure the term. The justice of the New Netherlands is made for honest men as well as for knaves. I, too, ask a hearing."

"I protest!" fumed Van Hoeck, "I—"

"Speak on," said the Governor kindly.

"Your excellency," I resumed, "I am the victim of this man's charges. Here is no case for the law's slow course. If my accuser be indeed insane—as seems most likely—I ask that he be confined, for the safety of the town. If he be sane, then I entreat that you waive the laws against the duello, and let me vindicate mine honor with drawn sword, as becomes a brave man. 'Tis the only adequate redress."

Yes, I know how foolish, how braggart and futile was my dramatic appeal. I knew it then. I knew, too, that the plea would not be granted.

But I was playing for time. The ship bearing my precious report to King Charles had left port. It had passed Staaten Eiland, as the cannon's salute had told me. But if, indeed, there were any chance for exposure I wanted that possible exposure to come too late for the vessel to be recalled.

In another hour or less, the fast-sailing post-ship would have gone too far on her journey for the swiftest of our local craft to overhaul her and bring back the mail-bouch.

"Dirck!" exclaimed Stuyvesant in cold reproof, "'tis incredible that you, my secretary, a stanch upholder of my laws and authority, should make so gross a demand. Youth's blood is ever hot. And for that reason I excuse your words. Rest assured that justice shall avenge you as readily as could your own sword."

"But your excellency—"

"Know you not," he kept on, "that our laws provide amply for such cases as this? 'If a citizen,'" he quoted, "'bring criminal charge and fail to sustain the same, and if it can be shown that his charge was prompted by malice and without what seemed good evidence, he shall be punished according to the eighth clause of the statute regulations.' So runs the law. And, even a States General safe-conduct cannot intervene in the case of a criminal offense. Let Van Hoeck have his say. He will punish himself far more certainly than you could avenge your honor. Louis Van Hoeck, the council will hear you. Speak!"

Louis, wriggling, mouthing, cursing under his breath, had listened with mad impatience to the wrangle. Now, steadying himself with manifest effort, he began:

"Your excellency cites the law. Be it so. I, too, cite it, the law governing witchcraft. To-day I found a document that

proved a man here to be a spy in England's pay. I bore that document straight to your excellency. It did not leave my person. By the time it reached you, it was miraculously changed to a lying report supposed to have been written by *me* to the States General."

The fellow was not only recovering his strength, but his subtle wit as well. I saw the trend of his words. Not only did he plan to ruin me, but to reinstate himself with Stuyvesant by denying all knowledge of the incriminating report he had written to their high mightinesses. It was clever—clever, past doubt.

Nowadays, when folk are for the most part beginning to believe that witchcraft does not exist, Van Hoeck's talk of black magic might well raise a laugh. But those burghers of an earlier age looked from one to the other in troubled doubt.

"I ask you all," resumed Louis, "to use your own good sense. Had I penned a scurrilous screed against the Governor, would I have been insane enough to thrust it upon him and to beseech him to read it? Doth the panther implore the hunter to slay her?"

The burghers whispered excitedly. Van Hoeck had made an impression. Stuyvesant's angry face had changed from wrath to perplexity.

There were wit and logic in Louis's claim. Even *I* had to admit that. There was no shadow of reason why he should knowingly have shown Stuyvesant his letter.

Van Hoeck saw the effect of his words, and hurried on:

"I came here from the Vaterland to cast my lot with this colony, and to do all in my poor power for the colony's advancement. I was so happy as to receive appointment on the Governor's own staff. Had I been an agent for his enemies the position would have been an ideal one for the purposes of spying. The longer I could continue to make adverse reports to the States General, the longer my pay from them would have continued. Should I have been lunatic enough to rob myself of *both* employments by showing his excellency such a report? I ask not that you consider me too *honest* a man to play so foul a part, but that you give me credit for a grain of intelligence."

"There may be something in what you say," vouchsafed Stuyvesant grudgingly. "Proceed with your charges."

Van Hoeck squared his shoulders. He was himself again—subtle, shrewd, deadly.

"Before high heaven and before this council," said he, "I accuse Dirck Dewitt of being the paid spy of Charles, King of England. I accuse him of having come to New Amsterdam for the purpose of learning this colony's weaknesses and of making report on them to his English master. I accuse—"

"Your excellency," I burst in, "grant me leave to answer this man with cold steel."

"Peace, lad!" ordered Stuyvesant, not unkindly. "'Tis hard, I know, to sit and listen to such vile lies. But have patience. He will bring himself his own punishment. Go on, Van Hoeck. Make as swift an end to your charges as you can."

"I accuse him," proceeded Van Hoeck, as though reading from a printed page, "of having drafted that report and of placing it this day in the official mail-pouch whence for the good of the colony I abstracted it.

"This man wrote to England's king a detailed account of every condition here, of the Indians' hatred toward us, of the easy conquest England could gain should she send a force while your excellency is at odds with the States General and while the people at large are so discontented with Dutch rule."

"Is that all?" queried Stuyvesant in frigid politeness as Louise paused.

"Not quite. From the letter that accompanied the report I gather he is an Englishman; that he went to Holland from London, assumed a Dutch name and identity, and through the connivance of the British ambassador there was enabled to—"

Stuyvesant's great laugh shook the air.

"You overshoot, Mynheer Van Hoeck," he cried. "'Twas a very pretty batch of charges as it stood. Why weaken it by claiming him a newly emigrated Londoner? Do Londoners speak Dutch with no trace of accent? Do they know the Indian dialects and the art of 'forest running'? Next you will say he is King Charles in disguise."

"I speak," answered Louis, "not of mine own opinions, but what I read in black and white, in his own handwriting, over his own signature."

"And *now*, have you done?" asked the Governor. "Or is there more?"

"I have done. I have accused the so-called Dirck Dewitt of being an English spy. The charge stands."

"Not yet," corrected Stuyvesant. "There

remain two trifling formalities. One is the taking of solemn oath as to the truth of what you have said. Second, to establish proof thereof. We await your convenience. But, ere you commit yourself to oath, let me remind you that perjury is here punishable by death."

Van Hoeck's reply was to walk to the bronze lectern where lay the council Bible. With his hand on the sacred volume, he said solemnly:

"I, Louis Van Hoeck, do hereby swear on the blessed Book that to the best of my knowledge and belief the charges I have just made against the man calling himself Dirck Dewitt are in every respect true, and the whole truth, so help me."

I think no one, observing the man, could have wholly doubted his sincerity.

There was an instant's awed silence. Then Stuyvesant drew a long breath.

"'Tis done," said he gravely. "Mynheer Van Hoeck, for your immortal soul's welfare as much as for that of your mortal body, I trust you have told what you deem to be the truth. 'Tis a fearful thing at best to call upon the Creator to witness our spoken words. And now," more briskly, "to the point. Your proofs, man! You promised us proofs of your monstrous assertion. Produce them!"

Van Hoeck hesitated.

"My chief evidence," he said, "was the document itself. It has vanished, and another screed has been magically substituted for it."

"So your whole proof hangs upon the doubtful assertion of witchcraft?"

"No. Else had I not dared press the charge. I beg to call a witness."

"A witness?"

"My sister. The Juffrouw Greta Van Hoeck, who is known to your excellency."

A stir of excited interest swept the room. I turned sick. Not with fear, though hope seemed to be stranding me on the shoals of despond, but at the thought that any woman — Greta least of all — should be called upon to take away a man's life.

My first shock passed, my senses rallied. Why, of course, I was safe. The girl who had once so infatuated me would surely not now help bring about my utter ruin? Then I remembered her face as she had turned from us that morning. And once more a dull doubt oppressed me.

Ere leaving London I had gone one evening to the Globe playhouse to witness Master Congreve's right turgid drama, "The Mourning Bride." A tag in this stage-play—that had most vastly caught the fancy of the audience—now recurred to me. 'Twas a couplet that ran:

> Heaven knows no rage like love to hatred turned,
> Nor Hell a fury like a woman scorned!

"It is well," agreed Stuyvesant, after a moment's frowning reflection. Let the Juffrouw Van Hoeck be summoned. No!" as Louis started for the door, "stay where you are, *mynheer*. There shall be no chance at collusion. We will hear the lady's story independently.

"Clerk," he went on, "seek the Juffrouw Greta Van Hoeck, and beg her with my sincere compliments to attend us here with all convenient speed. It may be she hath not yet left the White Hall, but is waiting below with the rest for the rain to abate, ere venturing home."

"Your fate," whispered Macopin, as the clerk bustled out on his errand, "hangs on a thread."

"On a woman's mood," I corrected.

"Are the two so different?" was his only reply as once more he turned to his inspection of the rainy street below.

(To be continued.)

DEAR LITTLE VERSE.

DEAR little verse, the careless eye
And heedless heart will pass thee by,
And never needst thou hope to be
To others as thou art to me.

For, lo! I know thy bliss and wo,
Thy shallows, depths, and boundless heights,
How thou wast wrought, patient and slow,
Through crucibles of sleepless nights.

Robert Loveman.

His Picnic Predicament.

BY LESLIE HAVERGAL BRADSHAW.

Tommy Castleton Gets in Bad and Decides To Struggle On Rather Than To Wriggle Out.

THE Drummonds were at breakfast. Sunshine streamed in through the open windows. Being up early, and in the country, they received its full benefit. Evelyn was manipulating the coffee, and a tense silence hung over the room as her husband provisioned himself for the labors of the day.

He paused in the act of grappling with a soft-boiled egg.

"I wonder," he said, in a tone of curiosity rather than complaint, "if Tommy is ever coming down. He seems to regard this as a movable feast."

"He'll be here directly," said Evelyn. "We're rather earlier than usual to-day, you know. He has had a hard time of it in town lately, and I don't blame him for sleeping when he can."

"You're right, dear. That Seymour case must have taken it out of him, especially as he's a friend of Seymour. It couldn't have been the pleasantest sort of thing for him to have to write about."

"No, I suppose not. Somehow I haven't seen the papers lately. What *is* the case, Jack?"

"It's a love affair. Don't start. Her name is Yorke — Yolande Yorke She's the daughter of a plutocrat, I believe. The old man heard some story or other about Seymour, and absolutely forbade his daughter to have anything to do with him. Circumstantial evidence, etc. She has been sent away to stay with some relatives to be out of Seymour's way. Beastly hard on the man."

"Yes, awfully. I wonder how it will turn out."

"I wonder. I shouldn't think they could stamp a girl's love out that way. And they'll find it out soon, too. Hallo, what's that?"

A door banged up-stairs. Then followed half a dozen thuds, indicative of some one taking the stairs three at a time. A miniature earthquake seemed to shake the house.

A moment later Tommy appeared.

"What *ho*," he said breezily. "And good morning! Now to important business. I say, what's under that dish?"

Tommy Castleton, of the *Daily Despatch*, was beginning his vacation by staying with the Drummonds at their country house. He had been working hard up to the last minute, mainly on the Seymour affair referred to. Hence Evelyn's sympathy was justified.

The painful case of Seymour and his love apparently did not weigh heavily on Tommy's spirits. He proceeded to give an excellent imitation of his host's example at the board.

"Have you anything special on for to-day, Thomas?" asked Drummond, neatly spearing a sardine.

"No. I may sit on your stoop and give the passers-by a treat. That is, if you previously send out hand-bills announcing it. Nothing further. Why?"

"I wish you would do me a favor."

"Any number. Speak, friend. You have our ear."

"Well, it's this way. Evelyn and I are going into town, which is why we're up so early. Now, some people round about here have planned a picnic for to-day. They're going out into the woods and all that sort of thing. I said I would attend, but I can't. Would you care for it? I may as well confess that I told them you would be there.

"Don't look so ghastly," Drummond added, on seeing Tommy's dubious face, "there are some awfully decent girls in the neighborhood. In fact, that's why I took the liberty of making the engagement for you. There's one in particular whom we know rather well. She lives with her mother somewhere near the next village. Romsey, the name of the place is. I've told them a lot about you. You have a big reputation to live up to, I can assure you. Honestly, I've bucked you up a fearful lot. Haven't I, Evelyn?"

"Yes, you have, dear," said his wife. "And without exaggerating, too."

Tommy looked at her searchingly.

"Please don't rot," he said. "Well, all right. I'll go."

"Good man," exclaimed Drummond, rising. "That's the sort. Their name is Clark. Look them up first, and you'll find everybody'll fawn on you afterward."

"That sounds inspiring. Where is the place?"

"They're going into the woody bit on the hill, the other side of Romsey. You can't miss it. It isn't far from the main road, although it's pleasantly secluded. All you have to do is just to stroll up and introduce yourself in a neat, polished speech."

Tommy pushed his chair back from the table, and searched in his pocket for his pipe.

"I always *was* a versatile man," he said. "And now herding stray females is added to my list of accomplishments. But, look here, how am I going to be able to pick these people out? I don't want to charge in among a lot of strangers and make an ass of myself."

"Oh," said Drummond, "you can't mistake them. Look for an oldish, genial appearing sort of dame with a rather prominent nose."

"And the girl?"

"The girl—well, Evelyn's here, but I must say, she's what people call a dream. You know the sort of thing."

"Right. I fancy I can manage to find them on that description. When does it start?"

"The picnic? Oh, about three, I suppose. You can take the car if you don't care to walk."

"Thanks. And when will you be back?"

"About six. Not later than seven, in any case. Dinner's at quarter after seven to-night. I have told Aunt Chloe. Now, dear," Drummond added to his wife, who had been up-stairs to put on her hat, "we *must* be off. Come along."

At the door Evelyn paused.

"Be very careful, Tommy," she warned him laughingly.

"Oh, all right. Don't worry about me. I'm immune, you know."

Tommy lazed around the house for a while, enjoying the complete relaxation from his strenuous labors in the city, then, after having seen to the automobile, proceeded to make a careful toilet.

Directly after lunch he started out. The automobile was one of the best, and he reached Romsey in a few minutes. Finding himself with some time to spare, he stopped the car and got out to have a look around.

Strolling into the hotel, the first person he saw—the most dejected-looking man in the place—was Seymour.

II.

"HALLO, Tommy," said Seymour listlessly, "what brings you here? There's nothing new, and I'm not going to talk, so be warned. I'm sick of newspaper men."

"You wrong me," answered Tommy. "I am now the simple country gentleman. In mufti, as it were. You may sob out your secrets on my shoulder without fear of their going any further than the lining."

"Glad to hear it," said Seymour. "I don't mind telling you I *was* going to make a dash for it."

Tommy explained that he was on his vacation. Indicating Drummond's car, he described his afternoon's prospect.

"Well, good luck," remarked Seymour, in a dismal tone. "I wish I could go in for that sort of thing. But I can't forget Yolande for a minute. Jove, I wish I could find her and have a few minutes with her alone. I'd give anything for it."

"Hard luck," said Tommy, with genuine sympathy. "You haven't any idea where she could have gone, have you?"

"Not the slightest. I know she's not in the city, and that's all. I've tried every place around New York, I should think."

"I wish I could help you. Are you out here for long?"

"No, only the day. My machine is round at the back. I may stay overnight if I feel like it."

"Well, look here. I hope to get away from this picnic business by six at the latest, and the Drummonds certainly won't be later than seven. They're coming back for dinner. You met Drummond, you remember. Why not come over for the evening? It doesn't take long in the car. Mrs. Drummond is great. You can't help liking her. She's awfully jolly—and she'll help you to forget."

Tommy spoke the last few words hurriedly. Anything even remotely connected with sentiment made him feel uncomfortable.

"Thanks," said Seymour. "If nothing happens to prevent, I'll come over. I'll be around here until seven-thirty, anyway, if you should happen to want me for anything."

"Good," and Tommy stepped into the car once more. "See you later, then. So-long."

He kept a sharp lookout on both sides of the road, and after a few minutes came across a narrow drive at right angles to the highway. Judging this to lead in the direction of the picnickers, he turned the machine into it.

Soon his vigilance was rewarded by the sight of what was unmistakably a feminine group some distance off. He drove the machine as far as he could along the overgrown roadway, then got out and continued on foot.

As he drew near the party he slackened his pace. He did not want to attract attention. His plan was to pick out the Clarks and get to know them as soon as possible. After that, matters could take their course.

For a few minutes he looked on at the scene, shielded from view by a small clump of bushes, and as he did so he noticed that two of the gathering were evidently on the lookout for some one. They stood a little apart from the others, who were busy unpacking various bags and hampers. They gave the impression of not intending to join in until their expected friend appeared. They had their backs toward him, but as they changed their position every few minutes Tommy felt that it would not be long before he would get a glimpse of their faces.

Soon the expected happened. As they turned slowly in his direction, Tommy noticed with growing interest that one was a middle-aged lady, and the other—a girl.

But she was no ordinary girl. Even from that distance he was struck with the general attractiveness of her appearance and the grace of her movements. Evidently she was *the* girl.

"This," said Tommy to himself, "is where *I* come in."

He strode rapidly toward them.

"Good afternoon," he said, taking off his hat.

III.

"Good afternoon," replied the girl. "We thought you were never coming."

Tommy, nearly lost in a trance of admiration now that he was close enough to see her face clearly, recovered himself sufficiently to speak.

"What? I'm not late, am I?"

"Nothing to speak of," remarked the elder lady.

"Oh, good. He told me about three; and it's only a few seconds past. What shall we do? Charge over there"—indicating the main body of picnickers—"or what?"

The girl hesitated.

"I'm not sure. You see, we don't know many people around here, and—and it's a little strange. The two ladies we know best are over there by the trees. Do you see them? They're bending down — no, one has just straightened up again. Now she's looking toward the right."

"Oh, yes," said Tommy, but a careful observer would not have been impressed with the accuracy of the statement.

"I think I will sit down for a minute," observed the matron. "They will no doubt be over here presently."

She suited the action to the word. Meanwhile, the girl was studying Tommy. She decided that he looked *sensible*. So many of the young men she had known were inclined to be silly—especially in the summer, and particularly on such occasions as the present. And she was not in the mood for that sort of thing just now.

Tommy, on his part, was wondering at the girl's quiet, subdued air. She was the sort he would have expected to see in the thick of things — laying cloths, keeping people from sitting in the butter, producing spoons, etc., from apparently nowhere, and conducting the affair in a brainy, scientific way generally.

Instead, here she was, keeping on the outskirts. And she was such a pretty girl! He doubted if he had ever seen one more attractive—with the possible exception of Evelyn Drummond.

Seymour had been wont to deliver for his benefit lengthy monologues on the subject of Miss Yolande Yorke's beauty. Tommy wished Seymour were here now. He felt he would like to show him *this* girl.

He sat down on the grass beside her, and, as the older lady showed no signs of desiring to join in the conversation, they were soon in the middle of a *tête-à-tête*. It had proceeded for about ten minutes, when Tommy received his first surprise.

"I do believe," said the girl suddenly, "that my aunt has gone to sleep."

The supposition was not without foundation. It certainly looked as if the lady *had* gone to sleep.

But Tommy did not feel interested in the engrossing spectacle. The girl had said *aunt*. What did it mean? There must be some mistake.

Drummond had distinctly explained that the Clarks were mother and daughter. Who, then, were these people?

So far, things had been most enjoyable. Their reception of him had swept away any doubts Tommy might have entertained as to their identity. Until now the possibility of a mistake had not occurred to him. But there evidently had been one.

He did not show his astonishment, however, but continued to maintain his end in a bright and often witty conversation. All the time, however, he was keeping a sharp lookout for some indication of the truth.

It was not long in coming. The main body of the picnickers, who evidently believed in "business before pleasure," were laying a long white cloth on the grass. One end of it was being brought in Tommy's direction. He had wondered several times how long it would be before some of the others came up.

Suddenly he became aware, by a curious instinctive feeling, that some of the ladies among the newcomers were speaking about the little group of which he was a member.

Without giving any sign that he was doing so, Tommy listened. For a while he could not distinguish what was said; then his second surprise came. He heard the words: "Miss Yorke and her aunt."

He started. Miss Yorke! By some wonderful luck he had stumbled upon the very girl he had been utterly unable to reach in the city; the girl whose father had plunged Seymour into despondency and gloom; the girl who might still like—and perhaps love—him. He had never heard that she shared her father's opinion.

Tommy thought rapidly. Seymour was likely to be still lazing around Romsey, certainly not far from it. He (Tommy) must bring them together in some way.

But how? One can hardly leave a picnic within half an hour of one's arrival without some very good excuse. And just then Tommy found good excuses few and far between. In fact, he could not at the moment think of any.

He looked around in desperation. Time was flying. Any moment some one might come over — possibly a bunch of "some ones"—and carry Miss Yorke into the thick of the festivities. Then his chance would be gone.

He was looking at the aunt, who, fortunately, was still sleeping peacefully, when an idea came to him.

"Miss Yorke," he whispered, "are you very keen on this?"

"Not particularly. Why?"

"Well, I have a car close by, and I thought we might slip away and take a run. The roads are fine."

"I should like it immensely, but—but there is my aunt."

"Oh, that's all right. She's asleep. You wouldn't *wake* her?"

The girl smiled.

"All right," she said, "I'll come."

Seizing an opportunity when no one seemed to be looking, Tommy led the way to the bushes which had secreted him a little while before. He found the car without difficulty, and, having seen Miss Yorke comfortably ensconced, cranked up and started off at once.

IV.

For a time neither spoke. The automobile glided silently along the white road. Miss Yorke sat with closed eyes. Tommy's attention was concentrated on the steering-wheel.

Then, when they were on the main road once more and fairly clear of the picnic district, he turned to her.

"Who do you think I am?" he asked, rather abruptly.

The girl raised her eyebrows.

"Why, Mr. Vaughan, what a curious question! Uncle said you'd be up to look after us, you know. If he hadn't been so busy with his aeroplane he would have come himself. Picnics are just the sort of thing he likes. I hope we haven't brought you away from anything very exciting?"

"Oh, no."

"Well, what did you mean by 'Who do you think I am?'"

"Simply this," said Tommy, changing color slightly. "There has been a mistake. I'm *not* Vaughan."

"What!"

"No. My name is Castleton. I'm a friend of the Drummonds in Meadville. You see, it was this way. I came to this thing to look up friends of theirs, and mistook you and your aunt for them. The description fitted exactly."

She looked at him a little curiously, but said nothing.

"I didn't know until just now that I'd run across — well, I won't say the *wrong* people. It doesn't sound nice. I'll substitute a 'pleasant surprise.' I realize, of

course, that you must feel a little—well, uncomfortable with a total stranger, so if you desire it I will at once turn back. I hope you don't want that, though, because I'm enjoying this immensely. Besides, if I hadn't said anything, you wouldn't have known.

"You really ought to reward my honesty," he concluded persuasively. "Think what a temptation it was to keep silent."

He decided that this was the best course of action. After all, there is nothing like gaining a person's confidence. It establishes a new footing. This is generally the point where acquaintances ripen into friendships.

She regarded him curiously for a moment, then smiled frankly.

"All right," she said. "Let's go on. I feel I can trust you."

Tommy blushed. He was not used to this sort of thing.

"To look at me," he remarked, after a short pause, in which he lessened the speed of the car, "you wouldn't think I was weighed down by sorrow, would you?"

"I should say not."

"I am, though," he assured her. "The thing is simple. It is the problem of a friend of mine, who could solve it easily if he only had a chance. But he hasn't the chance."

"No?"

"No. It's awfully hard luck. He is a splendid fellow. One of the best. The main flaw in his character is that he's warm-hearted. To be exact and not mince matters, he's fallen desperately—fearfully—in love."

"I shouldn't think that would necessarily be a flaw."

"It isn't, and yet it is. You see, it's apparently bad judgment. His friends think he is wasting his love. They urge him to forget. He says he can't. It pains me, and I grieve over it. My pillow becomes a perfect mop nightly around 1 A.M. I have given him my opinion and advice in undiluted quantities, and all free. But it does not seem to be of use.

"He *will* persist in what he calls confidence in—her. I don't want to praise myself, but I must admit that at times I have been almost eloquent. 'Love,' I told him, 'is—well, love. It's a most curious thing. You can't analyze it. It simply appears. It sprints up and waltzes away.' And so on along that line. Rather meaty, and often quite deep. Somebody who knows shorthand ought to follow me round with a well-pointed pencil and a large-sized note-book."

He paused for breath, and then went on in a more serious tone:

"I want to enlist your sympathy. This man was getting along all right, and the girl—who is simply splendid—was encouraging him, when suddenly her father heard some rotten idiot's mad story about the fellow—and told him to go away, and stay away."

Tommy thought he heard his companion move slightly.

"I bore you," he said with ready tact. "Let me change the subject. Talking about furniture—"

"Please go on."

"You really want me to?"

"Really."

"All right, then. The great point about the whole thing," he continued, with an earnestness which was as unusual with him as it was impressive, "is that her father was absolutely mistaken. The story was a hideous lie. I *know* the man's all right. He's a friend of mine. As I said before, one of the best. And I have an idea that the girl thinks so, too. Don't you imagine it's probable?"

"Quite p—probable."

"And doesn't it seem a pity that the three of them should have a miserable time when the whole thing could easily be put right?"

"It does."

"Now, *I* think the girl is the one to show the other two that she—er—trusts the fellow. Don't you?"

He waited expectantly for the answer.

"Y-e-s," she said softly, looking away.

Tommy had timed his story well. During his recital the car had merely crawled. The buildings of Romsey were close at hand now.

"Well," he said hurriedly, as the machine drew up outside the hotel and he caught sight of Seymour at the top of the steps, "you have your chance now. Just a moment."

He jumped out, dashed up to Seymour, rapidly explained the situation, and, after seeing the two in the machine, their heads very close together, turned and strolled off in the opposite direction.

V.

TOMMY waited a discreet interval, and then ventured to approach the car. Soon

the delighted Seymour caught sight of him. He jumped down and shook Tommy's hand in a particularly jovial fashion.

For the next few minutes each did some rapid talking, while Yolande in the automobile looked down on them with the greatest interest. Her profile stood out sharply against the dull red sky, and an occasional ray from the setting sun lightened up her face.

Tommy, as he glanced up, thought he had never seen anything finer. Seymour, as his eyes met hers, felt the world had little more to offer.

"It's getting late," said Tommy presently. "Look here, old man, why not bring Miss Yorke round to dinner at the Drummonds'? We'll make it the maddest, merriest day of all the glad New Year."

Seymour warmly approved the plan. A unanimous decision had just been reached, when Tommy recollected Miss Yorke's aunt. There was more than a possibility that on awakening she might become alarmed at not seeing her niece at hand. Then there was the picnic—and the Clarks!

Seymour brought round his car, and together the two machines returned to the scene of the picnic. Seymour took Yolande, and on arriving made a bee-line for her aunt.

He was in luck. She understood the situation at once, and, being favorably inclined toward him, predicted a speedy softening of Mr. Yorke's heart, especially as Seymour had by now prepared a strong case for himself, backed up by many alibis.

Meanwhile, Tommy had sought out the Clarks. To his satisfaction he discovered that the Mr. Vaughan whom the Yorkes expected had made the same mistake as himself, and had then spent the afternoon with the Clarks. Tommy felt that this was one of his lucky days.

The dinner at the Drummonds' that night was a big success. Evelyn and Jack understood exactly how Yolande and Seymour felt. Tommy undertook the rôle of comedian, feeling that it was the only way in which he could fit into this atmosphere of domesticity.

It was a noticeable fact that the *Daily Despatch* was a clear day ahead of its rivals in its account of the Yorke-Seymour engagement and Mr. Yorke's princely wedding present.

The Wire That Wasn't Cut.

BY F. RAYMOND BREWSTER.

The Story of a Thrilling Experience When a Telephone Man Attempted To Frustrate a Crime by Putting in a Silent Call.

I WAS sitting at the assistant manager's desk, idly picking up bits of conversation on the various lines, when the first report of trouble floated in. The trouble itself was not of a serious nature, but it came at an inconvenient time, and led me into a situation that was perilous indeed.

Nichols, the assistant manager, was at a long table near-by, deeply engrossed in a report to headquarters. The usual buzz of voices which is so much a part of a busy telephone exchange during the day was missing, for, in the early evening these great nerve-centers of the large cities simmer down to a calm.

On this particular evening in June it was unusually quiet. The busy evening hour of social conversations had not begun, and I was growing a bit lonesome.

A tiny lamp flashed in the monitor-box, and the buzz of the signal dispelled the lonesome feeling.

"Manager's office," I broke in, throwing the key which picked up the line indicated by the lamp.

A feminine voice responded. "My telephone is out of order, and I want it fixed right away," came over the wire.

"What is your number?" I asked.

"Four five six, Main," the voice answered.

I jotted it down.

"And your address?" I questioned.

"Forty-four Willis Avenue," was the reply.

I jotted that down, too, mentally noting that it was in a fashionable neighborhood in the southern part of the city.

"We can't get a man there to-night, madam, but—"

"You must!" the voice broke in. "My husband is out of town, and I simply cannot be here alone at night without the use of my telephone."

I tried diplomatically to put off the job until the next morning, but the woman at the other end was insistent.

"We'll do the best we can, madam," I told her finally. "We'll have a man there within an hour."

"Thank you," she said, and the signal-light faded.

"Nichols," I spoke up, distracting the assistant manager's attention from his report, "I've a chance to get out in the air. Can't you get Miss Nelson to take care of the desk?"

"Sure thing," Nichols replied readily. "Thanks for staying as long as you did."

Miss Nelson, who took my place, was the night chief operator, and she was a wonderfully pretty girl. I had stayed more than once beyond office hours so that I might see Miss Nelson and help her with telegraphy, which she was studying.

Before coming East to the telephone company, I had entered the telegraph service in the West when a youngster, and it was like the greeting of an old friend to hear the responsive "click-click" of the key under my finger.

Although I missed the occasional thrill of the telegraph service, I was not confined to routine work. The company sent me about from place to place, wherever a new switchboard was cut into service, and I was not in one place more than six months.

The "cut-over" of the new board at Newark had been made the previous night, and minor troubles and kinks had been straightened out the following day.

I assigned myself to the case just reported, but little did I know that it was destined to lead me into a situation that was so full of danger.

Darkness was rapidly enveloping the city, and the street-lights were beginning to cast long shadows on belated workers. It was an ideal evening, and I was glad of the opportunity to get out in the air. My pipe added no small drop to my delight.

I decided to walk to the seat of the trouble, for, although the trolley might be a little quicker, it reached my destination by such a circuitous route that the saving in time would be very small. Besides, smoking was not permitted on the street-cars.

When I rang the proper bell in the vestibule of the apartment-house at 44 Willis Avenue, I was immediately shown to the library in which the telephone was located. I was not even asked to show my employee's badge of identification. Thus do thieves prosper.

The usual tests failed to reveal a spark of life, and an examination of the connections and visible wiring was without result. The instrument was positively dead.

The janitor showed me where the wires came into the house from the distributing-pole on the corner, and I carefully examined all the wiring in the basement, but could not locate the trouble. I pierced the wire with the clasps of my test-set, a combination receiver and transmitter, and listened for a response from the operator.

The wire was dead. The trouble was outside, somewhere between the house and the central office, a rather indefinite location.

The nervous woman who would not be without telephone service overnight, refused to be reconciled to a postponement of the search until morning.

"One of your own men cut the wire this afternoon," she said acridly, "and I don't propose to suffer for his blunder."

"One of our own men?" I repeated.

"Yes," she insisted. "I saw him walking along Willis Avenue trying to follow one of the wires with his eyes. He climbed the pole on the corner and apparently cut one of the wires and then disappeared. Soon after I had occasion to use my telephone and found it out of order. He cut the wrong wire."

I knew that it would be a dangerous task to climb the pole at night, but I also knew that it would be useless to try to convince the subscriber that the line had not been cut by one of the company's men.

I was really puzzled, but when I left the house it was with a promise to open the line that night. There was only one explanation of the cut line, and I revolved it in my mind as I climbed the tall pole on the corner.

I knew that a telephone man would never try to follow a line with his eyes for any distance. The cut had not been made in the service of the company.

I was glad when the working platform

at the top of the pole was safely reached, for the changing shadows cast by the arc-light on the corner confused me, and several times I nearly missed my footing on the narrow block steps bolted to the pole.

Anticipating the task before me, I had left my kit at 44, and only brought the necessary tools and a bit of copper wire with a strip of insulating tape. In my bag I had found the stump of a candle, and this shed an uncertain light on the network of wires which centered at this pole.

I remembered that the woman at 44 had seen the man walking along Willis Avenue from the west, so I gave these wires my first attention. From that direction there were only five lines attached to the pole, and it was only the work of a minute to find the break.

The cut was a clean one, but the man responsible for it was clever enough to sever only one wire of the pair, thus preventing it from dangling in the street.

As I scraped the severed ends clean of the insulation, and twisted on the small piece of copper wire and covered it with tape, I could see the white, upturned faces and shadowy forms of a group of onlookers gathered below, evidently attracted, like moths, by the flickering candle-flame.

In the darkness it was impossible to make a permanent splice, and when this temporary connection was completed I descended the pole, and again entered the house at 44, resolving to complete the job next morning.

A test showed the line working satisfactorily, and the nervous woman readily granted me permission to leave my tool-kit over night.

I got Nichols on the wire, and he gave me a list of the addresses where the other four instruments were located whose wires reached the distributing pole from the west on Willis Avenue.

"Watch for possible developments on those four lines," I told Nichols.

The fearless spirit developed in the Western telegraph service asserted itself, and I hurried out, not knowing that the real trouble was yet to come.

Contrasted with the busy social season, Willis Avenue was quiet and almost deserted.

Most of the darkened houses were set well back from the street, and they loomed up like huge black monuments against the glare of the lights in the distant center of the city.

The first on the list was still occupied, but the next was darkened and closely boarded up for the summer.

I walked up the gravel driveway, avoiding the noisy flagstones, and reached the rear. There was not a sign of life about the big place. The windows in the basement had not been boarded up, but they were heavily guarded with steel gratings.

An airshaft cut into the rear of the house several feet, and I peered into the black chasm.

My heart gave a startled leap.

A thin stream of light shone through a crack in the boards at the window. It was only a tiny crack, but in the inky blackness of the air-shaft it stood out clear and bright.

The light could only be accounted for in one way—the man who had cut the wire in the afternoon thought that he was severing the only link which connected the darkened house with the outside world, and that he could plunder undisturbed.

I thought of getting the police, but my work in the evening had taken considerable time, and it was now nearing nine o'clock, the hour when the night-platoon of police begin their tour. The night-patrolman was not yet on duty, and the other man was probably at the far end of his post waiting to be relieved.

I resolved to go it alone.

This was not a foolhardy determination, for I knew that the telephone-line was intact. If I could only get Nichols and say a few words to him without being heard I could then keep the thief under surveillance until help arrived.

An open basement window from which one of the steel bars had been loosened showed me where the burglar had entered. I took off my shoes and stepped into the house.

Outside my eyes had become accustomed to the semidarkness, but inside the blackness was impenetrable. I feared that in the gloom I might stumble against something and alarm the man on the floor above. I stood still, hoping that my eyes would become accustomed to the dark and that I would be able to find the door which led to the hallway. But it was useless.

Presently I was conscious of a slight draft of air fanning my face, and I knew

that it came from an open door at the end of the room.

Stealthily I made my way in that direction. Several pieces of furniture interfered with my progress, but I was fortunate, and inch by inch I reached the door.

In my stockinged feet I could feel that I was walking on carpet, and by stretching out both my arms I could touch the wall on either side. I knew then that I was in the hallway.

Dropping to my hands and knees, I crept slowly along, feeling along the surbase for an opening.

Suddenly, on the right, the base stopped and I raised my hand. I had come to the stairway.

Looking up, I could see a faint glimmer of light, probably reflected from a mirror, but it was too dim to light my way up.

Still creeping slowly, I managed to climb the stairs without making a sound. As I gained the top, a sudden fear struck terror to my heart.

Except for my small pocket-knife, I was without a weapon. What would this avail against a revolver in the hands of the burglar? But the thought that terrorized me was that there might be more than one.

I rested at the top of the stairs a moment to collect my thoughts. I realized that the odds were overwhelmingly against me, but I resolved to depend upon getting Nichols on the wire.

I avoided the doorway through which the faint light shone, and tried to find some way out of the hall.

There was no carpet on the hardwood floors, and I had not gone far when my knees began to get sore. I endeavored to obtain the lay of the rooms, so that I could reach the library, where the telephone was likely to be, without any unnecessary risk, but the direction I took brought me up against a closed door. The hazard of opening it was too great, so I turned away.

There was only one way to get out of the hall, and that was through the room from which the reflection of light came.

I was puzzled to know just where the light itself was, for it jumped back and forth so between the rooms from mirror to mirror, from chandelier to chandelier, that I lost track of it in the maze.

My eyes had become accustomed to the darkness now, and the faint light cast by the baffling reflection enabled me to locate the doorway distinctly. I stood up straight and glided stealthily into the room.

I stood for a moment transfixed. It was like a glimpse of the Arabian Nights. The rich hangings—the rainbow beams from the crystal electroliers—the faint glow of the light, and the distant scene—doubly reflected, of the robber at work, seemingly far away in the recesses of a mysterious cavern—was a sight to inspire awe and—fear.

I lost little time in watching, for the thief was busily engaged and the minutes were precious. In the dim light I could make out the lines of a grand piano, shrouded in white, and I knew that I was in the music-room.

A black hole in the wall alongside me indicated a doorway, and I crept toward it and stepped quietly over the threshold.

My heart gave a joyous thump. On a desk the light glinted from the shiny nickel-plated surface of a desk telephone.

Eagerly I stepped to the desk and felt around for the wire. My hand rapidly followed it to the bell-box, which was fastened underneath.

I knew that extreme caution was necessary and I took no chances. Long familiarity with the telephone had taught me that when the receiver is lifted, or when central cuts in with "number, please," there is very often a tap of the bell. This would be fatal to me, so I reached under the desk and carefully unscrewed the two gongs.

I had placed one on the table and was bringing the other up when my arm brushed the first one off and it fell to the hardwood floor.

There was an awful crash.

The blood seemed to freeze in my veins and I dropped into the desk-chair, limp and cold.

The gong clattered down and rolled around the floor in diminishing circles, but before it was stilled the thief had me covered with an ugly-looking revolver.

I had seen him coming in the dim light of the room beyond, and had instinctively reached for a glistening small steel envelope-opener on the desk, thinking that I might bluff him into believing that I had a revolver.

I raised my arm, but only as far as the transmitter, where I let it rest. The thought flashed into my mind that the ruse would only serve to draw his fire, for we were both in a perilous situation.

Still keeping me covered, he reached over to the wall and pushed a button.

There was a flare of light as the green shaded library-lamp shed a brilliant pyramid over the desk.

His voice was tense.

"Are you one of the profession?" he asked in a low tone.

Sparring for time, I hesitated a moment.

"Yes," I finally answered.

In my hand I had the telephone, the only means of communicating with the outside world, and at the other end was Nichols.

How could I use the instrument? How could I make it talk—make it tell Nichols that I was in a desperate corner?

The thief was glaring at me with suspicion. Finally he spoke.

"You lie!" he said sharply.

I started involuntarily, as though about to rise.

"Sit down!" he commanded. "I saw your badge. Either a detective or a reporter."

"A poor guess," I answered, trying to control my voice.

My brain was working rapidly, but not clearly. I had the means of getting help under my hand, but without the human voice it was useless. If only it were a telegraph-key!

At the word "telegraph" my mind cleared instantly, and I began to tap the telephone lightly with the envelope opener.

I had placed the point of it on one of the little pegs by which the wire is fastened to the receiver, and with the other end I tapped the metal part of the transmitter. I knew that this would complete the circuit and flash the tiny lamp over this number in the central office. The instrument was useless to me as a telephone, but it would carry a telegraph message just as well.

But who was at the other end? Would he understand my flashes? If Nichols was there, "No!" but if it were Miss Nelson—"yes."

At every tap, a current of electricity passed through me and made me wince slightly, but the thief, confident that the wire was cut, gave no thought to the silent instrument on the desk.

"Don't you think I had sense enough to fix that thing?" he asked contemptuously, indicating the telephone.

He evidently thought that I was awaiting a chance to call for help by speaking over the wire.

"Come quick! Come quick!" I was sending over the line in rapid flashes. I repeated the message many times, on the chance that Miss Nelson might be at the other end. It was my only hope.

In the meantime, the thief sneered at my clumsiness in dropping the bell on the floor. He gave it a vicious kick, sending it spinning across the room with an awful clatter.

I tried not to arouse his suspicions and talked slowly, drawing out my sentences and sparring for time.

But I kept up an incessant tapping on the telephone. I changed my signal to the "S. O. S." of the wireless, hoping that if my first "Come quick" was beyond Miss Nelson's range, the simple "S. O. S." would be within her grasp.

"Hand over your badge," the thief commanded.

"S. O. S." I flashed.

It was my last message.

My signals stopped, and I unpinned my employee's device. Reluctantly I pushed it across the table.

The thief picked it up quickly.

"A telephone man!" he exclaimed. "The cut has been found out."

His voice was tense and a look of alarm came into his face.

"Out into the other room," he ordered.

I obeyed rather slowly, walking out ahead of him.

The dining-room was strewn with boxes and some papers, and on the table a pile of silverware and jewelry was ready to be packed.

"Sit on that chair," the thief ordered.

I obeyed in a listless way.

A faint sound seemed to come to my ears from the outside, and I listened intently, but it was not repeated.

The burglar snatched a cover off one of the chairs and hurriedly tore it into long strips. I knew that he intended to tie me fast, and my heart sank. Would I still be sitting there, gaunt and cold, when the owner opened up the house in the fall? Were my signals understood? Why didn't help arrive?

It was but the work of a minute to tear the cover into strips, and as the thief approached me I squirmed uneasily in the chair. But I dared not resist.

From the outside of the house came the shrill whistle of the police. My flashes had been understood.

The burglar hesitated, and a puzzled, dis-

appointed look came into his eyes. He involuntarily turned his head and, like an alarmed beast, listened.

I was on my feet in an instant.

Quick as I was, he was prepared, and, warding off my blow, he fired pointblank.

The bullet whistled by me and crashed, with a dull thud, into the wall beyond.

Before he could fire again I had grappled with him, and we clinched and fell to the floor, the revolver flying out of his hand and crashing through the mirror of the buffet.

He was a powerful fellow, and I felt that my strength was fast giving out.

We struggled fiercely around the room, and it seemed to me that the help which was so near would never arrive.

A door slammed somewhere in a distant part of the house, and there was a heavy tread of many feet on the hardwood floors.

With help at hand I relaxed my muscles a little, and the burglar, feeling my resistance crumple, had me pinned beneath him as the officers burst into the room.

"You are just in time," the thief exclaimed, breathing heavily. "I couldn't have held him much longer."

Before I could say a word, two of the officers jerked me roughly to my feet and I felt the cold steel of the handcuffs on my wrists.

"You've got the wrong man!" I exclaimed hotly. "Arrest the other fellow; he's the fellow you want."

"I'm a telephone inspector," the burglar explained immediately, displaying my employee's badge.

I tried in vain to convince the police that they were being fooled, but my explanation was received with contempt.

They were sufficiently impressed, however, to insist upon taking the bogus inspector to the station-house along with me.

I was roughly handled while being led out, but I wisely controlled my desire to resent this.

Outside, the place swarmed with police. Two patrol-wagons stood at the curb and a small crowd of the curious had collected.

A lieutenant was in charge of the squad, and when those surrounding the house were called in, a guard was detailed to stay while the rest prepared to return in the wagons.

The burglar and I were separated, he getting into one patrol-wagon, while I was roughly pushed into the other.

As I took my seat there, a man broke through the crowd and rushed up to the step at the rear.

"What's the matter, Jim?" he yelled.

I recognized Nichols's voice.

He turned to the officers and exclaimed: "You've got the wrong man there! You don't—"

"Git out o' this!" a burly policeman growled, raising his club threateningly. "Do yez want to go wid him?"

"Take him, too, in the other wagon," the lieutenant ordered.

I saw and heard no more of poor Nichols then, for the officers clambered in, and with a startling clang of the gong, the wagon rattled off down the street.

I was not familiar with police methods, but I felt that I had not only gotten deeply into a mess of trouble, but that I had also dragged Nichols into it.

On the way to the station-house I heard the officers speak about my arrest as clearing up a number of robberies in the fashionable residential section, and I knew that they would try to fasten innumerable unexplained crimes on me.

I was indeed in sorry plight.

The other wagon had already reached the police-station when our wagon arrived, but Nichols was nowhere to be seen.

The burglar was standing on one side of the high desk with several officers near by. The sergeant was prepared to take my pedigree when the captain emerged from his private office and at once commanded him to stop.

I looked up in surprise, to find Nichols with the captain. The expression on his face told the whole story.

Fortunately the assistant manager knew the captain and was able to get an immediate hearing.

There was nothing for me to explain except a few details of my experience in the house with the burglar.

In the face of the evidence the latter confessed, and the police subsequently connected him with other robberies.

I was indeed glad to leave the station-house a free man. As Nichols boarded a trolley with me he asked the conductor for a transfer, but I paid little heed to this, for my thoughts were on other things.

"Nichols," I asked, after a while, "who was at the other end of the line when my signal flashed for help?"

"Who but Miss Nelson could read it?" he replied.

"I'll go back to the office with you," I said, rather slowly. "Miss Nelson may want to hear the finish of this thing, and I'd like to tell her all about it."

We had reached a busy transfer point and Nichols thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out the transfer.

"Jim," he said, "Miss Nelson does want to hear about it, but the suspense upset her nerves so much that I sent her home. It's a little late, but you'll be on time. She'll be waiting for you. This is where you change cars—take the Prospect line! Good-night!"

And he thrust the transfer into my hand as I hurried out.

HIS BROTHER'S ECLIPSE.

BY LEE BERTRAND.

Bob Hillias Pleads in Vain, and Then Refuses To Talk, Which Puts Him in Worse Case Than Ever.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESULT OF THE OPERATION.

IT was arranged that the operation upon Morton Hillias should be performed the following day. Bob was anxious to have the ordeal over as soon as possible. That morning, just as he was getting ready to conduct his brother to the private hospital, an automobile drew up outside Mrs. Weller's boarding-house, and a young woman alighted and ran up the front stoop.

"Is Mr. Bob Hillias at home?" she inquired breathlessly of the servant.

At the sound of that voice Bob bounded down the stairs two steps at a time.

"Katherine!" he cried in a tone of mingled surprise, alarm, and joy. "So you have come back?"

He made an impulsive move, as though about to embrace her, but suddenly checked himself, and did not even take the hand she extended toward him.

The girl winced at this, and her lower lip quivered.

"Yes, I have come back, Bob," she answered. "I suppose you are very angry with me. You must despise me thoroughly for running away in such a cowardly fashion."

"On the contrary," he answered coldly, "I think you did perfectly right in going away, Katherine. I am very sorry you have returned. You have made a big mistake. I am afraid the consequences will be most disastrous."

"I don't care about the consequences to me," cried the girl passionately. "I have come back to save you, Bob. I have come back to tell the truth about what happened up in that studio that terrible night. My story is bound to clear you."

"You mean that you are going to—to confess?" gasped Bob.

"Confess?" She looked at him with pained surprise. "Good Heavens, Bob, do you think I have anything to confess? Do you believe I shot your brother?"

"Yes," he groaned, "I do believe that, Katherine. God help me, I can't help believing it!"

Tears came to the girl's eyes.

"Oh, Bob," she murmured sadly, "this is awful! Of all persons in the world I thought I could rely upon your faith in me."

He looked searchingly into her eyes.

"Do you mean to say you are innocent?" he cried hoarsely. "Can you look straight at me, Katherine, and swear that you did not shoot my brother?"

Katherine met his gaze steadily.

"I am innocent," she said. "I swear it, Bob."

He uttered an exclamation of joy, and took her in his arms.

"I believe you," he cried. "Dear little girl, I know you are telling me the truth, and you have made me the happiest man in the world.

"Forgive me, Katherine, for having doubted you," he went on contritely. "I couldn't help it. I tried hard to have faith in you, but everything seemed to point to your guilt, and finally, when I found that you had run away, I lost my last shred of hope."

"It was very wrong and very foolish of

me to run away," she admitted, "but I couldn't help it, Bob. Father pleaded so hard. He reminded me that he was an old man, and that his health was not good, and that if I got mixed up in this terrible scandal it would kill him. He shed tears, Bob, and I can't remember when I have ever seen dad cry before.

"I was so affected that I meekly consented to go aboard the yacht. Father assured me that everything would be all right with you—that he would spend his last dollar to prevent you from being convicted—and that influenced me a whole lot, Bob. I have always had confidence in father's power to carry out whatever he undertakes, and I felt sure that he would be able to get you off, even without my help.

"But after we had been out at sea a couple of days I began to realize how base I was to run off and desert you in that shameful manner, and I insisted upon father giving orders that we return to New York. He wouldn't hear of it at first; but finally, when I threatened to jump overboard, he let me have my way—and here I am. Won't you forgive me, Bob?"

"Of course I'll forgive you, dear. There is nothing for me to forgive, in fact. The apologies are all on my side, Katherine, for having been such a brute as to believe you guilty of shooting my brother.

"Since you did not shoot him, however," he went on, with a troubled air, "who could have done it? Do you think, girlie, it is possible that your father—"

"My father had nothing to do with it," she broke in quickly. "He has sworn to me that he was not in any way responsible for the attack on your brother; and I believe him.

"Dad may have his faults, Bob, but he is not a murderer or a would-be assassin." Her blue eyes flashed indignantly. "He was very much upset by that horrible article in the *Champion* insinuating that he sought your brother's life because of those cartoons. We got the morning papers before we went aboard the yacht, and when father read that I thought he would go crazy, he was so angry.

"It was then he swore to me that he had nothing whatever to do with the attack on your brother, and that he knew absolutely nothing about the sending of that anonymous letter threatening your brother with death unless those cartoons stopped instantly.

"I have since found out about that letter, Bob. I know now who sent it."

"You do?" cried Bob eagerly. "Who was it, Katherine?"

"Hortense, my French maid. She confessed to me while we were on the yacht. She is very devoted to me, and when she learned that my engagement to you was going to be broken because of those cartoons she believed she could help us by sending that foolish letter to your brother. She wrote it on my typewriter.

"It was very silly of her, of course, but her intentions were good. She never meant to carry out that ridiculous threat—"

"Are you sure of that?" exclaimed Bob excitedly. "By Jove, I wonder if that isn't the solution of the mystery! Don't you think, Katherine, it's possible that that foolish girl, in her zeal to serve you, went a step further than the sending of that letter? Don't you think that she may have gone up to Morton's rooms that night and shot him?"

"No. I am positive she did not," declared Katherine. "Hortense is too tenderhearted to hurt even a fly."

"Well," said Bob, "I hope to learn within a couple of hours who did shoot poor Morton. They are going to operate on him to restore him to his normal senses—he's been out of his head, you know, since that night—and somehow I feel confident that the operation will be a success."

"God grant that it will be!" said Katherine fervently.

"Amen," responded Bob, and added, with a shamed laugh: "Do you know, dear, that until now I've actually been awaiting the outcome of that operation with dread—dread that it would be successful, and that Morton, coming to his senses, would accuse you?

"I can't tell you the agonies I have suffered since yesterday, when the doctor told me there was a chance of restoring my brother's mind." He shuddered at the recollection.

"You poor boy!" murmured Katherine sympathetically.

Three hours later Dr. Leopold Schweiger stepped softly into the little anteroom at the hospital where sat Bob and Katherine anxiously waiting.

"It is all over," said the surgeon, with a smile. "You can come in now and see the patient. I congratulate you. The operation has been a complete success."

They followed him, and as they approached the cot on which Morton Hillias lay stretched, the cartoonist turned his eyes toward them, and a smile illumined his white face.

"Hallo, Bob, old fellow," he said, putting out his hand toward his brother, "I am glad to see you. And I am glad to see you, too, Miss Gedney," he went on, with a pleasant smile for Katherine. "It is very good of you to come here. Let me take this opportunity to express my regret that your visit to my studio the other evening should have terminated so unpleasantly.

"I trust the next time you are good enough to honor me with a visit—and I hope you will surely come up with Bob again—there won't be any more such accidents to mar the occasion."

"Accidents!" exclaimed Bob. "Do you mean to say, Morton, that that shooting was accidental?"

"Why, of course it was! You don't think for a minute that he'd have shot me on purpose, do you? Poor fellow, it must have given him an awful scare when that gun went off accidentally and knocked me senseless."

"Of whom are you talking?" gasped Bob.

"Beverly Robinson, of course," replied the cartoonist, and, noting the look of astonishment that came to his brother's face, he exclaimed: "Good Heavens, Bob, you don't mean to say that you didn't know that it was Robinson who shot me?"

"I never even suspected it," declared his brother, a dazed look on his face.

"Well, that's strange. I don't see why he should have kept it a secret. It was plainly an accident. He was handling Miss Gedney's cute little revolver, and it went off suddenly and hit me."

"Katherine's revolver," gasped Bob in bewilderment. "I don't understand this thing at all. How on earth did that fellow come to have possession of Katherine's revolver?"

"That's easily explained," replied the cartoonist. "When Miss Gedney left the studio she forgot to take her hand-bag with her. Beverly accidentally knocked it from the table, and when it struck the floor it flew open and the revolver fell out. Beverly picked up the weapon and held it up to me, calling my attention to it. Then there was a flash, and after that I went down and out."

"Did Robinson come in right after Katherine left the studio?" inquired Bob.

"No; he was there all the time," answered Morton. "He was hiding in the kitchen while you folks were up there."

"Why was he hiding?" demanded Bob indignantly.

"Well, I'll be candid with you, brother. When you telephoned that you were coming up to my place and were going to bring somebody with you, and you wouldn't tell me over the phone who your companion was, I suspected that you were bringing old Richard Gedney himself to see me, to try to persuade me to cut out those cartoons.

"Beverly dropped in a few minutes after you telephoned, and I told him I expected you, and that you were probably bringing old Gedney along.

"He suggested that it would be a good idea for me to have a witness throughout the interview, so he proposed that he hide in the kitchen, where he could overhear everything without being seen, and I consented to the plan."

"And to think that that man actually had the audacity to accuse me of firing that shot!" exclaimed Katherine indignantly.

"The scoundrel!" muttered Bob savagely. "I took a dislike to him the very first time I met him; but, although I felt instinctively that he was not on the level, I never suspected that he was fiend enough to try to fasten a heinous crime upon a gentle young girl whom he knew to be innocent. Oh, wait until I get a chance to lay my hands on him."

He clenched his fists menacingly, and there was a look in his eyes which boded ill for Mr. Beverly Robinson.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EXTRAORDINARY LETTER.

Bob Hillias never did get a chance to square accounts with the dramatic critic of the *Champion*.

That disappointed young man, as soon as he learned that the operation upon Morton Hillias was a success, suddenly left town, without even going through the formality of resigning his position on the *Champion*.

He had the grace, however, to pen a letter of explanation and apology to Morton Hillias, which the cartoonist received

a day after his departure. This extraordinary communication ran as follows:

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I still venture to call you friend, although I have no doubt that by the time this reaches you, you will have formed such an unfavorable opinion of me that my use of that word will arouse your indignation and scorn.

In view of what I have done and of that which I tried to do, I cannot blame you and all other right-thinking men for regarding me with loathing and contempt.

And yet, to be candid, my only great regret, at this time, is that I did not succeed in my desperate undertaking.

Yes, my dear Morton, much as I care for you—and I assure you that I have more esteem and regard for you than for any other person in the world—I was actually glad that that bullet hit you—because it gave me an opportunity to get revenge on Richard Gedney.

That scoundrel ruined my poor father and drove him to suicide, and my desire to get revenge on him is so strong as to transcend all other considerations, including my friendship for you.

I do not want you to think, from this statement, that I fired that shot at you deliberately.

I swear that the discharge of that revolver was an accident. It went off suddenly in my hands while I was examining it and, when you fell senseless to the floor, my first sensation was one of horror and grief.

I had no thought of revenging myself on Gedney then. That idea came afterward—almost immediately afterward. It was the sudden return of Gedney's daughter to the room which put the thought into my head and prompted my subsequent actions.

When the bullet entered your head and you fell instantly and lay as one dead, I bent anxiously over you and believed indeed that life had departed.

Mad with despair and horror, I rushed into the kitchen to get water, hoping against hope that there might still be a spark of life left.

While I was in there, Gedney's daughter returned to the studio to get her hand-bag which she had forgotten.

It was then the idea came to me like a flash that here was my chance to strike at that scoundrel Gedney and avenge my poor father.

It occurred to me that the girl, upon discovering you lying there dead or dying, would give the alarm. People would come to the scene and would find her there—all alone in that room with you. The revolver from which the shot had been fired would be discovered, and it would soon be learned that it belonged to Gedney's daughter.

I figured out that naturally she would be accused of shooting you. Her protestations and denials would be of no avail. The fact that she and her father resented those cartoons so strongly would furnish the motive for her supposed crime.

She would be tried and found guilty—I was sure of it. If you died, she would be sentenced to the electric-chair. If you lived, she would be sent to prison. Old Gedney's heart would be broken in either case. My poor father would be amply avenged.

When these thoughts came to me, I softly lifted the kitchen window and fled from the scene by means of the fire-escape, leaving that girl up there to call for help, and thereby bring about her own ruin.

Alas, things did not turn out at all as I had expected. Everything went wrong—from my standpoint.

The girl did not give the alarm. She thought of her own danger and fled in panic—got away without anybody seeing her or suspecting that she had been there.

Then your fool brother came to the studio and was arrested and charged with shooting you.

He could have cleared himself by telling the truth; but he would not do this—confound him. He preferred to keep silent and run the risk of being declared guilty rather than expose Gedney's daughter to danger.

When I found out how things were going, I was beside myself with disappointment and rage; but I did not quite give up hope.

I continued to do everything in my power to fasten that crime on Gedney's daughter and, at last, to my great joy, it began to look as if I was going to succeed.

Then came that German surgeon with the announcement that you could be restored to your senses by an operation, and when I learned that that operation had been successful, I knew the game was up.

I humbly apologize to you, my dear friend, for what I did, and I want you to believe that I shall always lament the loss of your friendship; but at the same time, I repeat, in closing, that my one great regret is that I did not succeed in having Gedney's daughter sent to prison and thereby breaking the heart of that old scoundrel.

Take into consideration the fact that since the day my poor father died by his own hand, the desire to wreak vengeance upon his enemy has been growing stronger and stronger within me all the time, and try to be as lenient as you can in passing judgment upon,

Your miserable friend,

BEVERLY ROBINSON.

Morton Hillias handed this letter to Bob and Katherine when they came to visit him at the hospital.

"What a terrible fellow he is!" exclaimed Katherine with a shudder, after she had read it. "It makes my blood run cold to think he is so vengeful toward my father.

"Dad swears that he did not do anything to his father that was not absolutely legitimate and in accordance with the ethics of modern business. He admits that he ruined the poor man in a business conflict; but he says that he played fair, and that it was not his fault that poor Mr. Robinson was driven to the wall and committed suicide. It distresses me terribly to think that his son should feel so bitter toward us."

"Poor Beverly!" said Morton Hillias sadly. "It is only charitable for us to assume that he is not quite right in his head. Brooding over his father's sad fate has turned his brain. Terrible as is the text of that letter, it seems to me that there is a note of pathos in it. Let us be as lenient with him as possible. Please be good enough, Bob, to burn that letter in that gas-jet over there."

When this was done Morton heaved a sigh of relief.

"And now, to change the subject to a more pleasant one," he went on, "when are you folks going to get married?

"I hope you intend to make Katherine your wife, brother, just as soon as I can get out of this hospital, and it will please me very much to serve in the capacity of your best man.

"Of course, there is no obstacle to your marriage now. You need not be afraid that those troublesome cartoons will continue. I do not intend to draw another one of them. You poor children have suffered enough as it is."

THE END.

After the Road Forked.

BY GARRET SMITH.

The Thrilling Discovery Made by a Carriage Traveler When a Flash of Lightning Showed Him Where He Really Was.

STAND at a fork in an unknown road with absolutely nothing to guide you. Blindly choose one of the paths ahead and follow it. Just as surely as you do so, you will be overwhelmed by a moral certainty that you have made the wrong turn. It's a pleasant feeling, isn't it?

Now, let the highway in question lead through a forest at nightfall, and your personal safety depend on a lucky selection, and you have a dilemma with horns on it that would make the Beast of the Revelations look like a Rocky Mountain goat.

I struck one of those combinations last summer when I was canvassing the small towns in the Red Mountain district for the General Hardware Company. I let my confounded moral sense of rightness control me then, and it got me into a mess that they'll still be talking about up there twenty years from now.

The misguided idiot in Kendalville who told me that a direct road led up the valley to Hulburton, ten miles away, neglected to mention the fork which I struck about half-way to my destination.

The two paths looked as much alike as a pair of monkey-wrenches. They were just a couple of vague wagon-tracks, turning on either hand at exactly equal angles to the direction from which I came, and disappearing in forests of equal density and equally devoid both of sign-posts and human beings.

Night was at hand. To go back for more directions meant a drive through a black woodland. In it, I understood, were catamounts, wolves, and such. Excuse me! I must either return to Kendalville for the night, which meant spoiling my schedule, or hustle on into Hulburton before it became absolutely dark.

I decided to go on. Which way?

Well, I looked at the two roadways helplessly for a moment, then selected the left-hand one. My only reason was that a superstitious man would probably have chosen the right hand.

But I hadn't driven a dozen yards down that left-hand road before I stopped. Something seemed to be shouting in my ears that I was on the wrong track. I

simply couldn't go on. It made me mad to think I was yielding to a superstition, but there was a gloomy suggestiveness about that dark, unfamiliar trail that belied my sober senses.

So I went back and tried the right-hand road, only to be tortured again with an equal fear that I had simply been lured off the true path by a particularly clever dodge of the Evil One.

But this time I was firm with myself. I cracked my whip over the back of the livery bucephalus, and started up the right-hand thoroughfare at a lively clip.

No, sir. Darkness didn't steal over us. Not that night. It was suddenly present, that's all, just like blowing out the light.

The last glimpse I got of the sky-line showed me a thunder-cloud hustling the sunset out of the way as though it had been suddenly called off that route for the rest of the season. There was a flash of lightning and some preliminary thunder. I was in for a storm.

I lashed the horse into a gallop. By now my destination could hardly be far. I couldn't see my own hands, but trusted that the instinct of the horse could keep us in the road.

On we scudded for a mile or more. Then the storm broke. It was with a white blaze of lightning and a crash of thunder had drove my beast into a mad panic. He redoubled his speed, and I expected momentarily to be dashed against one of the great tree-trunks that lined the path.

Then the booming echoes of thunder were smothered in the roar of a wind that seemed to spring suddenly out of a dead calm and blow as if it would rip the very foundations out from under the earth. It was accompanied by the worst downpour of rain I ever experienced. The lightning played around fast and furiously.

I forgot wolves and catamounts forthwith. Here were two certain dangers. In such a tempest a big limb might be blown on me at any moment. Moreover, it is a notoriously dangerous thing to be under trees in an electric storm.

I did some praying then, I want to tell you. My chief request was that Hulburton be allowed to loom up immediately before me.

But there came no such answer to my supplications for another mile or more. I was thoroughly chilled by my soaking. The storm showed no sign of coming to an end.

My steed had tired himself out and slowed down to a jog-trot. I noticed as we progressed an increasing unevenness in the motion of the wagon. The way was getting rougher. With the next flash of lightning I caught a glimpse of the road, and noted to my horror that it had dwindled to a mere grassy trail.

I had taken the wrong turn for certain!

To go back meant a ten-mile drive or more through all the peril of the storm, with a chance of getting lost in some other by-path in the darkness. To go on would lead nowhere.

Retreat seemed the only recourse, and I got out of the wagon to find a favorable place for turning. Scarcely a dozen steps ahead my foot hit something that made me stop and investigate.

It was a railroad!

A lightning-flash at that instant gave a glimpse of shining rails. I knew at once that this was a single-tracked division of the M. and W., the only railroad through the Red Mountains.

At the same moment came an inspiration. The stations on this line were not far apart, and I could not be far from one of them. Probably Hulburton, for which I was bound, was a mile or two to my left along this very railroad.

Now I could swing my rig around on to the track and lead my old horse into the next town to safety. The wagon could bump along on the ties. This promised the quickest outlet to safety.

Well, the horse didn't take very kindly to the notion, and when I got him started at last he stumbled a good deal. But I managed somehow to get my caravan settled down to a steady pace of about three miles an hour, I walking ahead and leading the animal. The storm began to subside a little, and I breathed easily once more.

There was not much chance of a late evening train on that division, I thought. If one did come, I could see it in time to get out of the way.

Still, as I went on, my horse showed increasing signs of dissatisfaction with his uncertain footing. Several times he hinted at balking. In case a train did appear suddenly and the brute should decide to stay right there, we'd be in a pretty fix.

I could undoubtedly get out of the way myself, but I didn't like the idea of losing

the outfit. Moreover, a heavy horse and wagon squarely in the middle of a track might easily wreck a train.

While I was musing on these possibilities my foot suddenly slipped between the ties, and I fell through to my knee. Fortunately I stopped promptly enough to avoid wrenching my leg.

I felt about me and soon discovered, to my disgust, that we had come upon a trestle. There was the single track with a narrow footpath beside it consisting of a single plank, and that was all. If my horse took a notion to bolt either way for a few feet, we would be dumped into a ditch, no knowing how deep.

Fortunate for me that the old horse was pretty well tired out and quite docile.

This was probably one of the numerous little bridges with which mountain railroads abound, I thought, and if I could get my horse on the footpath all right I could cross in safety. Still I sincerely hoped there were not many of those structures on the way to Hulburton.

The beast made a good deal of a mess of getting over to the path, and came mighty near stumbling right off the bridge, but I finally got him where he could walk all right, and pried the wagon over so the wheels on one side would run between the rails and the others on the footpath.

So we started slowly along again, I walking ahead and leading my reluctant horse. Each step I took I expected to feel cinders again at the other end of the bridge.

But we kept on and on and no end appeared. I soon came to the conclusion that no bridge could last that long, and stopped to investigate again. Yes, there was still vacancy between the ties. I felt over the guard-rail with one leg as far as I could stretch it. Vacancy there.

Could it be possible that this was a long trestle over a bit of swampy land? The thought was disconcerting. It might be a pretty miry place to jump out into if a train should appear.

Now the storm, which had granted a temporary lull, started in again with redoubled fury. The wind suddenly howled around us with such increased force that I actually feared we might be blown off that mysterious trestle.

I stopped and braced myself against the horse for protection. Then fell another deluge of rain.

Suddenly as I cowered there came another of those flashes of lightning, first blinding, then illuminating.

I shall never forget the panorama it seared into my brain.

I and my little outfit hung there alone in the warring heavens hundreds of feet from the earth. Stretched out far below me I saw in that brief vision a broad valley and a running stream. In either direction from me extended that narrow, fragile-looking track to the hills that seemed a measureless distance away.

For a full minute I stood stunned and bewildered. Then the truth dawned.

I had heard of the great Minturn River bridge. One of the highest and longest railroad bridges in the world. I remembered being told it was somewhere in this region, but hadn't been interested enough then to note just where.

Now I knew. It was immediately under my quaking person!

To be exact, Minturn River bridge is three-quarters of a mile long and stands three hundred and seventy-seven feet above the surface of the stream. I judged from my brief glimpse that I was now squarely in the middle of it.

At length I pulled myself together partially and prepared to go on. I wanted to get down and crawl on my hands and knees. My limbs were nearly paralyzed with the thought of that gulf yawning below me in the darkness.

What made matters worse was the terror of my horse. He, too, had taken in the situation in that lightning-flash. I couldn't budge him. He stood there, feet spread as far as possible, and trembling like an aspen, but immovable as Gibraltar.

Still the rain poured down and the wind swept round me, and the vivid lightning seemed to play unceasingly along the very structure under my feet.

There I stood suspended like Mohammed's coffin between earth and heaven. I struggled with that confounded horse and struggled in vain. Not an inch would he budge.

Frantically I kept peering through the storm — now ahead, now behind, looking for signs of an approaching train. The rumble of one would be drowned by the storm. No clanging bell or shrieking whistle could be heard above it. I must trust to seeing the headlight of the locomotive.

But what if I did see it? No signal I

could make would be seen or heard by the engineer. Even if he came upon me at an interval when the lightning was playing, with the deluge of rain sweeping against his cab he would not see far through the blurred glass, and on the rails, slippery with rain, would not be able to stop in time to avoid a collision, even at the reduced speed made on a bridge.

Moreover, there was no escape for me. I could not leap from the track and leave the rig if necessary. To do so meant a jump of nearly four hundred feet down. There were probably little platforms at intervals provided for track-workers to stand on while a train was passing, but of course I could not find them now.

Then another thought came to my fear-stimulated brain. A train going at full speed usually hurls a small object like a horse and buggy away from it when it strikes, and passes on uninjured. But let it hit that same object when running at reduced speed, as it would be on this bridge, and it is likely to roll on to it and be itself thrown from the track.

Should a train come along at that inopportune moment, or, for that matter, any time during the next twenty-four hours, judging from the disposition of my horse, I would not only meet my doom, but would send the whole outfit to the bottom of the gorge.

Just at that moment, as if to fulfil my worst fears and verify my pessimistic theories, I saw, blurred through the rain, the lights of a row of passenger-coaches out on the hills, that seemed to swing around a curve, then line up behind the dull glow of an engine's headlight.

Even as I watched that ominous growing eye with a horrible fascination, I began to feel the bridge vibrate under me. Destruction was close at hand.

I thought of a dozen things all in an instant. My first mad impulse was to jump, but I controlled that as quickly as it came. Could I lie down on the footpath and trust that the train would pass without hitting me? But if there should be a wreck I would be swept off the bridge with it.

Be it said to my credit, I thought, too, of the death I was to bring to that train-load of passengers. I made a frantic effort to drive the old horse, wagon and all, from the bridge. As well have tried to shake one of those mountains.

Then I gave it all up, and, without realizing just what I did, started to run back along the footpath in a direction opposite to the approaching train.

Now the bridge was swaying as trestles do under the impact of a moving train.

Suppose the engine should hit the rig and not be wrecked? In the next instant it would be upon me.

Without any more thought or hesitation I grabbed the guard-rail and piled over it with a vague idea that I would climb down the outside as far as possible out of reach of the oncoming juggernaut.

My foot caught on something that gave way with my weight, and both feet flew out into nothingness. I hung to the rail with my hands and frantically flung my legs about till I struck something that I could fasten them on. And there I clutched, too weak for other motion.

It had all taken place in an instant. I shut my eyes, expecting a momentary crash.

For a second I hung there and nothing had happened. Then I realized that the bridge had ceased trembling. The train had stopped. With a frantic effort I scrambled back over the rail.

Again I stood on the footpath. I rubbed my eyes in amazement. All along the bridge rail at regular intervals a light gleamed through the rain. I could see the dull outline of my rig near one of them. Off in the distance, still apparently near the end of the bridge, was the headlight of the locomotive.

I had now recovered my presence of mind and started on a run for the train. Whatever the cause of the appearance of these miraculous lights and of the stopping of the train, I must get to it and give an alarm before it went on again.

Half-way there I bumped into a man in a trainman's uniform, carrying a lighted lantern.

"Who are you?" he demanded, flashing the lantern in my face. "Is there a break in the bridge? Where is it?"

"I don't know anything about a break," I said, "but don't let your train come on. There's a horse and buggy out there."

The fellow looked at me keenly. He evidently thought I was either drunk or crazy. Without a word I led him back to my noble steed, who still stood a monument of trembling adamant. Then I told him briefly what had happened.

"So you knew about the signals and

cut one of the wires?" commented the trainman when I had finished.

"What signals?" I asked. "Do you mean these lights along the bridge?"

"Yes. A set of wires are strung across so that one at least will be broken if anything happens to the structure. That breaks a circuit and switches on a set of lights and signals as a warning that the bridge is unsafe."

Then I guessed what had happened.

"Let me show you where I climbed over the rail," I said.

We hunted back with his lantern till we found on the outside of the guard-rail one of the signal-wires broken by the toe of my shoe. That is what gave way and nearly threw me into the gorge when I let myself down. I had unwittingly touched off a patent electric signal just at the right moment.

Well, the train backed off the bridge, and it took the combined efforts of the entire train-crew an entire hour to get my balky horse safely back on solid land.

But I got into Hulburton that night, after all. And I had a good story to tell while I was getting dried out, even if the natives wouldn't believe it till they went out and saw for themselves the print of my horse's hoofs on the footpath of the Minturn River bridge.

A TENDERFOOT'S STAND.

BY GEORGE B. WALKER.

MacGregor Makes a Good Start, but Neglects To Pay Sufficient Attention to the "Eternal Vigilance" Slogan.

'NO, sir; not for twice that amount." The young Easterner who had that afternoon stepped off the train on to the blistered platform at Plano, coolly eyed the reputed bad man of the town.

After a wild ride from the station in the hotel bus, young MacGregor began to realize that he had not eaten since the previous morning, and it was with this object in view that he found himself in Snap Barney's saloon and grill.

When he entered the door conversation ceased abruptly. Not only was he a stranger, but an Easterner, and the clothes he was wearing, while perfectly correct in New York or Boston, were, to say the least, an oddity in a place like Snap's.

Big Jim McVeagh jumped up with alacrity, scenting a possible purchaser of anything phoney that he—Jim—had to sell.

"What's yours, stranger?" he asked, lounging to the bar.

"Nothing, thank you," MacGregor answered.

"Wal, have a smoke on me, then," Jim insisted, bent on quieting the snickers that were going around the room.

"No thanks, I don't smoke," the other replied.

Jim scowled ferociously, at the same time taking four twenty-dollar gold pieces from his pocket and throwing them down on the bar viciously.

"Wal, young feller," he growled, "you've got the choice of doin' one of two things. You'll either take that drink with me and earn that hundred, or you'll take the biggest lickin' that you ever had in your life. It's my private opinion that you'll choose the drink," he added sneeringly.

It was at this moment the young fellow had uttered the words already set down.

"And," he continued, "I might as well tell you that while I am adverse to fighting, I can take good care of myself."

Big Jim fell back a step in surprise. Never before had any one stood up in front of him without quailing, and here was this young whipper-snapper, calmly announcing that he could take care of himself. Throwing off his coat and vest, Jim started for him with the firm intention of administering the most severe thrashing on record.

In action he was a terrible thing to behold. Imagine one hundred and eighty pounds of fighting muscle, perfectly balanced, and topped with a cool figuring brain. Big Jim was all of that and more.

MacGregor was waiting for him, and as he rushed in with lowered head, neatly sidestepped and sent in a beautiful uppercut, following with two short-arm body blows.

Big Jim straightened up with a roar of pain and rage, bleeding profusely from the mouth and nose. Nothing daunted, he rushed again, to meet with the same treatment, but with more steam behind the blows. This only served to madden him, and drawing back once more, he poured out a stream of abuse, calling on his opponent to come on in and mix it.

An instant later he went to the floor under a smother of hits, and lay still.

MacGregor stood over him with an unholy joy in his heart, then turning to the crowd in the room he said:

"I came here to get something to eat. Where can I get it?"

Snap came forward obligingly and pointed toward the rear of the room.

"Right back thar, partner," he directed. "An' it's on the house for doin' such a good job as you jest done," he added.

MacGregor went to the counter as directed and eat a hearty meal. While doing so he had a chance to map out his plan of campaign.

"Oh, well," he thoughtlessly decided, "as dad used to say, when in Rome do as the Romans; I guess I'll be a Roman."

And he found that to be an easy matter, for, coupled with the fact that he had pulled down the town bully, he had money, and friends were easy to make under such circumstances.

On a Tuesday morning, some three weeks later, he was sitting by the stove at Snap's, reading a bundle of home papers when his eyes opened widely. Under scare-head lettering his name appeared, and on running the article through he found it to be a complete and exhaustive description of his fight with Jim MacVeagh.

"Gosh! Won't the gove'nor be hot when he reads that? Guess I'll go up to the post-office and see if I've got any mail."

He did so, and received an explicit notice from his father to this effect:

New York.

DEAR THEODORE:

As you know, I sent you West to avoid notoriety. This morning I opened the paper to find a heading similar to this: "Son of the Rich Administers Severe Trouncing," etc.

From now on you may consider yourself in absolute control of your future. Your allowance will not continue. However, you still have the ten thousand dollars your grandfather left you, and much as I should like, I cannot prevent your drawing upon it.

Hoping that you will realize the gravity of your situation, and advising you to let your legacy alone, I am

Your affectionate father,

J. S. MACGREGOR.

P. S. Make good for your mother's sake.

That night Ted had a heavy attack of the blues. His roommate and partner, Hughie Evers, noticed it, and slapping him on the back inquired the trouble.

Ted handed him the letter.

Evers read it, and then turned to the homesick boy.

"Why, buck up, partner," he said. "You ain't got no cause to be feelin' bad. This here letter says as how you've got a nice little stake. Here in this country there's all kinds of chances to make money. You ain't in half as bad as you might be."

"Is that straight?"

"You bet it is."

"Well, then," Todd decided, "all I want is a chance."

As if in answer, a knock came at the door.

II.

BIG JIM MCVEAGH stepped into the room.

"Howd'y, boys," he began.

"How'dy, Jim," and Evers nodded toward a chair.

"What can we to for you, Jim?" MacGregor inquired.

"Wal, you see," and Jim plunged right into his subject, "ever since you give me that beatin' up at Snap's, Ted, I've been gettin' more an' more tired of this country, an' to-day I got a letter from my ol' mammy back in Arkansas that she was dyin' an' wanted to see me before she went. And, well, I jest come over to give you fellers a chance at a good buy. I want to sell my ranch on the edge of town, and I want to sell it quick, so that I can leave here on Saturday at the latest. Do you want it?"

Young MacGregor straightened up. Here was big Jim, the owner of the best ranch in the irrigation project, trying to sell it, and to him, too. Opportunity was surely knocking at his door, and he asked quickly:

"What do you want for it, Jim?"

"Wal, I'm in a hurry, and would be willin' to take twelve thousand, although it's worth twice that."

"How many acres are there?" Ted inquired.

. "Jest an even eight thousand. I ain't goin' to say anythin' about the ground, but let it talk for itself."

"I'll give you ten thousand dollars, *cash*," MacGregor offered.

"Cash," Jim muttered to himself, then turning, put out his hand.

"I'll take you up," he said.

The two men shook hands, and Jim left them.

Evers jumped up.

"Gee, you're a lucky guy, Ted. Why, that ground will be worth ten times that in a couple of years, when they run the railroad over to Beartrap," and he danced around the room in his gladness. "Why, right now, boy, that land is worth three times the amount. Say, but you're some lucky. Why, here's your chance, now—"

MacGregor stopped him.

"Hughie, didn't you and I take oath that we were inseparable partners about a week ago? Now you're a half owner in this deal."

"But, Ted, you're puttin' up all the money," the other objected.

"Sure I am," Ted rejoined, "but, Hughie, you've simply got to stand by me now, for wouldn't I make a peach of a mess if I tried to farm that place by myself. Why, I don't know a plow from a cultivator."

"Wal, that's all right too, but—"

"Now, Hughie, you've got to say yes," Ted declared.

Evers hesitated an instant, then turning, grasped the waiting hand.

"I'm with you, boy; you can bank on that."

III.

BIG JIM smiled and swore softly to himself when he left the two men.

"Now," he mused complacently," it sure does pay to take your time in a matter of this kind. Why, it's as easy as fallin' off a log. I've got them fellers to thinkin' I don't bear them any hard feelin's, an' they're fallin' just the way I want 'em to. Guess I'll run over to Classon and close with headquarters for that bunch of land on the south of town. Those two guys will never think to read over the deed till I'm well clear of here," and he laughed gleefully.

That night he saddled his pet bronco and set out on a sixty-mile ride to Classon, the county seat. Arriving the following afternoon he went to the proper authorities and purchased eight thousand acres of worthless land lying on the southern edge of town. After concluding this business he went around his usual haunts and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

On the following Saturday morning Ted received his money from the East, and he and Evers went out in search of Big Jim. He was not to be found. They visited all the saloons and gambling houses, but to no purpose.

"Oh, well," Evers remarked, "he probably got a better price for it and threw us down, so let's go out to the station and say good-by to him, anyway."

"You bet," Ted acquiesced. "He may have been kept away for some good reason, and not had the chance to communicate with us. Come on. I'm pretty sure he isn't going to throw us down."

The two men walked out to the station and, though it lacked half an hour of train-time, stood anxiously scanning the road leading to it.

Finally the train was made up, and Sandy Thorne tooted the whistle to hurry any late arrivals.

As if in answer to the signal, a big, gray automobile swung into view, and came racing along with a continuous *honking*.

"That's Jim!" young MacGregor shouted excitedly.

And when the motor an instant later ran up to the platform big Jim leaped out with a "Come on!" to the two men with him and boarded the now moving train.

Ted and Evers followed him into the day-coach.

"By gosh, we just made it, didn't we?" he asked, catching sight of MacGregor. "Have you got the money with you?" he added.

Ted, with a triumphant look at Hughie, took the roll from his pocket.

"Here it is, Jim, the whole ten thousand in cold cash."

"Good, and I've got the deed, all but the signin' of it. I'm a notary public though, an' Evers can be one witness, an' I'll get the conductor for the other."

After this was done Jim turned to them again.

"I'm sure sorry to have kept you fellers in suspense, but I was out to the Black Hat mining district, gettin' rid of my claims out there, an' on the way back that derned auto broke down and come pretty near makin' me miss connections at this end. Lucky

you fellers remembered when I said I must leave plans."

Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him.

"Anyhow, you ain't bein' put out so awful bad because you can catch the up-train when we pass on the switch, instead of havin' to go all the way to the junction."

"George, you're right, Jim, and I guess that's what we'll do. Eh, Ted?"

"Yep, and there she whistles now. Well, so-long, Jim, and good luck to you."

"So-long," Jim returned, and then under his breath said with a peculiar look on his face: "Too easy—too easy."

Both men swung off the down-train as it passed the switch where the other was waiting for it. Waving a farewell to Jim, who was hanging out of the window, watching them, they crossed to the other train and, nodding to the engineer and conductor, climbed aboard.

In a few moments they arrived back in Plano, and, as the afternoon was still young, decided to go out to their ranch and map out a plan of action for the coming months.

Getting their ponies from the livery-stable, they set forth and rode in silence until nearly there, when Hughie turned in the saddle with a glowing face.

"Boy," he said, "it seems almost too good to be true that in a couple of weeks I'll have Nellie and the kids out here with me. If it hadn't been for you I'd still be pluggin' along on a salary an' makin' just enough for them to live on with no chances of ever bringin' 'em out here. Thanks, Ted," and his voice quivered.

"Oh, that's all right, Hugh," Ted answered, fidgeting uneasily. "Why, you old fraud, if it hadn't been for you where would I be now? It's a cinch I wouldn't have the deed to the best piece of property in the country. Let's drop it."

In a few moments they rode up to the ranch buildings and turned their horses into a corral.

"I didn't know that Jim had so much stock as that," remarked Hughie, looking out over a field well dotted with cattle.

"Maybe they're feeders that he took on before he sold to us," suggested Ted. "Come on, we'll go over to the house and size up our future home."

At this instant a figure appeared in the doorway.

"Hallo, boys! What can I do for you?"

"Well—" Ted checked himself, and then continued: "It seems to me that you've got that twisted, inasmuch as we own this ranch. What can we do for you?"

"You own this ranch?" The other looked at MacGregor earnestly, and, when apparently convinced of the latter's seriousness, resumed: "Have you got a deed?"

"Sure, right here with me," and Ted drew out his paper with a flourish.

The stranger took it and looked it over. Then he grunted.

"Here, partner, listen to this," as he read from the deed.

"'And be it hereby understood, that the party of the first part on the payment of ten thousand dollars becomes the owner of the following described ground, to wit—beginning at a point in the south side center of the—'"

"The south side?" Ted broke in. "Why, that's the other side of town and isn't any good." Then hopefully he added: "Maybe Jim got his directions twisted."

"No, I don't think so, partner," the other interrupted. "Because McVeagh sold this ranch to me this afternoon just before the train pulled out. It kind of looks as if he done you."

Hughie turned helplessly to his friend.

"Well, what do you think of that?"

"I don't think. I know. Come on," MacGregor rasped out.

And running to their horses, they leaped into the saddle and were off to town in a wild gallop.

"We'll get Jim before he has a chance to go very far." Ted growled savagely as they swung off their steaming ponies at the telegraph office.

But such was not to be. Big Jim had made a clean getaway, and the authorities could find no trace of him.

Evers still retained his job. Young MacGregor went on a rip-roaring drunk, and then when he sobered up faced the thing squarely.

IV.

"HUGHIE," he said a few mornings later, "here I've been acting the fool when I could have been improving the ranch we do own. This afternoon I am going down there and start to bore a well. That land isn't worth anything because the irrigation project can't get any water to it. I'm going to dig for water and get it."

Hughie was too good a student of human nature to put anything in the young fellow's

way, so the afternoon saw him hard at work with a one-man well-borer.

In the afternoon, quite late, Evers rode up.

"Well; how goes it, Ted?" he asked.

"Fine. I've made fifty feet this afternoon, and to-morrow I'll have all kinds of water."

Again Evers was silent.

The next morning saw MacGregor once more at work. Late in the afternoon the drill stuck, and Ted could not budge it. Thoroughly disgusted and with a great feeling of homesickness, he sat down.

And so Evers found him when he rode up that afternoon.

"What's up, Ted, old man?" he asked, dismounting and clapping the seated man on the back.

"Oh, that darned drill stuck on me."

Evers walked over and attempted to turn it.

"Come on over here and give me a hand," he ordered. "We'll soon get it loose."

Then with much twisting and grunting the steel at last came free, whereupon Evers went over to the windlass, turned the handle, and brought the auger-point to the surface.

"What's the drill got on it, Ted?" he asked.

"Looks something like clay, dirty and sticky as the deuce, and, gee, what a rotten smell!" the other answered.

Hughie left the windlass and walked over to take a look himself. Bending down, he let out a low whistle of astonishment, and then straightened to his feet with a jerk.

"Boy," he cried excitedly, "that's one of the richest specimens of cinnabar I have ever seen."

"Cinnabar? What's that?" Ted questioned blankly.

"Why, it's mercury — quicksilver — and it's a fortune."

"Are you sure?" asked the boy, quickly getting fired with the older man's excitement.

"You bet I am. Why, it's twice as rich as any of the ore I used to handle. You're rich, boy—rich!" And he danced around like a child, supremely happy in his friend's good luck.

"Well," Ted said slowly, "if I'm rich, you're rich, too; and I guess we'll be able to send for the wife and kids after all, Hughie, old man."

That evening the two sat discussing their good fortune and laying out plans for the future.

"Yes, it's good luck, all right," Hughie declared, "but we'll have to dig a shaft down to it before we can expect to realize anything on the property, and that is going to take some time and money. We haven't got a big supply of either of those two things."

"Gosh, if I only had that ten thousand now, Hughie, it would come handy!" Ted broke out.

As if in answer to his wish, a knock came at the door as it had done before.

Again both men sang out, but it was only Reddy, the postmaster's son.

"Hallo, Reddy! What do you want?" Ted asked.

"Me fader had a registered letter for youse, an' I brung it up," the youngster answered.

Ted tore it open and read a few lines, after which he was apparently unable to go further. Turning, he handed it to his partner without a word.

Attached to a torn and wrinkled piece of paper was a check for twenty thousand dollars. Hughie read the writing on the paper aloud:

> Herewith is certified check for twenty thousand. A greaser shot me through the lungs in the Last Chance saloon last night, and I'm a goner. This is to square myself with the only man I ever treated wrong. So-long,
>
> JIM.

"Good for Jim!" Ted broke out after a long silence. "And now, Hughie, the first thing that we'll do is to send a telegram to your wife to come on at once and one to my dad."

These were sent, and Ted's read as follows:

> J. S. MACGREGOR, ESQ.,
> New York, N. Y.
>
> DEAR DAD:
>
> Have made good. Can I come home on a visit? TED.

And late that night he had this answer from his father:

> MR. THEODORE MACGREGOR,
> Plano, Nevada.
>
> You bet. Take the first train.
>
> DAD.

Groceries, Diamonds, and a Fraud.

BY H. E. TWINELLS.

A Loss Among the Cranberry Boxes and the Exciting Times That Resulted for the Clerk Who Caught It All Ways.

I AM a grocery clerk. There is food for thought in the grocery business. I give it all my time, and my boss gives me eighteen a week and a turkey at Christmas. I have no kick coming, and neither have the customers, generally speaking. They buy as little as they can get along with, and I charge them as much as I think they'll stand.

People will tell you there is no romance in radishes, no atmosphere about apricots, no fantasy in farina. But they haven't been in the business as long as I. I know just how many cold-storage eggs the customers will stand for mixed with those marked "strictly fresh"; I have weighed out enough sugar to know that the heavier the bag or wrapping-paper I use the better the boss likes it.

And in that time I have had a good many exciting experiences which prove that the person who thinks there's no romance in my line might as well do his marketing at the hardware-store.

Two weeks ago Saturday we had a great rush, and the other two clerks, the boss, and myself were worked so hard we didn't even have time for lunch, outside of an apple and a piece of cheese I managed to gulp down behind the ice-box when the boss was waiting on a swell customer and giving her and her pocketbook all his attention.

I remember the time precisely, because I was just getting out three rush orders promised for twelve o'clock noon; I began that job at two o'clock, but was interrupted by a lady who rustled in in a fine silk gown and gave a small order with a bored accent.

"Take it with you or have it sent?" I asked as I did up her purchases into a small bundle.

"Oh, I'll take them," she replied languidly.

That seemed a little strange to me, because women don't like to carry bundles, except four-foot-square hat-boxes and shopping-bags two feet long.

I remembered vaguely that I had seen her two or three times in the last week. She was a new customer, and though she didn't buy much I gave her all I could for the money, hoping to make a steady patron of her.

Just as she was going out she stopped at the vegetable-stand outside, picked up a handful of cranberries, sorted over a few bunches of radishes, mussed things up generally, and finally said: "Oh, you may give me five cents' worth of soup greens."

As she did so she reached into her purse to get out the nickel, preparatory to kissing it good-by. I distinctly saw her turn white and sway backward.

I was about to say, "If it hurts you to spend so much money, madam, don't do it," when she gave a little scream as though she had just seen a mouse, clutched her bare hand, and cried:

"My diamond ring!"

"We only accept cash," I said, jumping at conclusions.

"It's gone. I've lost it. I've dropped it somewhere."

That was more serious.

"Kindly describe it, madam," I said. "What color was its"—"hair" I was about to say, for the only things that sort of women ever lose when they're shopping are their small children. "How tall was the—price, and when was it last seen?"

"I must have just dropped it among the crates," she cried, messing over a box of green stuff and closely scanning our potato display.

I got down on my knees and helped look. I pulled out the crates, sifted the cranberries, shook out the greens, and hunted everywhere in an endeavor to humor her.

Finally I made bold to suggest: "Are you sure you had it on when you came?"

"No—not exactly," she cried, wringing her ringless hands and moaning like an orphan pussy. "But I'm almost sure. Yes, it must have been here. I had it on in the street-car, I remember now. Mrs. Ogilvie was sitting opposite, and I took off my glove and—"

"But maybe you dropped it in the car?"

"No. I'm sure I didn't. I had it on when I got off, and I came right here."

She was beside herself with anxiety.

Several people had crowded around to see what was the matter. I shooed them away, and asked the lady inside, where she talked with the boss. He came out and made a personal search. His eyes proved to be no sharper than mine. We didn't find the ring anywhere.

"I would offer to take up the sidewalk and look for it, only the walk is cement," I said consolingly.

"No, it must be among the crates somewhere. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Advertise," I suggested, for that was the boss's watchword in business.

"But it must be here."

"If we come across it, madam," I began wearily, hoping to get rid of her, "we have your address, and we—"

"Yes, here is my address." She took out a card, dropped a tear on it for a souvenir, and handed it to me. "Mrs. John Main Rhodes," I read. The address had already been written on in pencil.

"The ring was worth two hundred dollars," she blubbered. "It was my engagement ring. My husband gave it to me before we were married."

"Naturally," I said.

"I will pay a reward of twenty dollars to the finder," she went on.

"Ten per cent to the—"

"This is not a case of charity," she cut me off. "It is a business proposition, young man, and if you want to make twenty dollars I'd advise you to put in some of your spare time looking for it. It must be here."

With that she left, and I drew a long breath of relief.

During the next half-hour I worked outside as much as possible, rather hoping I'd run across the ring and make the twenty. Of course I couldn't be sure that she had lost it there, but I wasn't going to overlook any chances of finding it.

At about three o'clock there was a little let-up in the rush, and I was putting up an order inside, when, out of the tail of my eye, I saw a rather ragged fellow with a five days' growth and a whisky-nose stoop over and furtively snatch something from between the cranberry-crate and the potato-box.

I caught a flash and sparkle of light from the thing he picked up, and watched for a second while he dropped it in his pocket, cast a furtive look around, hesitated nervously, and then started to slink away.

I made a leap through the door and caught him by the nape of the neck. He offered a slight struggle, but finally I managed to get the better of him and thrust my hand into the pocket where I had seen him drop the flashing object.

I pulled it out.

Sure enough, it was Mrs. John Main Rhodes's ring!

"Thought you'd get away with that, didn't you?" I cried, giving the down-and-out a shaking.

"I found it," he muttered. "If you find anything, it's yours, ain't it?"

"Not in this case. You found the ring, but now it's mine."

"It isn't yours; it's a lady's ring."

"I mean I will return it to the owner. We were looking for it," I explained.

"Yes, and then you'll get a reward, I suppose."

"I hope to."

"What right you got taking it away from me, then? I found it. I got more of a right to the ring than you have."

"Yes, but you started to run away with it." My heart misgave me. I knew I was in the wrong, and began to feel pretty sure that the square thing to do would be to divide the twenty dollars' reward with him.

"How do you know I wasn't going to look for the lady, too?"

"Well, we won't discuss that," I said grandly, my conscience getting the better of me. I reached into my pocket, pulled out the week's salary I had just received from the boss, and peeled off the ten-dollar-bill I was using as a wrapper for the eight ones.

"Take this," I said, with the air of a philanthropist. "There will doubtless be a reward offered for the ring, and you have earned that much by finding it." I felt that dividing the reward with him was a very fair thing to do.

He was satisfied. He pocketed the ten, and shambled on up the street, while I rushed to the telephone.

"Hallo, is this Mrs. John Main Rhodes?" I asked, having secured from "Information" the telephone number at the address she had given me.

"No such person lives here," was the reply.

"Are you sure?"

"Certain."

The boss overheard me talking, and came up to find out what it was about. I had hoped to keep it from him till after I had received the reward. I thought he might claim half of my share because the diamond had turned up in his store.

"Did you find that ring?" he demanded sharply.

"Why, yes—er—you, see—Mrs. Rhodes isn't home. They don't know anything about her at the number she gave us."

"She's only been here a couple of times. I didn't like her looks much," said the boss. "The way she stuck up her nose at that celery yesterday made me mad."

"But I have the ring, and how shall I return it?" I asked.

"Let me see it."

I didn't like to part company with that ring for even a minute, but business is business, and the boss is boss, so I laid it on his palm and watched close to see that he didn't switch the jewel on me or let it slip up his coat-sleeve.

He looked at it critically, and then began nibbling his mustache nervously. He does that always before he delivers a call-down.

"What's the matter, boss?" I breathed anxiously.

"Come around to Schmidt's with me for a minute," he said thoughtfully.

"If you're going to sell it, boss, I get half—remember that, I get half," I cried; for Schmidt was the jeweler around the corner.

"You talk too much," he snapped.

So, just to get even with him, I didn't say another word.

We walked into Schmidt's store, and the boss laid the ring down on the counter.

"Have a look at this, will you, Schmidt?" he said.

"Sure. Vat iss it?"

"A diamond ring a woman lost in my store to-day."

"A diamond ring, nutting," Schmidt scoffed. "It is a piece of a glass tumbler dat fell on a brass curtain-ring an' got stuck dere, what?"

"You don't mean that it is a fake diamond?"

"You might sell dot for cut glass, but de piece iss too schmall to use on de table," Schmidt sneered.

"I thought myself it was a fake diamond," said my boss, turning to me; "that's why I brought it over here."

I thought of my ten dollars. I remembered then that I didn't like Mrs. Rhodes's looks at all.

She had swindled me.

"Tell me dose particulars," went on Schmidt.

I told him the whole story of the loss of the ring, and about the ragged fellow who had picked it up half an hour later. I confessed before him and the boss that I'd paid ten dollars to the tramp for his reward, being sure of getting my twenty from Mrs. Rhodes.

"Iss de lady a regular customer?" asked Schmidt.

"No; she has only been in the store the last two or three days."

"It iss a clever game," announced the old jeweler. "Dere is hundreds of diamond swindles what I know, but dis is de best."

"But how was the swindle worked? Was the ragged fellow who found the ring an accomplice of Mrs. Rhodes?" I wanted to know.

"Sure! Dat's it! You see, de lady, dressed up grand, goes into de store a couple of times and buys nutting much. Den she pretends to lose her diamond ring in de crates. She don't lose nutting, she just pretends to.

"Den pretty soon dis accomplice of hers comes along und pretends to pick up a ring from where she said she dropped it. De clerk, remembering de twenty dollars reward de lady offered, iss always willing to give half to de poor devil what finds it.

"Dis poor devil waits till he sees de clerk looking at him, an' den he pretends to pick up de lost ring. Instead, he has in his hand all de time dis fake one, de only ring dere was in de whole business, and he gives dat to de clerk for his ten dollars. Dat ten dollars is clear profit. Dere iss money in dat business, what?"

"I should think so!" I cried.

"Pretty clever scheme," observed the

boss. "So the tramp and the lady were working together?"

"Dat's it," laughed Schmidt, passing back the ring. "Dis piece of glass ain't worth nutting. Dere iss a carpenter and glazier around de corner—you might try to sell it to him, but his window-panes comes in bigger pieces."

We thanked him. I walked out wiser, but sadder and poorer.

"Can I have an hour or two off, boss? I'd like to go on a still hunt for this Mrs. Rhodes and her pal. I'd like to try to get my ten dollars back."

"They have probably pulled off the same stunt at a few other stores and got safely out of town by now," said the boss.

"But I need that ten."

"Well, get back as soon as you can," he answered.

I started off at once toward the address on the card Mrs. Rhodes had given me. I didn't have much hope of finding her there, after telephoning and learning there was no such family living in the place, but I thought I might get track of her some way. Of course, she had probably left town, but I might be able to catch her at one of the railroad stations.

I stopped at the number and rang the bell.

Great Heavens! I staggered back and stared wildly. I pinched myself to see if I was awake.

The lady who came to let me in was Mrs. John Main Rhodes.

I dissembled immediately. With a poorly concealed sneering tone, I remarked, bringing out the fake diamond:

"I found your ring, Mrs. Rhodes, and I have come to collect the twenty."

"Oh, I am so glad!" she cried.

I was a little startled that she didn't show more surprise. She took the news calmly. I nearly fell over when she said:

"Excuse me a minute while I go up-stairs for the money."

I couldn't figure that out. Suddenly I realized that it was a dodge. She was discovered, and of course she would leave by the window up-stairs or down the back way.

As long as I was so sure of her, I wasn't going to let her escape. Luck had played into my hands. I may be a grocery clerk, but I'm not timid. So as soon as she had started up-stairs and I had finally decided what her dodge would be, I sneaked up after her, close to the wall, listening.

I had just reached the first landing when she came tripping down, a big pocketbook in her hands. Of course I knew in a minute that she had heard me coming up and thought the best thing to do was to come straight down and try to bluff me out.

She simulated surprise rather well when she found me hiding in a dark corner on the landing. Throwing up her hands she turned scarlet and screamed:

"What are you doing here?"

"Oh—I—you see, I always walk up and down stairs twenty times every morning before breakfast for exercise," I stammered. I missed doing it this morning, and I thought while you were gone I would improve my opportunity and use your stairs."

She looked at me strangely. Of course she knew I was lying. Nobody would swallow that story, but I actually couldn't think of any other possible reason for my being caught in the middle of the stairway.

I followed her down to the parlor and she opened the bag and extracted two ten-dollar bills. She was certainly carrying the bluff pretty far. I knew she wouldn't actually hand over the money. What surprise did she have in store for me?

She started to hand the bills to me. My heart beat rapidly with the hope that she was going to try to square the thing by paying me the twenty dollars for the glass ring. It would be a loss of only ten dollars to her, anyway, because her pal had ten of mine already.

Just then she drew back her hand, looked at me suspiciously and demanded: "Let me see the ring first."

My hand trembled as I pulled it out and dropped it in her pink palm. What would be her next move? I thought I could guess it now.

"Why," she cried, "this isn't my ring."

That was what I figured she'd say. As long as she was going to bluff it out further, I was ready for it. I looked at her keenly.

"No," I said, "but it's the glass ring your pal came along later with and pretended to find among the crates. I paid him ten dollars for it, having swallowed your story, hook and all. And now, Mrs. Rhodes, if you want to get out of trouble, you'd better pay back that ten to me and give me another ten for my trouble. Otherwise I will call a policeman at once."

"My pal! Glass ring!" she cried, stepping back from me. "Young man, are you crazy?"

"I'm not as crazy as you thought I was when you tried to spring that old diamond-losing gag on me. I may look crazy, but I'm not."

Her eyes narrowed, she glared at me shrewdly. Stepping closer, she pressed her lips tight shut, then opened them suddenly, and cried in a tense tone, her searching eyes upon me: "You impudent little whiffet! *I believe you stole my ring yourself.*"

The nerve of her! She certainly played her part well. She accused me as earnestly as though she meant it. But then, she had had long experience in fraud and deception, and I couldn't expect to cope with her in cleverness. But I could be firm, and I was.

"Now, none of this faking goes," I said sternly. "I've got the goods on you. I got the telephone at this house here and they said there wasn't any such person as you living here."

"The telephone?" she cried. "Why, we haven't one."

She had snapped her purse shut and held it behind her in both hands.

"Didn't you say you were living here?" I went on. "Didn't you have the address already written on the card you slipped me when you were sobbing about your fake ring?"

"I don't exactly understand," she answered. "But I'd advise you to be more careful in your speech. I am Mrs. John Main Rhodes; this is my sister's house; I have been visiting here the last three or four days. We have no telephone. If you called up, you must have received some other number, and they certainly wouldn't know about me."

She drew herself up so proudly that for the moment I was nearly fooled into thinking she was the real goods.

She was edging toward a back room, and I knew she was looking every minute for a chance to make a getaway.

I had one more surprise in store for her. As she backed away from me, I turned suddenly and pointed through the window.

"The game's up, Mrs. Rhodes!" I cried, the way I had read it in detective stories. "There come the police now!"

She wheeled about and stared through the window. That gave me the opportunity I wanted. As she turned and was off her guard for the second, I snatched the purse from her hands.

She flew on me like a tigress.

"Give me that!" she screamed.

"I will give you the balance after I take out my twenty," I said calmly, for I was master of the situation.

As I was intent on opening the pocketbook and extracting the bills, she darted past me and out at the front door. I didn't give chase. As she was so anxious to make her getaway, I'd let her go.

She would join her pal and warn him, and they'd leave the city. I would take the twenty dollars belonging to me from the roll in her pocketbook and turn the rest over to the police.

The police! Just as I arrived at that thought, a huge form in blue burst through the open front door and smashed me over the head with his club. Mrs. Rhodes's purse dropped from my fingers.

I was knocked to the floor. When I picked myself up there were three other policemen present, and Mrs. Rhodes was crying in explanation:

"See! He robbed me! You caught him red-handed! There is my purse and my money at his feet! He came in and attacked a poor defenseless woman. I was suspicious of him the moment he entered. He sneaked after me toward the up-stairs rooms. I caught him on the landing-place. He was trying to steal something, or lying in wait there to attack me when I came down."

She paused for breath, and I gasped for the same article.

"She's a confidence woman!" I cried, as soon as I could get mine. "Don't believe a word she says. She tried to fool me with an old diamond ring gag."

"Yes, he is a thief all right," she cried. "First he tried to cheat me into paying him a twenty-dollar reward for a glass-set brass ring, pretending it was one I lost this morning. Officer, I want you to arrest him. He is a grocer's clerk, at that store four blocks down, near Schmidt's jewelry shop."

"See, she knows where the jewelry-stores are and everything," I burst out. "Schmidt himself said there were lots of fakers who tried to work him. She's probably tried him. I am innocent! Arrest her! Don't lose track of her! Just because she's a high-class crook I suppose I'll have to—"

A heavy hand was clapped over my mouth and I was dragged without further formality to a patrol-wagon waiting in front. They shoved me in, booked me at the station-house as guilty of grand larceny in the theft of a two hundred-dollar ring,

and I was soon playing solitaire in a cell, waiting for the boss to come and bail me out.

Time dragged. I figured it would be about closing time. I wondered what was keeping the boss. I had sent him a note to come to my aid. Of course he always put business before pleasure, so I waited and waited. Finally I asked a guard what time it was, and he said "midnight."

Half an hour later my boss appeared. He managed to get in and see me. I rushed to the bars to greet him. He beat me to it with the greetings.

"You scoundrel! You idiot! You fathead!" he yelled, shaking the bars and trying to get at me. "You are fired! You have tried to ruin my business! You have ruined it! This Mrs. Rhodes is the sister of one of our best customers. She is visiting here. She came down to the store after she had you arrested and told me you had stolen her ring. She may try to make me pay for it, and then where are the profits of the business?"

I grew paler than the hue of prison pallor. I trembled with a mighty emotion. I had been wrong, then.

"Mrs. Rhodes isn't fooling you? You're sure of that?" I cried.

"Sure of it, you numskull. Of course I am. She had no trouble in proving who she was, and you've got yourself and me into an awful mess."

"But you don't think I stole her ring, boss?" I cried.

"No, I don't think you'd have sense enough to steal a postage-stamp. But you've ruined me and you're fired. You're fired! Understand?"

"Oh, boss, if you'll only get me out of here and take me back! You know that Schmidt said it was a game, and you believed it, too!"

He softened a little.

"I'll try to get you out," he said finally. "Jail is too good a place for you. Besides, I'd like to get you outside for a minute and punch your head."

He hurried off and half an hour later came back with a police sergeant. My boss was pretty well known among the politicians of the neighborhood. I don't know how he worked it, but he did manage to get me out. He signed a statement as to my character and the explanation of the fake diamond finding.

I fell on my knees and kissed his hand when we were outside, thanking him from the bottom of my heart for my delivery.

"Boss, can I come back to work for you Monday morning, as usual?" I begged.

"No! Don't you ever let me see your face again!" he yelled, jamming his fist down on my derby hat and smashing it over my face.

When I was free from the hat he wasn't in sight. I picked myself up and went sorrowfully home.

It had been a bad day. I had been arrested, lost ten dollars, and been fired. Too much is plenty. I didn't feel like passing my plate for more.

At the same time I couldn't rest easy until I'd found the ragged crook that did me out of the ten dollars. Now I realized that he had been working solely on his own account.

I went out and searched everywhere for him all that night. The next day I looked for him. Three days I spent trying to find some trace of that tramp. At length I got news of him at a lodging-house, and lay in wait for his return. I would get even with him, anyway.

The moment he shambled through the door I recognized him and he recognized me. I grabbed him by the throat and called a policeman. He was immediately arrested and I told my story at the station-house.

On searching him they found that he had only nine cents of my ten dollars left. He denied any knowledge of the crime, but when they went through his vest they found in an inside pocket a pawn ticket reading:

TWO CARAT DIAMOND RING—$50

"That's what I want!" I cried to the desk-sergeant. "That's the pawn-ticket for the diamond ring. He stole it from Mrs. Rhodes, or found it where she dropped it."

And that proved to be the case. I rushed off to Mrs. Rhodes with the pawn-ticket, and she went to the shop with me and advanced the fifty dollars and interest to redeem the ring.

It was hers, sure enough. She praised me highly for helping her recover it. I took her to the police-station to help prove the case against the ragged crook. During my absence the police had ripped open the tramp's belt and found the fifty dollars for which he had pawned Mrs. Rhodes's ring, carefully sewed up in it.

The case was so clear against him that he pleaded guilty and asked for mercy.

His explanation in court was to the effect that he had been standing by when Mrs. Rhodes's ring slipped off her finger as she was looking over the vegetables. The ring had struck an edge of a crate and rolled almost to his feet. All he did was to reach out one foot and cover it, then when the small crowd of curious people collected and all attention rested on Mrs. Rhodes he had stooped over, picked up the ring and pocketed it.

In former days he had played the fake ring trick described by Schmidt, and it immediately occurred to him to try that on me. The chance was too good to miss; he didn't have any worry about being detected as the actual thief of the ring, so he bought the brass thing, came back to the store, waited till he saw me looking, and then pretended that he had just found the genuine stone.

Naturally I fell for the trick. It was pretty clever, and you could hardly blame me for being caught.

Well, I was some relieved by that confession of his. It put me in solid with Mrs. Rhodes. She said she was sorry about all that had happened, but she could understand now why my actions at her house had seemed so suspicious.

She expressed her genuine sorrow by paying back to me the ten dollars I had given the crook and adding the original twenty reward to it. She interceded with the boss for me, and I got my job back.

All I really lost was a week's salary, but the reward paid that and gave me a bonus of two dollars. The boss was so pleased to get Mrs. Rhodes back as a customer that he never said anything more to me about it after I returned to the job.

Now I am back at the old stand. This only happened two weeks ago, and I've already settled back to the old routine, only I call personally every morning at Mrs. Rhodes's to take her order.

I suppose when you come to our store to buy a dill-pickle and a can of sardines, you look at me and say: "Poor clerk, what excitement does he ever get in that business? Poor fellow, there is no romance in radishes, no atmosphere about apricots, no fantasy in farina."

Maybe not, but that diamond lost by the crate of cranberries created a considerable sensation for a few hours.

Emmy and the Dining-Car Conductor.

BY RALPH IRVING.

How Henry Howe's Ambition To Be a Railroad Man Was Gratified and the Exciting Episode That Punctuated a Memorable Trip He Made.

IT was a red-letter day for Henry Howe when he got a job with the railroad. From the time when his vocal powers were sufficiently developed to allow him to say "Toot, toot," the railroad had been an obsession with him. Oh, to be brakeman, flagman, conductor, engineer, fireman—anything, in short, that would make him a part of those flying trains!

Alas, Henry could never be any of those. He was not weak, but he was not strong enough to be a fireman. His eyes were not bad, but they were not quite good enough to distinguish every time between a yellow and a red lantern.

Decidedly he could not be a brakeman or a flagman, and one does not start in as a conductor.

He could sell tickets, of course, but that wasn't his idea of railroading. Henry worked in a store and tried to improve his eyes—but without avail.

He pestered every one he knew in the railroad line until at last he found a way. One day the division superintendent, a friend of his father's, told Henry, to get rid of him, that if he would work two years in a restaurant he would get him into the dining-car service. The superintendent never thought he would, but he did.

Henry's family objected, but their pleadings could not turn him from his purpose.

He made good in the restaurant and got to be head waiter. He saw the superintendent frequently to remind him of his promise. When the two years were up Henry donned a blue coat with shiny buttons and took charge of a car, made captain of a crew consisting of four black cooks and five black waiters. It was a red-letter day for Henry.

It looks like an easy job, being conductor on a dining-car, but that's only because you don't know all about it. Henry found that it drew pretty heavily on his mental resources, keeping the four black cooks from feeding their families out of the supplies for which he was accountable. For every ounce of these that he didn't bring back at the end of the run he had to turn in cash receipts. But this wasn't all he had to do besides making change. He had to see that passengers with a mania for "souvenirs" didn't leave the car with too much of the company's silverware. He had to relieve them of their prizes, too, in a pleasant, tactful way.

One day, after Henry had been in the service long enough to get a little used to things, but not long enough for the novelty to wear off, he pulled out of the yard in an unusually good frame of mind. It was to be a long run this time, which would take him through his native town. He had telegraphed his people to be at the station, and hoped they would bring some friends with them. There was one friend especially he hoped they would bring.

Since he had been away in the city restaurant he had not seen much of the people in Camroy. He had felt a little diffident about calling while he was a waiter, for although his friends were not what you would call proud people, he knew that they had not approved of the profession he had chosen.

Now that he was in charge of a car, however, things would be different. He had been thinking of Emmy Watts a good deal lately, and he hoped she would be at the station. The fact that she had almost cut him the last time he saw her faded from his memory.

Business was good on the first part of the trip. Henry smiled affably and took in the money. He handed the little order slips to the diners with such serene good humor in his manner that they caught his cheerfulness and felt that they could afford an unusually good meal that day.

The rush was over when they reached Camroy. Henry left his car in charge of one of the waiters and jumped off before the train stopped in order to make the most of the three-minute wait.

He kissed his mother, and grasped his father's hand in a hearty clasp. Then he looked around the platform. The station-master came up and spoke to him. His father and mother seemed embarrassed about something. He was going to ask about Emmy when he saw her being helped up the steps of one of the Pullmans by a strange man who immediately followed her.

Henry looked quickly at his mother, but she turned her head. His father started to ask him questions about his new life. Henry understood, and said nothing.

Once more he kissed his mother, squeezed his father's hand, and climbed back to his car. When the train pulled out he had lost his good humor.

"So Emmy is married," he told himself.

His parents had evidently been afraid to hurt him by mentioning the fact, but he had read it in his mother's look.

Well, he would get over it. It is hard at first when you have been cherishing a hope for a long time to see it suddenly crumble away. But after all, there was never any real understanding between him and Emmy. She had not been bound to him in any way. He fell to wondering if this was her honeymoon trip, or if she had been married several months. If it were the former, there would have been people down to see them off and throw rice, so he decided that she must have been a wife for some time.

While he was thinking of these things the two came into the diner. This was a contingency that had not entered Henry's head. He showed them to a place without looking at Emmy, and glanced at her shyly.

He might have been an utter stranger for all the recognition he received. Then he looked at the man, and he was sure that he would have disliked him under any circumstances.

Emmy and her companion began to study the *menu*.

"What do you see that you like?" asked the man.

"Oh, you order."

"Shall we have oysters?"

"Just as you say! I like anything."

"Two orders bluepoints," the man wrote down on the little pad.

"Soup?" he then inquired, looking up at Emmy.

"Oh, you go ahead; don't ask me."

"But, my dear, I might get something you don't like."

"They haven't been married very long," Henry thought.

"Let's not have soup, then," said Emmy. "In fact, let's just have lamb chops and some hashed brown potatoes."

If Henry had entertained the slightest hope that the couple were not man and wife, this banished it. Lamb chops were the cheapest things on the bill.

The man protested weakly. He suggested one or two delicacies, which were declined, and Henry knew that these suggestions were more for his benefit than for Emmy's. Henry gave the waiter his part of the check and took up his place at the end of the car.

Emmy was facing him. She glanced up from time to time, and once or twice he thought he caught a flicker of recognition in her eyes. Was there also a little suggestion of supplication in her glance, or was this his imagination?

He was inclined at first to lay it to the latter, but when the waiter knocked over a glass of water, and was roundly abused in a voice that could be heard all over the car, he was sure that Emmy looked at him appealingly. There was nothing he could do, however.

It was none of his business. It was evident enough that the girl did not want to show that she knew him. This was a rather detestable form of pride, Henry thought. Yet he couldn't help feeling indignant that her husband of so short a time should be so inconsiderate.

Before they were ready to leave he saw that look twice more. He almost made up his mind to speak.

When the waiter brought him their check and a five-dollar bill to change, he also brought word that the gentleman had secreted a silver *menu* holder and a butter-knife.

Henry was in a rage. He had grown to detest these polite thieves who seem to think it perfectly proper to take anything they fancy from the table-service of dining-cars and restaurants. That Emmy's husband should be one of them was an outrage.

Yet he would not shame her by demanding the stolen goods in her presence. He would find what car they were in and have the conductor regain the filched articles as quietly as possible.

As they passed him on the way out Emmy looked as though she wanted to make Henry understand something, but she was in advance and there was no chance.

Henry reported the theft to the Pullman conductor. He wished he could let the matter drop and pay for the things himself, but as the waiter had discovered the theft he feared to do so lest his act should be discovered and attributed to timidity.

When the conductor came in for his dinner Henry told him about the affair, and described the pair to him. There were several young married couples in the train that answered the same general description, however, so he was forced to go forward and identify them.

He remembered that they had got aboard near the head of the train, and was much surprised to see them in the first car from his. He pointed them out, and then stepped back to see what would happen when the accusation was made.

The two were sitting opposite each other. The man had his back toward Henry, but from the expression on Emmy's face it was plain that she was pained at something that he was saying. She leaned forward and put her hand on his arm. The gesture seemed half a caress and half an admonition to be calm. He shook the touch off impatiently.

"Surely," thought Henry, "he must be a brute. They can't have been married more than a few months, and yet he treats her like the dirt under his feet."

Meantime the conductor had reached their side. The man looked up and the conductor spoke to him. The former began to expostulate angrily, evidently denying something. He raised his voice.

"What could I do with your cheap imitation silver stuff?" he shouted. "What do you mean by insulting passengers like this? Who do you think I am? Why, I could buy out your dirty little car and not know it. Who told you I stole your knives and forks? Let me get hold of that black-skinned, white-livered waiter and I'll break his neck."

Then followed a torrent of abuse heaped on the whole company from the president down to the waiter, with special and very personal reference to the conductor.

The other occupants of the car turned,

and some of them stood up in their seats. As soon as the shouting began Emmy had started to try and soothe her companion, but he paid no attention to her.

She looked up and saw Henry standing in the doorway. There was no question that she recognized him now. Her look was a cry for help. But when he started forward she seemed terrified. She waved him away with so much frightened entreaty in her gesture that he immediately stepped back out of sight.

He did not understand, but he thought it best not to give any assistance that was not wanted. He decided that Emmy's husband was jealous; that he had heard of their former friendship; and that he would make it even more unpleasant for her if anything was done to show that the friendship still existed.

As scenes of a violent nature are one of the things that railroad employees are cautioned to avoid, the conductor did his best to aid Emmy in pacifying her irate companion. They succeeded in this after a time. The conductor apologized, saying it was a mistake, and returned to the diner with Henry.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," he said. "There's no use making any more fuss about this. There's been too much already. But when we get to Mellville, where they get off, we'll have one of the railroad detectives find out who the man is and report the matter to the superintendent. Then they can follow it up or let it drop as they see fit. But I know what I'd do," he added. "I'd have him arrested like a common thief and make an example of him."

Henry said nothing. It expressed his sentiment, but for Emmy's sake he began to wish he had never mentioned the matter.

The conductor went on through the train, and soon returned with the information that the man was storming at his wife in a way that had caused several people to leave the car. Henry prevailed on him not to stop at the next station and have them put off, as he hinted he wanted to do. Mellville was the place where the diner was cut out of the train to lay over for a couple of hours while waiting for one going back.

As they slowed down Henry went into the vestibule of the car ahead to be near if anything should happen. He told himself that he was foolish, but he couldn't shake off the idea that Emmy would need his assistance.

Hardly had they come to a stop when he heard a woman's cry. The car was in an uproar when he dashed in. Women were screaming, men were shouting orders to be quiet, while they were themselves rushing about and adding to the disorder.

The conductor and two strangers were engaged in a desperate struggle with the gentleman who had stolen the silverware. Emmy was huddled back in a corner between the two seats in constant danger of being hit by the combatants.

The thief seemed to be a match for the three who were endeavoring to overpower him. He twisted and turned, kicking and hitting out wildly His hand crashed through a window, and a second later Emmy was pushed against the broken glass.

All this happened while Henry was trying to make his way through the excited passengers who blocked the aisle. When he reached the scene of the conflict Emmy was powerless to move. The four belligerents were piled up in a writhing mass, and her skirts were pinioned under them.

He wrenched them free and lifted her over the back of the seat to safety. Then he turned his attention to the fray.

With his reenforcement the struggle was soon ended, but it took three of them to keep their prisoner on the floor.

"Just hold him a second," said one of the two strangers.

He went to a near-by seat, and to Henry's amazement, returned with a strait-jacket, into which the prostrate man was quickly strapped. It was done so rapidly and so easily that Henry stared in amazement at the two men who had accomplished it.

Then he noticed that they both wore dark blue uniforms, and he began to understand. He now remembered dimly having heard that Emmy had a brother in an asylum. The State institution was at Mellville. Still there were many things left to be explained.

He turned toward Emmy, who had sunk into a seat and was sobbing hysterically. He led her into the diner, which was about to be switched onto a siding, put her in a seat, and took the one opposite.

"Did they take him away all right?" she asked as soon as she had recovered a little of her composure.

"Yes, but how did you ever happen to do such a thing? Why did they let you? It was terribly foolish."

"Oh, there wasn't any danger," she replied. "John wouldn't hurt me. I am

the only person he always remembers. He has been in the asylum for years. The other night he escaped and came home. Nobody in town knew it, he was so clever. He seemed to be perfectly all right, so we wrote to the authorities asking if he couldn't stay with us. They wrote back that he was still violent at times and that it wouldn't be safe. They said they would send for him in a day or two, and told us to keep him from seeing people, and never to talk to any one else when we were with him. That's what makes him violent.

"He seemed so sane that we couldn't believe there was anything the matter with him. When he went away the first time he was just a little queer, so none of the family had ever seen him the way he was just now. This morning he told us that the authorities were sure to find him, and that he wanted to go back and be examined so that he could be released regularly. We were almost sure he was cured, and anyway, you can't be afraid of one of the family. Crazy people seem dreadful when they're strangers, but not when you have always known them.

"We decided to take him back and make them examine him again. As he seemed to be the happiest with me, I said I'd go with him. Nobody thought of not letting me, because nobody thought there was anything to be afraid of. We really had a little idea that they were pretending he was bad, so they wouldn't lose a patient. It was terrible, though. I was awfully frightened. He began to be cross just as soon as we left the house to-day, only I didn't like to go back then."

"Well, I should think you *would* have been frightened," said Henry. "It was a terrible experience."

She looked at him timidly.

"Oh, you were so good. How can you ever forgive me?"

"For what?"

"I don't exactly know, but I felt so miserable about not speaking to you, and then your father and mother—why, I cut them—and I hadn't seen them for months. What must they have thought?"

Henry laughed.

"The same thing I did. That you were married."

"Did you think that? I'm terribly sorry."

"Well, I must say I'm awfully glad you didn't want me to think it. Do you know why?"

She did not answer. The two hours passed very quickly. On the run back that night the cooks had special orders, and no one on the train had a better dinner than Emmy.

THE MAN WHO FRETS AT WORLDLY STRIFE.

The man who frets at worldly strife
  Grows sallow, sour, and thin;
Give us the lad whose happy life
  Is one perpetual grin.
He, Midas-like, turns all to gold—
  He smiles when others sigh,
Enjoys alike the hot and cold,
  And laughs through wet and dry.

There's fun in everything we meet—
  The greatest, worst, and best;
Existence is a merry treat,
  And every speech a jest.
Be it ours to watch the crowds that pass
  Where Mirth's gay banner waves;
To show fools through a quizzing-glass,
  And bastinade the knaves.

Joseph Rodman Drake.

THE ARGOSY'S LOG-BOOK.

BY THE EDITOR.

About a New Kind of Story—Slipshod Methods of Would-Be Authors —Many Letters from Readers — Those Deer Tracks in the Snow— Cuba and the Philippines Heard From — Some Glimpses Ahead.

YESTERDAY I read the opening chapters of a new story now being written for THE ARGOSY on a new and—shall I say—daring plan. I hesitated about using this word, as it has come so often to mean indelicate or "off-color." As a matter of fact, daring implies courage to enter upon an untried path. We speak of Peary after the North Pole, or Stanley in search of Livingstone as daring, so if a story that has in it the elements of the unusual be daring, why must it needs be of the "Three Weeks" type?

* * * * * *

"But where does the daring element in this case come in?" you ask.

Well, as the story is not yet finished, it is as yet a little early to say more on this point, but I can let out this much of the secret. You have read tales with their scenes laid in Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, the plains of the West, the down-East villages of New England. You have become so accustomed to this sort of thing that you have perhaps never given a second thought to the background of a story, provided the story itself was interesting. (Oh, I beg pardon of those correspondents who have written me they were tired of seeing New York used so often as the theater of plots. I think they will note that their wishes have been complied with to a very large extent, although later on in the department this month they will see a pathetic plea for Gotham stories.)

As I was saying, backgrounds of the character I have named have come to be considered a matter of course in fiction, and the thrill I am seeking to awaken will arise from an absolutely new departure in this respect, essentially very American in character and graphic in realism. And the scheme is susceptible of exploitation in other stories to an almost unlimited extent.

I shall hope to tell you more about this new departure next month, when it is barely possible the name and date of publication of this first in a series of new kind of stories will be announced. Hence you can't afford to miss any of the summer numbers of THE ARGOSY, which will be especially attractive this year.

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As was to be expected, the inauguration of the Log-Book has deluged me with manuscripts from ambitious beginners in the story-writing game. I cannot say, however, that I have as yet discovered a Charles Dickens or a William Dean Howells among the number. In most cases the authors seem to ship off their goods too hastily. They should go over them carefully many times, comparing them closely with the stories we print in order to see that all the rules are observed.

Why, only last evening a young fellow I know, and who has been trying to break into the contributors' ranks, brought me a story that broke about as many of these rules as could be fractured by a single individual. In the first place the manuscript was rolled, written in long hand, had no title, and the pages were not only not numbered, but were not even placed together in regular order. When a writer handicaps himself at the outset with these drawbacks to an easy perusal of his work he cannot blame the editor for not being in a receptive frame of mind.

* * * * * *

But I have such a mass of letters this month that I must now give way to them. I am delighted to hear from my readers in this way, and I want you each to feel that your comments are carefully read. Really, you can scarcely understand the pleasurable sensation it is to realize via the postman how many thousands of unseen friends one has scattered all over this broad country of ours —and then some, if I may drop into slang,

to include correspondents from beyond the seas. Let me remind you to write "Argosy Log-Book" on your envelope and at the top of your letter; also, to sign your full name, although, as you will note, only the initials are used in the magazine.

I'll start with a kicker this time; but he is such a good-natured kicker, and has written such a good letter, that I forgive him. His especial grievance appears to be the complete stories in one particular number. I hope he will write again and tell me what he thinks of "The Fighting Streak," also "Midnight Between Towns," and the short stories in the present issue. His letter is too long to quote in full, is dated from Roseland, California, and begins thus:

> I have been a constant reader of THE ARGOSY for more than ten years. I have always enjoyed it, and I am glad of the opportunity your Log-Book gives me to express my opinion. . . . The make-up of THE ARGOSY is splendid; I will not say perfect. . . . What people want to read in fiction are stories not utterly impossible, with reasonable action. I do not think any one cares for mushy love stories, and yet I do not think any one objects to forceful, manly display of affection. A dash of red blood romance is a help to any story.

* * * * * *

Here is a reader in Boston who votes hard for serials. He has been a purchaser of THE ARGOSY since May, 1905, and says he takes great pride in the magazine. Continuing, he says:

> I wish I could get you to suggest to Albert Payson Terhune to write a serial on the war with Mexico, 1846—1848. I have never read a story that dealt with this war, although I have read countless other stories on every other war there ever was, I guess.
>
> E. H. R.

You will be glad to know, E. H. R., that Mr. Terhune is now at work on the *scenario* for a new story laid in this very period, and, in so far as he has outlined it to me, it promises to be a "corker."

From Franklin County, New York, F. W. B. writes as follows:

> I have been a reader of THE ARGOSY since January, 1895, and have every number issued since that date. It is my favorite magazine and I think all of its stories are good. Albert Payson Terhune and Bertram Lebhar are two of my favorite authors. Am a great admirer of Hawkins and his inventions, and hope he will favor us with another one soon.

This correspondent and thousands more of our readers will be delighted to hear, I am sure, that Mr. Franklin is now engaged on a serial story of which the redoubtable Hawkins is the much maligned hero.

* * * * * *

Regarding the deer-tracks in the snow mentioned in "The Tail of the Oregonian Limited," published in February, and about which I inquired of Western readers in April, I have letters from J. C. L., Marquette, Nebraska; M. P. N., Keslo, British Columbia, and a reader in Dunlap, South Dakota, all claiming that Mr. Williams did not push possibilities too far in speaking of them. They agree that out on the prairie it would be out of the question to find these tracks after a blizzard, but as the scene of the story was laid in the mountains, where there is some shelter from the wind, the case is different. L. G. K., of Vancouver, however, thinks the criticism of G. A. P. well taken.

L. S., mailing his letter from Hugo, Oklahoma, votes for the "hard-luck" yarns; but in his postscript he calls "The Great Buddha Cat's-Eye," an adventure serial we published several years ago, "the prince of all stories." But I will quote his letter:

> Have been reading THE ARGOSY for seven years and it is certainly the A No. 1 of all the magazines. I like the stories of the poor, threadbare, tramping the streets kind, as one man put it in the April Log-Book. I have been there myself and know how it goes. I am a traveling photographer, and have often wondered why some author doesn't ever write a story about them, as there are enough of them on the road and they have plenty of experiences.

A well-written letter from C. A. H., in Salt Lake City, tells me he was one of our earliest readers, and declares that he cares for no better fiction than that contributed by the Munsey writers. He winds up as follows:

> In twenty-five years' experience as cowboy, rancher, civil engineer, big game hunting, prospecting, and mining, all in the wildest parts of the West, I have found many good subjects for stories, but never attempted to write one. Of course, many Western stories contain incorrect terms and statements, also impossible situations, but, with the exception of a comparative few of your readers, they pass unnoticed, and often serve to save a desperate situation and sometimes the hero's life. As a rule, I do not consider your fiction

stories sufficiently improbable to justify severe criticism, and think the short stories and serials very fairly and properly divided.

I will say to C. A. H. that we take great pains not to make any "breaks" or have any anachronisms in our stories. Of course, if you are very familiar with a calling or a neighborhood of which the author has no personal knowledge, you may detect a blunder that no one else would notice.

* * * * * *

F. H. R., who signs himself a "constant reader" from Charlottesville, Virginia, thinks THE ARGOSY is "the best magazine in existence devoted to love, adventure, every-day occurrences," etc., and then proceeds to take another whack at poor, long-suffering New York in the following terms:

> But pray, why do all the writers try to wear out the Great White Way, Central Park, and the poor Subway? Why not lay their scenes in some little harmless Southern town, Richmond, Lynchburg, and so on. Why? It seems as though the Southerners can't furnish enough excitement.

Well, you have Southern background in the present issue with "The Fighting Streak," and Missouri furnishes the setting for "Midnight Between Towns." Note the opening item in this month's Log-Book and rejoice accordingly, F. H. R.

A telegraph operator, P. S., at a station on the Texas and Pacific Railway, expresses keen appreciation for THE ARGOSY, which he has read for the past ten years. He goes on to say:

> I like the Hawkins stories better than any of the others, because we find them so unlike anything we read in a magazine. Can't we have a few more of them? Then, too, I like the serials, but must confess that I get rather anxious for the whole story before it runs out. I usually read the magazine from cover to cover in one or two nights, as I am up most of the night, and find THE ARGOSY great company. I always look forward to the date it will appear, and after I have got rid of my trains and the anxious old lady about her baggage, I settle down for a good night's reading. Let us have some more of the "In Treason's Track" stories; also some more on the order of "The Trail of the Flashlight," and don't impose those hard-luck stories on us, as we are familiar with them from actual experience.

A cheery note from E. A. R., in Springfield-Ohio, bids the good work go on, as follows:

> Just finished reading your talk in April ARGOSY, and felt that I had to have a word. I do not think THE ARGOSY could be improved. You have just enough short stories and enough serials. I like Marie B. Schrader's stories, and such ones as "His Brother's Eclipse" and "Her Hero from Savannah." Also like good love stories until they get too "mushy," but you do not find them that way in THE ARGOSY. Keep humming just the way you have been and there will be no kick from this section.

A science student from Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, P. R. S., wants to know what has become of F. K. Scribner, whose "Ravens of the Rhine" he liked so much. Mr. Scribner is now traveling abroad, having set out with his family for Egypt last January. He expects to be back some time this summer and may possibly bring the material for another of his stirring serials. P. R. S. says further:

> I have been reading THE ARGOSY since 1900. It is the best story magazine published to-day. I like to read it to rest my mind after hard study. I much prefer serials and complete novels to short stories. Looking back over the past ten years, the best stories to my mind have been "In Frozen Fetters," "When I Was Czar," "On Glory's Trail," "The Eleventh Rider," and the like. In short, stories of adventure in all parts of the world are just my speed.

Which reminds me that the recent request for Russian stories has been gratified, and I already have two "corkers" in stock — one, a complete novel, "The Sign of Fear," to be published next month, and the other, "The Black Paw," a serial that will start a little later.

From a Southern Pacific Railway office in Benson, Arizona, W. H. T. discloses himself as another ardent admirer of adventure yarns, and adds: "I don't think I ever read a poor story in THE ARGOSY, so let it come as it has in the past. My coin is always ready to purchase it." Mrs. J. W. McC., of Fairmont, West Virginia, is of the same mind, and declares that the success of THE ARGOSY explodes the old theory: "Try to please everybody, you please nobody."

Here is a pathetic plea for New York stories from J. U., a Cuban correspondent:

> DEAR ARGOSY—A reader for ten years, paying from 12 to 15 cents for your magazine, one who never hopes to see but likes to read stories of Broadway, Bronx, and other large cities; on whom tales of the wilds pale, and

although I know most of your readers are city folks, do, oh, do not cut out dear old Broadway—the life of the paper.

I am now editing a serial of experiences in Cuba, to begin probably in August. This should come as a pleasing change to our friend, in spite of his penchant for Broadway.

E. H., of Richmond, Virginia, will be delighted to see his favorite, Fritz Krog, represented by "Midnight Between Towns" in this issue. I am particularly anxious, by the way, for opinions on this story. But E. H. continues: "When you start a story like 'In Quest of the Pink Elephant,' one can hardly wait for the next number. Stories decidedly 'out of the common' appeal to me."

M. A. C., writing from Kansas City, likes Terhune, Lebhar, and Smiley, and thinks THE ARGOSY should be congratulated on its stories generally.

A postal clerk, F. T. W., from Rockport, Massachusetts, who is on the road most of the time, is keen for railroad stories, instancing especially "The Flight of the Red Arrow." Terhune's historical serials also appeal to him. The most omnivorous magazine reader that has ever come to my knowledge, J. R. R., writes from New Albany, Mississippi, and after giving a list of periodicals he goes through every month that is simply appalling, adds naïvely:

> Some might say I am lying, but I can show you a book and magazine library that has cost me in round figures $1,000.00. I did not buy it all in a day or a year, but I began to collect in 1899. I like all the writers in THE ARGOSY. Lee Bertrand's "His Brother's Eclipse" is a fine story, and with this, his first serial, Mr. Bertrand has now won a place that can't be dislodged here in old Mississippi. What has become of Douglas Pierce, who wrote "The Shaft of Light"? He is one of my favorites. Send on the hard-luck stories They are my favorites.

Watch out for a striking complete novel by Mr. Pierce in the August or September issue. C. Y. H., while in Palatka, Florida, found time to send me this breezy comment:

> I am a lady commercial traveler with almost thirteen consecutive years to my credit, and during all that time I have never failed to secure my ARGOSY the moment it appeared on the news-stands. I think "The Tail of the Oregonian Limited" simply great! In fact, I sat up till 2 A.M. in order to finish it. The Hawkins stories are a sure cure for the blues. Let them come oftener. Personally, I do not care for the historical stories, but I *do* like the breezy Western ones. Fritz Krog's contribution in the April number, concerning that unfortunate tenor, was sure funny. Long live THE ARGOSY.

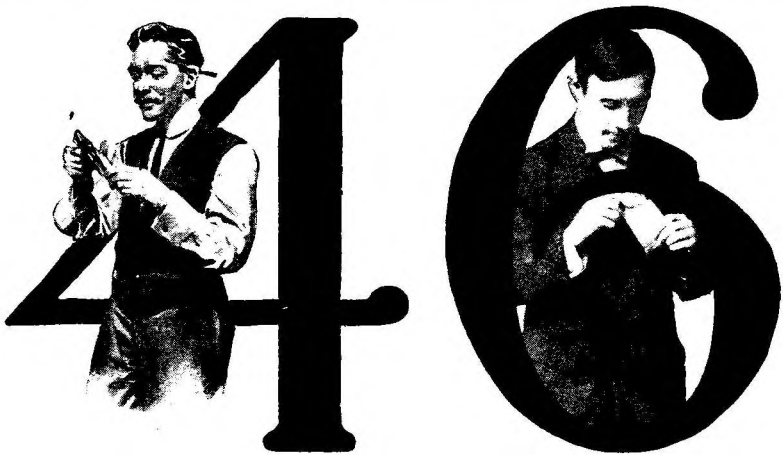
Another fair-sex reader, Mrs. M. H., of Union Hill, New Jersey, enjoys the short stories, but likes the serials best. Her preferences run to "something that has mystery, adventure, or shipwreck. Nothing that has too much love in it. Also a story that does not always end just as you think it will." A physician, Dr. C. A. W., of Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, has been a reader of THE ARGOSY since he was a boy, and looks back with fond recollections to the stories we published in those days, such as "The Boy Broker," by Mr. Munsey, and "Luke Bennett's Hide-Out," by Harry Castlemon. "I always look for a good story," he adds, "when I see Seward W. Hopkins's name attached. I enjoy stories with scenes laid in Russia and in Revolutionary times."

From around on the other side of the world, but still under the Stars and Stripes in Cavite, Philippine Islands, comes enthusiastic comment from G. G. G. for "Four Magic Words":

> That story is super-excellent, and if you have any more like it in the safe, you needn't worry about keeping the interest of your readers. I am a very rapid reader, and a story has to be extremely interesting to make me lose myself in it entirely, to the exclusion of every other thought, but that is what happened when I read "Four Magic Words."

Roxy, of Union, Oregon, who says he's only a boy, still in high school, and that, therefore, his opinions amount to little, if anything, expresses himself concisely and well, and I only wish he would write again and sign his full name:

> I like humor, adventure, mystery, and reasonable love stories. The kind of love stories that end with the villain being unmasked and the hero marrying the shero are of an old type, and while interesting, as "The Big Obstacle," they make one feel sorry that the author didn't end in a different way. THE ARGOSY is my favorite magazine, and shall be as long as it continues to be the wonderful story-book it has been to me in the past eight years.



Salaries

THESE are large figures and yet they are not half large enough. They simply represent the average yearly number of students of the International Correspondence Schools who *voluntarily* report an increase in salary as the direct result of the uplifting help of the I.C.S. Thousands do not report—we wish they would, because the I. C. S. never loses interest in a student's welfare.

It is difficult to compute the amount of increase in salaries of I. C. S. students. Sometimes they are only doubled, other times they are tripled or quadrupled; more often they are multiplied beyond belief. One thing, however, is *sure*—that if you earnestly join hands with the I. C. S. it will greatly increase your earning power in a surprisingly short space of time.

The first requirement is the confidence in yourself that you can do what thousands of other poorly paid, handicapped men have done before you. The second is to decide whether you wish to change your occupation for one more to your liking, or to be promoted from your present position to a higher one. From this point the I. C. S. will do the rest.

Do not worry about money; do not worry about distance; do not say your "Hands Are Tied" because you have Mother, Father, Wife or Children to support on little pay. No one could start worse off than hundreds of I. C. S. students who are today successful in their chosen line of work.

Read The Next Page

Raised

THIS is the Twentieth Anniversary of the I. C. S. As its only purpose is to help untrained, poorly paid men, no method of celebrating twenty years of success seemed so appropriate as something that would benefit the man who wants to rise—something that would stir him to get out of the rut. To do this the I. C. S. planned special inducements of remarkable liberality, to be in force only during June, July and August.

If you are interested in knowing just how the I. C. S. would go about helping you and how you can reap the special benefits of this Anniversary offer, fill in and mail the attached coupon. Remember this places you under no obligation whatever.

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Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position, trade or profession before which I have marked **X**.

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Stationary Engineer	Industrial Designing	
Telephone Expert	Commercial Illustrating	
Mechanical Engineer	Window Trimming	
Mechanical Draftsman	Show Card Writing	
Electrical Engineer	Advertising Man	
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Nabisco Sugar Wafers play an important part during the month of brides and roses.
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Sugar Wafers
served with ices, frozen puddings and beverages, add the final touch of elegance and hospitality to every repast—simple or elaborate.
In ten cent tins
Also in twenty-five cent tins
CHOCOLATE TOKENS—Confections of rare goodness with a coating of creamy chocolate.
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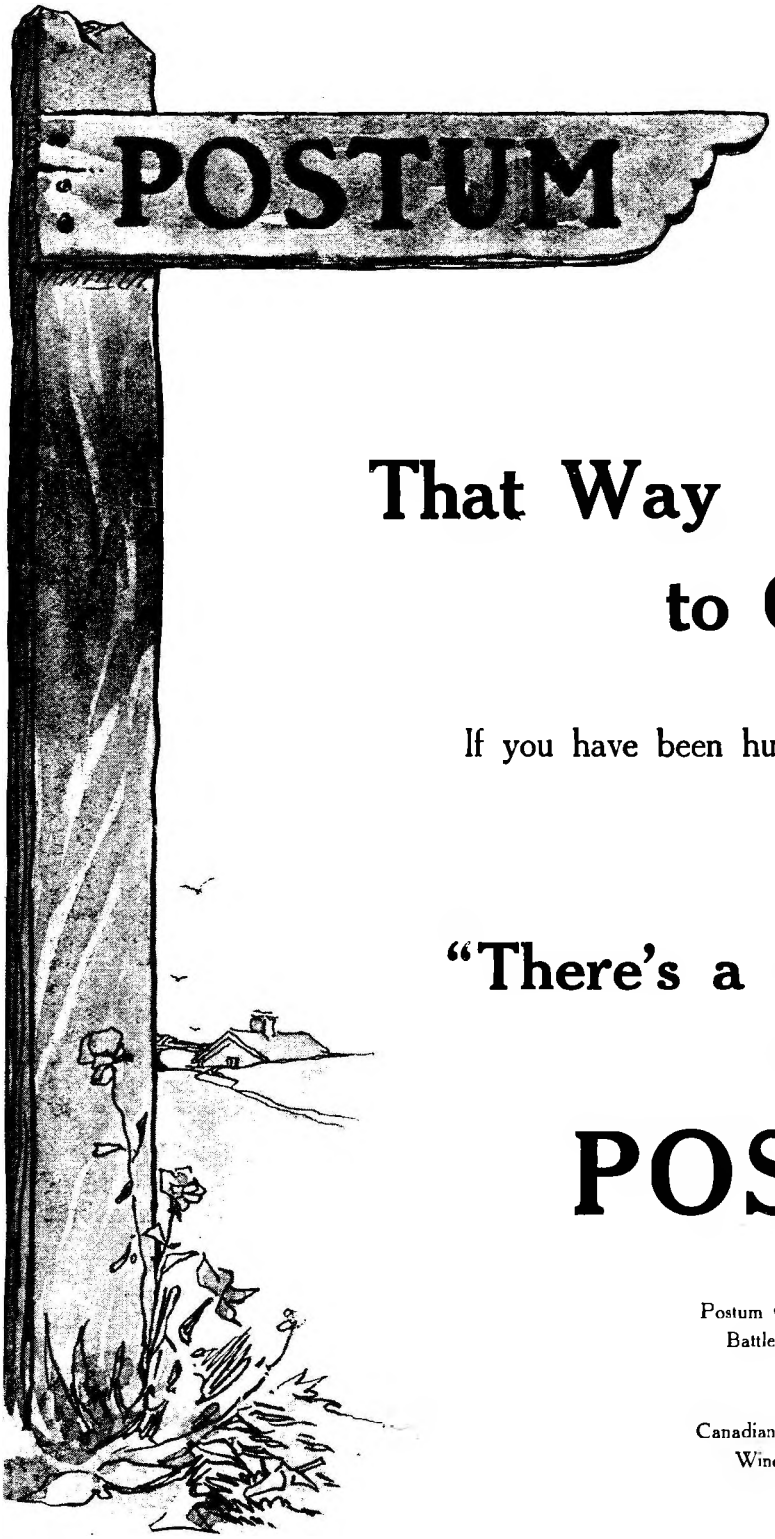

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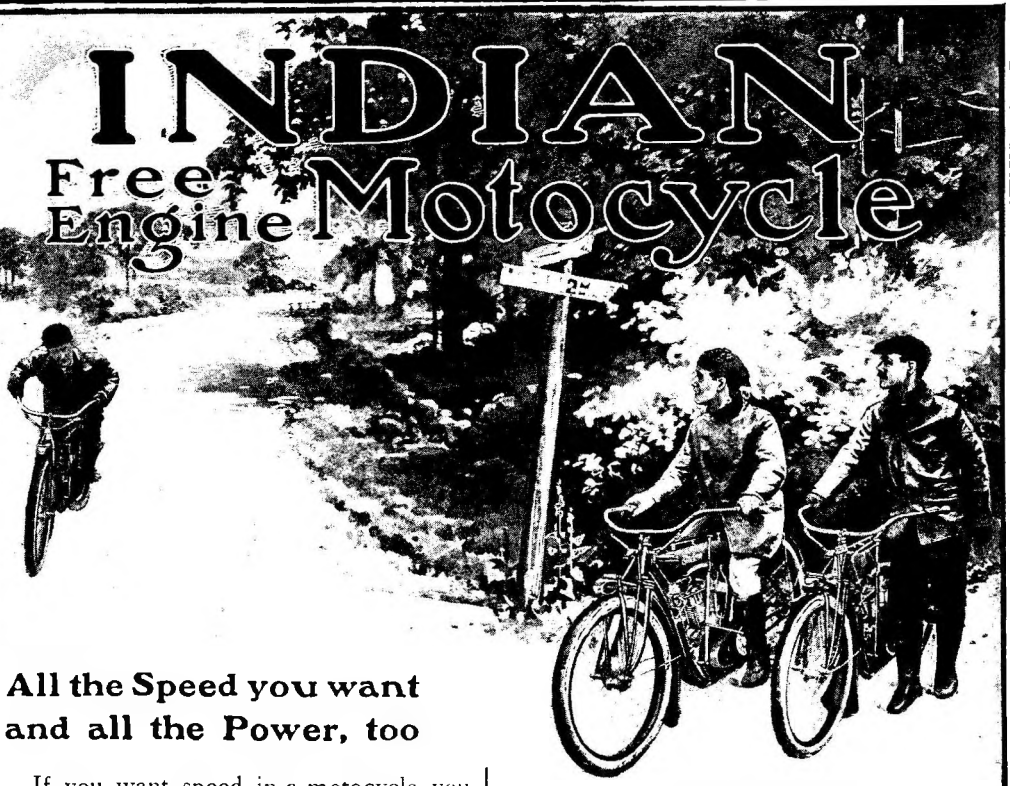

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If you want speed in a motocycle you can get all you want in the INDIAN, because the INDIAN is more powerful and efficient in proportion to its size than any other motoring machine ever produced.

Speed, however, is only *one* result of power and efficiency. The same qualities which give speed are invaluable to the tourist in the form of unusual power to be used on rough and sandy roads and on steep hills. The INDIAN Motocycle develops all the speed you want on the level, and all the power you need on the hills. It is not limited to a single use, but is good for *every* use.

The Machines Rest but the Motors Run

The 1911 INDIAN contains an epoch-making motocycle improvement—the new ***Free Engine Clutch***—by means of which the rider may stop and let his engine run free, or start at a snail's pace and increase speed at will. Not one or two speeds, but a hundred speeds at your fingers' end! No more running alongside to start the engine; no more stopping the engine when you dismount. Absolute comfort and control all the time. The INDIAN Clutch can not be burned out either by use or abuse.

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Learn something about the pleasures of motocycling. Find out what it means to feel companionship with your mount—a genuine sense of comradeship, almost like that you feel for a horse—found in no other motor-driven vehicle.

Let us send you our new 1911 INDIAN Motocycle Catalogue, containing complete descriptions of the new INDIANS, which mean more pleasure in motocycling than motocycling has ever known before. Enjoy thinking about it, and let the purchase of a motocycle come when the spirit moves you. Write for the INDIAN Motocycle Catalogue *today.*

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ARMED with B. V. D. you needn't be alarmed at summer heat and discomfort. These Loose Fitting Coat Cut Undershirts, Knee Length Drawers and Union Suits will keep you *cool* on the *hottest* days. To many men there's agreeable expectation in the mere *thought* of B. V. D.—to all men there's delightful relaxation in the *wearing* of it.

The light, woven fabrics are soft to the skin and the loose fitting garments put *no* strain on the body. It is *at ease*. Perspiration evaporates quickly. You feel like stretching your arms with a soothing sense of "*Glad-I'm-Alive!*" You don't get "heat-fagged" when you wear B. V. D.

B. V. D. is carefully cut, accurately sized and exactly proportioned. It can't chafe, bind or irritate. B. V. D. high standard of quality and workmanship never varies.

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MADE FOR THE B.V.D. BEST RETAIL TRADE

B. V. D. Union Suits (Pat. 4 30/07) $1, $1.50, $2.00, $3.00 and $5.00 a suit.

B. V. D. Coat Cut Undershirts and Knee Length Drawers, 50c, 75c, $1.00 and $1.50 a garment.

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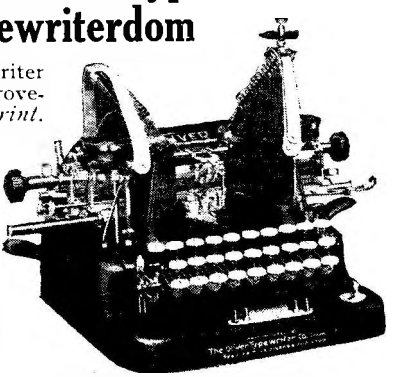

On top of all the innovations that have given The Oliver Typewriter such amazing success and sales, we have placed the crowning improvement — PRINTYPE! The Oliver Typewriter now *typewrites print.*

To the first acceptable man in each locality where we have no local agent, we offer the *exclusive agency* for The Oliver Typewriter, which carries with it absolute control of all sales of Printype Oliver Typewriters in the territory assigned.

Think of the money-making possibilities of an agency which enables you to step into a man's office and say: "I represent the only typewriter in the world that successfully typewrites print!"

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The beauty—the individuality—of Printype has turned the heads of some of the greatest business executives of the country.

Printype — OLIVER Typewriter

The Standard Visible Writer

If you have not had the pleasure of an introduction to Printype ask for a copy of our pamphlet—

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Printype is an adaptation, for the typewriter, of the regular book type universally used on printing presses.

An old friend in a captivating new dress—the last word in typewriter type style. It is twice as artistic and easy to read as the old-style, sharp, thin outline letters and numerals used on all other typewriters.

Although The Printype Oliver Typewriter is worth a premium, we placed the complete machine on the market at the regular catalog price.

The effect was electrical. Inquiries came thick and fast. Demands for demonstrations kept our Local Agencies working at high tension. Sales jumped. Public appreciation of the innovation was so impressively shown in actual orders that today one-third of our total output of Oliver Typewriters are "Printypes."

Belongs Exclusively to the Oliver

The Oliver Typewriter Company originated "Printype." We control it. The Oliver Typewriter is the only writing machine in the world that successfully *typewrites print.*

This triumph in typewriter type, added to the numerous other exclusive features of The Oliver Typewriter, greatly increases the value of our Local Agency Franchise. It puts our great Sales Organization still farther in the lead.

It's Your Supreme Opportunity

We distribute Oliver Typewriters through a world-wide Agency System. Each Local Agent is given exclusive control of all sales of new Oliver Typewriters in the territory assigned, during the entire life of the arrangement. The demand for demonstrations of The Printype Oliver Typewriter necessitates a heavy increase in our force of Local Agents.

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"17 Cents a Day" Booms Sales

As local agent for The Oliver Typewriter you can offer the liberal, attractive terms of "17 Cents a Day." You can accept any make of old machine your customer may own, to apply on the small first payment.

We do not surround our Local Agents with annoying rules and restrictions. In the territory assigned them, they are given full control. Loyal, efficient service wins generous recognition. Exceptional ability is rewarded by promotion to more important positions in the Oliver Organization.

Whether you can give your entire time to the work or only an hour or two a day, you cannot afford to miss this wonderful money-making opportunity.

Rush Agency Application Applications should be mailed promptly, as the territory is being assigned very rapidly. Interesting literature, including the "Printype Book" and "The Opportunity Book," together with complete information regarding Local Agency Plan, will be sent by first mail.

Address Agency Department (107)

The Oliver Typewriter Company, 284 Oliver Typewriter Building, Chicago

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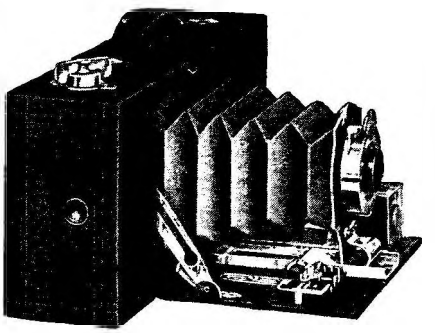
The first Brownie made 2 ¼ x 2 ¼ pictures and sold for a dollar. It was made so well that the inevitable happened. Other and bigger Brownies for bigger people simply had to follow. They are made in the Kodak factories under Kodak superintendence by Kodak workmen. Habit with these people means honest workmanship. That's why the Brownie, a low priced camera, has been and is a success.

No. 2A Folding Pocket Brownie



A truly *pocket* camera for 2½ x 4¼ pictures, loading in daylight with Kodak film cartridges. Capacity 12 exposures without reloading. Finest quality Meniscus Achromatic lens of 5 inch focus. Pocket Automatic shutter for snap-shots or instantaneous exposures, two tripod sockets, automatic focusing lock and reversible finder. Honestly and handsomely made in every detail. Covered with a durable imitation leather and has full nickeled fittings.

Price, $7.00

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Presents an entirely new line of puddings and desserts that are wholesome, handsome, toothsome, easily prepared.

Tapioca in its old form was unpopular because of the **hours of soaking** necessary in its preparation. Minute Tapioca **requires no soaking**, is ready for instant use, cooks quickly, is always light and delicious, and everybody likes it. Try this dessert at our expense.

Cocoanut Cream Tapioca

Boil fifteen minutes in double boiler, stirring frequently, one qt. hot milk, two level tablespoons of **Minute Tapioca**, three tablespoons of cocoanut, one small cup of sugar. Add beaten yolks of three eggs and remove from stove. Cover with whites of eggs beaten to a stiff froth with a little sugar. Brown in quick oven.

SAMPLE FREE

Enough to make this dessert and **Minuteman Cook Book** sent **absolutely free.**

In accepting this offer, be sure to send your grocer's name.

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Messrs. Ostermoor & Co.,

Dear Sirs: After nine years' constant use in my house, the first mattress purchased from you is as even, as perfect and as comfortable, or in fact more so, than the first night I slept on it.

Some three or four years ago I wanted another mattress, and as I was in a hurry and the dealer said it was "exactly the same," and it appeared very similar, I bought an imitation.

It looked very good then, but I must say it can not now compare with my Ostermoor in looks or in comfort.

Very truly yours, MRS. G. F. MCNITT.

WHEN you are buying a mattress, remember that Ostermoor is the *only* mattress which does or can offer a record for honest service covering generations of use.

When any one is trying to sell a substitute or imitation mattress, one of his first claims is sure to be "just as good as an Ostermoor"—and it is unfortunate that *so far as you may be able to prove right there on the spot*, he may be right. All mattresses *look* much alike, but *outside* appearances count for so little compared with *inside* facts.

Long, comfortable service is the one perfect test.

OSTERMOOR

MATTRESS $15.

"Built—Not Stuffed"

Buy from your Ostermoor dealer—his name will be sent if you write us. Do not be deceived into taking a cheaply constructed imitation offered at another store. We will ship a mattress by express, prepaid, same day your check is received, where we have no dealer or he has none in stock.

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In two parts, *five* extra.
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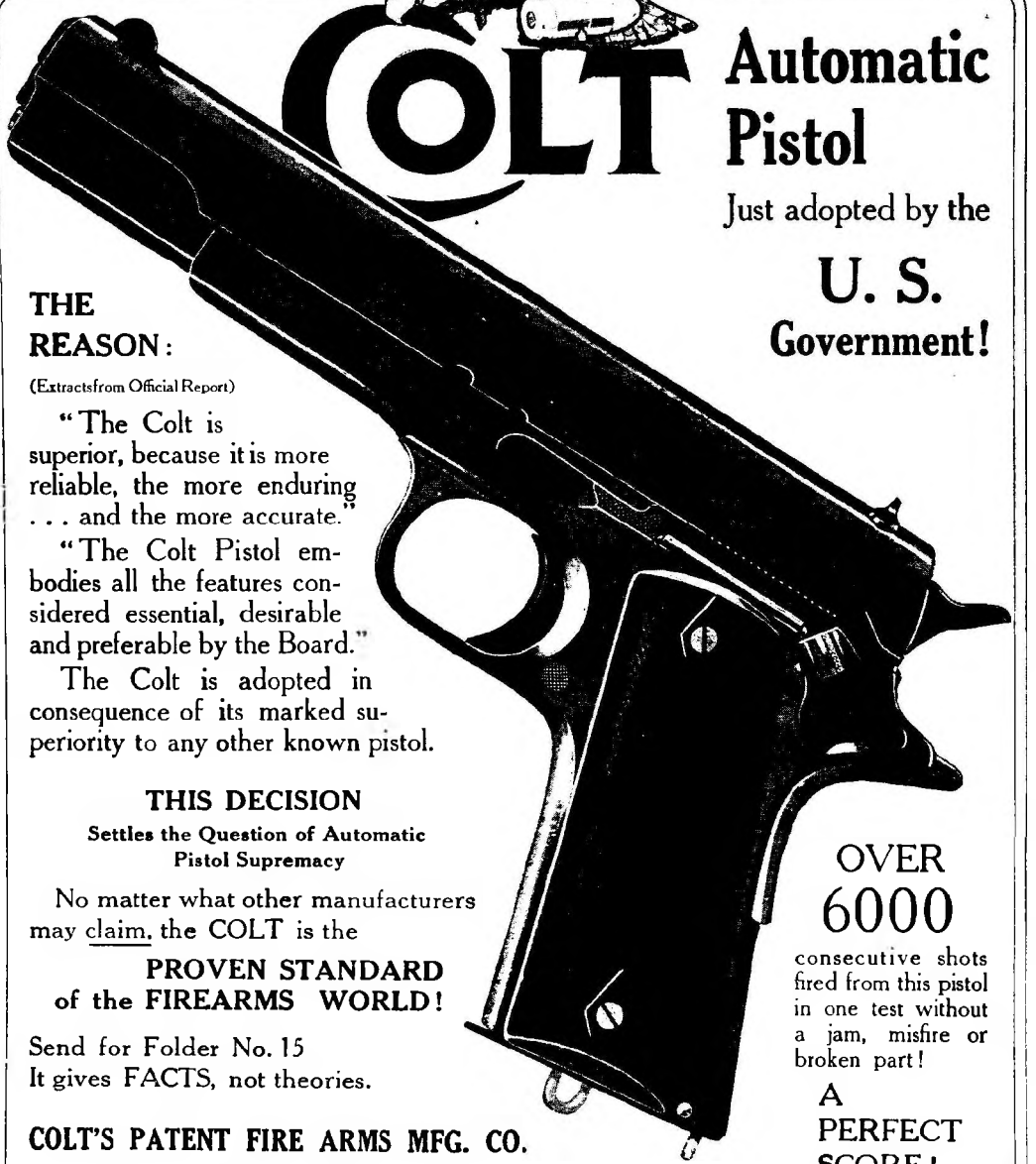
Just adopted by the

U. S. Government!



THE REASON:

(Extracts from Official Report)

"The Colt is superior, because it is more reliable, the more enduring . . . and the more accurate."

"The Colt Pistol embodies all the features considered essential, desirable and preferable by the Board."

The Colt is adopted in consequence of its marked superiority to any other known pistol.

THIS DECISION

Settles the Question of Automatic Pistol Supremacy

No matter what other manufacturers may claim, the COLT is the

PROVEN STANDARD of the FIREARMS WORLD!

Send for Folder No. 15
It gives FACTS, not theories.

COLT'S PATENT FIRE ARMS MFG. CO.
HARTFORD, CONN.

OVER
6000
consecutive shots fired from this pistol in one test without a jam, misfire or broken part!

A PERFECT SCORE!

I Want Some of

THE BLACK SHELLS

Say that to your dealer and you will get the ammunition you have been waiting for.

Our NON-MERCURIC PRIMER gives a certainty and quickness of ignition that will surprise you. It, combined with the extra size of our FLASH PASSAGE (the hole in the shell base through which the flame from the primer reaches the charge), will increase the effectiveness of your shooting from five to ten per cent.

The Waterproofing in THE BLACK SHELLS is perfect. Rainstorm nor ducking, mist nor fog, can make them miss fire or even swell or stick in the chamber.

THE BLACK SHELLS are in three classes:

AJAX, the tip of perfection in dense and bulk smokeless powders—all standard loads. Has extra high base and is made for the most particular.

CLIMAX, with all standard loads of dense and bulk smokeless powders, medium base. Sure to be the most popular of its class.

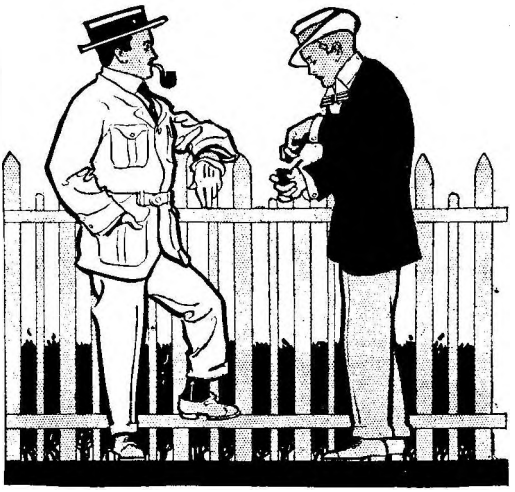
ROMAX, all standard black powder loads.

Send for book about shells. If you enclose 10c, we will send a beautiful colored poster, 20 x 30 inches, called October Days. It will delight any real shooter.

U.S. CARTRIDGE CO

Dept. A

Lowell, Mass., U. S. A.



Velvet

THE SMOOTHEST TOBACCO

Neighbors—the morning walk and talk and a pipeful of Velvet. Velvet is made of the choice leaves of Burley tobacco. It's a delightful smoke. Cured so perfectly and made so skillfully that it is different from any tobacco you've tried. It's all quality—as rich and tasty and cool as a tobacco can be. There is not a tongue burn to a thousand pipefuls. But, why bore you with descriptions? One pipeful of Velvet will tell its own story better than many words. Get a can to-day. Try it. Then you'll know.

Spaulding & Merrick
Chicago, Ill.

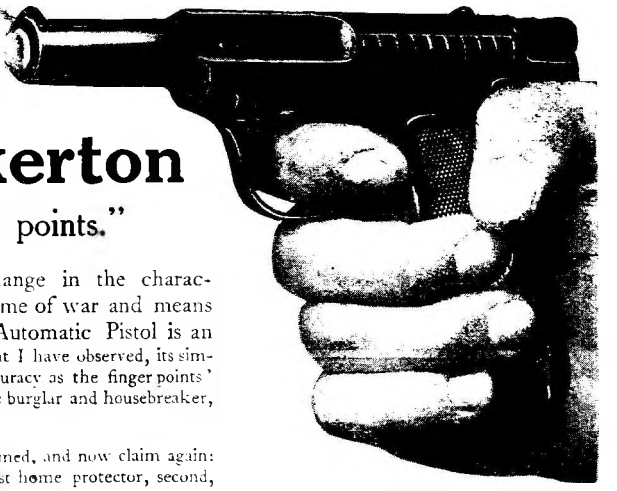
In a neat metal case

10 cents

At your dealer's or if he is sold out send us the 10 cents. We'll send you a can to any address in the U.S.A.

Greatest Detective Wm. A. Pinkerton

Says: "Accurate as the finger points."



"THERE has been a wonderful change in the character of materials for defense in time of war and means for protection in time of peace, and your Automatic Pistol is an interesting production of the latter class. From what I have observed, its simplicity, light weight, direct pull, ten shots, and 'accuracy as the finger points' should establish it as a very effective agent against the burglar and housebreaker, who invade the home or business house."

Mr. Pinkerton corroborates what we have claimed, and now claim again: that the new Savage Automatic, first, is the greatest home protector, second, banishes night fear.

Other great gun men corroborate the above. You cannot doubt men like Col. W. F. Cody, "Buffalo Bill," Dr. Carver, Wm. J. Burns, Walter Duncan, Major Sylvester. "Bat" Masterson has written a book about it, entitled "The Tenderfoot's Turn." Sent free.

If you want to do the best thing you ever did for your home, you'll get a Savage Automatic before tonight.

10 Shots Quick

RIFLE BOOK

Send for new book about the famous ".303" and other Savage Rifles. Free. Savage Arms Company, 866 Savage Ave., Utica, N. Y.

THE NEW SAVAGE AUTOMATIC

When the Salesman Hands You a Shoe

Satisfy Yourself that it is a Goodyear Welt

This is the only way by which you can be sure of getting a shoe equal in all respects to one sewed by hand.

GOODYEAR WELT

is a Synonym for Merit in Footwear

Shoes made on Goodyear Welt machines are marked by comfort, durability and style.

They are *Smooth Inside*, because no thread penetrates the insole to tantalize the foot.

The manufacturer or dealer who advertises that he makes or sells a Goodyear Welt, thereby assures you that he offers a shoe possessing the first requisite of excellence.

The United Shoe Machinery Co., Boston, Mass.

Write today for the following booklets which will be sent you without cost:

1. Contains an alphabetical list of over five hundred shoes sold under a special name or trade-mark, made by the Goodyear Welt process.

2. Describes the Goodyear Welt process in detail, and pictures the sixty marvelous machines employed.

3. "The Secret of the Shoe—An Industry Transformed." The true story of a great American achievement.

4. "An Industrial City." Illustrated—descriptive of the great model factory of the United Shoe Machinery Company at Beverly, Massachusetts.

POPE BICYCLES

COLUMBIA **RAMBLER**
CLEVELAND **TRIBUNE**

The proved perfection of these famous bicycles is due to many distinctive features of great merit not found in other makes. They are safe to buy and safe to ride. **Cycling is a Returning Fashion**

The bicycle is the most widely used vehicle, because it serves for utility, pleasure, exercise, health, economy and business. Over 300,000 new bicycles were made and sold last year.

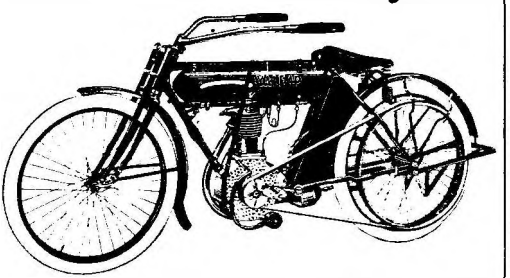
CAUTION! Thousands of very low-grade wheels, with fancy paint and deceptive names, are being sold at high-grade prices. If you see a name-plate that you do not know, beware! Everyone knows Pope Quality. Fully Guaranteed, $25 to $100.

The Pope Daily Service Bicycle—A new proposition. Send for full particulars about this magnificent wheel and our convenient method of selling it.

THE POPE MFG. CO., 469 Capitol Ave., Hartford, Conn.

There is a catalogue for each make ***Dealers wanted everywhere***

1911 Yale Motorcycles



Faultless in design—excelling in engineering skill and construction—1911 YALES embody every service feature which you should demand in a motorcycle of the highest quality.

1911 4 H. P. YALE **$200**

With Bosch Magneto, $235

1911 7 H. P. YALE TWIN **$300**

Long stroke motor, specially heat treated cylinder, ground to thousandth part of an inch, valves drop hammer forged from highest quality nickel steel, perfectly seated and of generous size. New positive grip control (patented) and offset cylinder.

Yale history is worth while reading. Write for it today.

CONSOLIDATED MFG. CO.

1716 Fernwood Ave. **Toledo, O.**

Marlin

REPEATER

Model 1897

The best-made .22 rifle in the world!

Shoots all .22 short, .22 long and .22 long rifle cartridges without change in adjustment; excellent for rabbits, squirrels, hawks, crows, foxes and all small game and target work up to 200 yards.

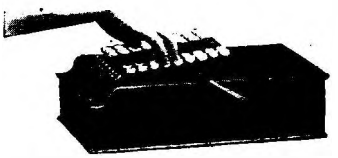
It's a take-down, convenient to carry and clean. The tool steel working parts cannot wear out. Its Ivory Bead and Rocky Mountain sights are the best set ever furnished on any .22. Has lever action—like a big game rifle; has solid top and side ejection for safety and rapid accurate firing—the real test of a repeater.

Note the beautiful case-hardened finish and the superb build and balance. Examine at your gun store or send three stamps postage for new big catalog of all Marlin repeating rifles and shotguns. Do it now!

The Marlin Firearms Co.

7 Willow Street, New Haven, Conn.

The Comptometer appeals to the Bookkeeper, Accountant,



Bill-clerk—the man who pays the bills—because:

1. It does additions in half the time possible by any other means.

2. It is the only adding machine fast enough for practical figuring of chain discounts, extending and checking bills, payrolls, costs. Let us show you by practical demonstration.

3. It is easy to operate; even your typewriter, with a few weeks' practice, can figure faster and more accurately than a skilled accountant. Brain direction, machine execution—that's the best possible system.

4. It saves time, money and worry by its rapid speed and sure accuracy. Used on all kinds of figuring by business houses all over the world.—One business house alone has 181 Comptometers in daily use.

Let us send you a booklet about it; or machine on free trial, prepaid U. S. or Canada.

Felt & Tarrant Mfg. Co., 1734 N. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

No Money No Deposit No Obligations

Make Your Own Terms

Try it 30 Days FREE

W. GRANT KING
PRES. & GEN MGR

At the end of 30 days trial, if you don't find this **KING** machine to be the best machine you ever saw or tried at any price, just send it right back to us and the trial will cost you nothing, as we will stand the freight both ways. You pay no money down.

Save $25. to $35.

If you want to keep the machine, you may make your own terms—pay us $3.00, $2.00, or even $1.00 a month—whatever suits you best, and in any case the cost is less than half that of any other high-grade machine.

Factory Prices

Guaranteed 20 Years

I have cut off my dealers and agents who charged customers from $45.00 to $65.00 for **King** machines, and from now on I will sell the same machine direct to family at factory cost—less than half former prices—and will let you make your own terms.—**Buy the KING for a third as much as other machines, even rent for. 20-year guarantee backed by our half-million dollar factory.**

Write for 64-page catalog and 30-day-free-trial, make-your-own-terms offer.

Gold Medal Winner

IN competition with all other makes of Sewing Machines, the Alaska-Yukon Exposition awarded the **KING** machine the gold medal highest award, and pronounced it "The Best Lock-Stitch Sewing Machine."

The KING is strictly ball-bearing, easy-running, sews perfect lockstitch, has newest drop head, with automatic or hand lift, beautifully grained, quarter-sawed oak Cabinet. Machine is complete, including finest set of attachments and accessories.

KING SEWING MACHINE CO.
1902 RANO STREET BUFFALO, N. Y.

$27.00 PROFIT In One Day

Machine a sure money-getter—better than a mint. That's what Mr. J. R. Gray, of Pickens, Miss., writes.

The Wonder Cannon Camera

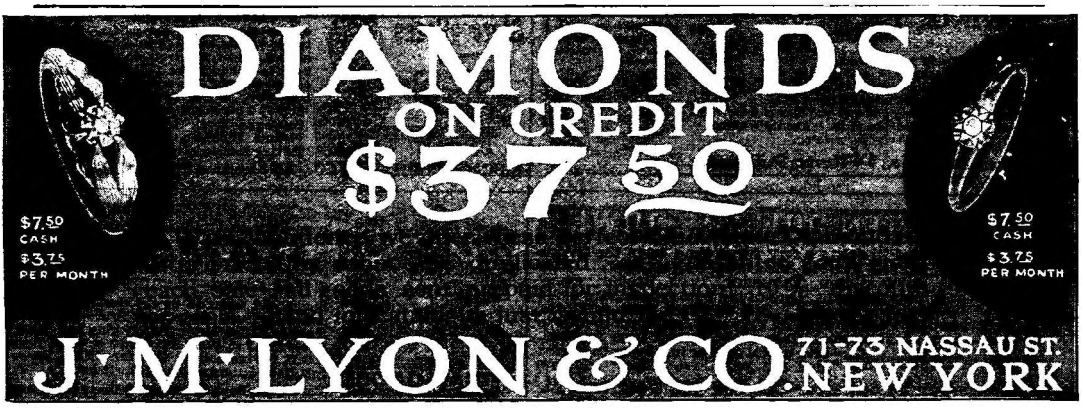
will do the same for you. It is the biggest **outdoor money-maker** to-day. Makes photo buttons at the rate of 8 a minute. **No experience needed.** Write at once for

Free Catalog

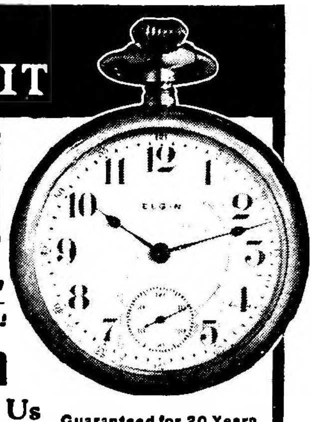
Be your own boss. Be independent on only a $25.00 investment. This buys a complete outfit—**Wonder Cannon Camera,** Tripod and Supplies to make 400 finished photo buttons. Will ship outfit upon receipt of $5.00 deposit—balance C. O. D.

Don't waste valuable time getting started in this Big Money - Getting Business. Fairs, street corners and all outdoor attractions offer big opportunities to hustlers.

Chicago Ferrotype Co.
Dept. A 9 Chicago, Ill.



ELGIN WATCHES ON CREDIT



Special This Month $16.50

17-Jewel Genuine ELGIN IN 20-YEAR GOLD FILLED CASE **only**

Sent PREPAID On ***Free Trial*** at Our Special ROCK BOTTOM WHOLESALE PRICE.

Let me send you this

Beautiful Genuine 17-Jewel Elgin Watch Complete in 20-Year Gold Filled Case—the BIGGEST BARGAIN Ever Offered!

NO MONEY DOWN **$2 A Month**

$2.50 After Examination.

You Assume No Risk Whatever in Dealing With Us Guaranteed for 20 Years.

because before you buy or pay one cent, we place the watch right in your own hands and let it do its own talking. We ask **NO SECURITY** and **NO INTEREST**—just plain honesty among men. Our Elgin Watches are so well known and our CREDIT PLAN so easy, that no matter where you live or how small your wages, **WE WILL TRUST YOU**, so that you and every honest man and woman can own a DIAMOND or High-Grade Elgin Watch in a beautiful Guaranteed 25 year Gold Filled Case and wear it while paying for it in such small payments that you never miss the money. ***Write today for our Big Free Watch and Jewelry Catalog.*** It tells all about our easy credit plan and how we send **Elgin 19-Jewel B. W. Raymond and 21 and 23-Jewel Elgin Veritas** everywhere on Free Trial, without security or one cent deposit, **positively Guaranteed to Pass Any Railroad Inspection.**

WATCH AND DIAMOND Book FREE Write For It.

HARRIS-GOAR CO. Dept. 107 KANSAS CITY, MO.

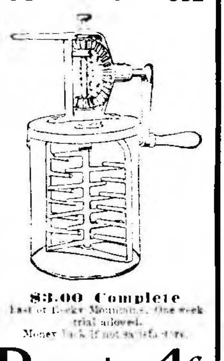
The House that Sells More Elgin Watches than Any Other Firm in the World.

Cuts Butter Bills Nearly Half

Wonderful cost saving Machine FOR FAMILY USE

You can make **two pounds** from **one pound of butter** and a pint of sweet milk; tastes sweeter and is just as healthful as the butter you used in making.

Mak-Mor Butter Machine



$3.00 Complete
East of Rocky Mountains. One week trial allowed.
Money back if not satisfactory.

Recipe: Place one pint of sweet milk and one pound of butter in the machine, turn the handle two minutes and take out two pounds of what you will say is about the best butter you have ever tasted.

Extra POUND costs 4c

(The price of a pint of milk.)

NOTE:—You can do even better if you want to make your own butter to begin with. Put one quart sour cream into the MAK-MOR MACHINE and a short stir will yield almost 1 lb. of butter. Work out the buttermilk and then stir in 1 pt. of sweet milk—result 2 lbs.

Cost—1 Qt. sour cream, 25c
1 Pt. sweet milk, 4c
29c for 2 lbs., or 14½c per lb.

AGENTS, SALESMEN AND SALES MANAGERS wanted to represent us everywhere, introducing this remarkable machine. Sold with a guarantee. Our advertising campaign makes sales easy. Get in touch with us at once.

Mak-Mor Sales Co., No. 28 Moore St., New York, N. Y.

VENTRILOQUISM

Taught Any Man or Boy

by Mail 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 1575—823 Bigelow St., PEORIA, ILL.

"I MADE $20 TODAY"

Sold 48 This Week, (profit $91.20,) writes M. G. Clark, Mont.

"WOMEN BUY AT SIGHT"

Started yesterday; sold 10, and today 12 more. It's a gold mine. Rush 50 more," writes J. H. Hodson, N. Y. Hundreds of men and women making

$50 TO $100 A WEEK

actually making a week's wages every day. They're banking money, buying homes, automobiles. **New discovery** makes it easy for them—should do the same for you. Tremendous sale of the

"HOME COMFORT" SCRUBBING AND FLOOR DRYING MACHINE

breaks all records. New, popular, irresistible—double your money every sale. Every housewife a customer. World's greatest labor saving invention. **No more back breaking scrubbing and floor cleaning days.** New marvelous machine replaces hands, old style brushes, unsanitary rags and hand disfiguring **mops. Vibration does the work.** Scrubs, dries floors, cleans, brightens removes dirt, grease, stains, germs—works like magic. A God-send to women. **Self feeding, self emptying, self sudsing.** Turns scrubbing and floor cleaning drudgery into neat, easy, quick, pleasant task.

Child can do it the Home Comfort way. Weighs 7 pounds. Sells for $3.50—last for years. **Not sold in stores.**

Home Comfort is truly a never ending household boon. Pleases, astonishes all. Customers wonder how they ever got along without it.

$3.50

Mrs. Harris, Ill., writes: "Home Comfort has been a God-send. It's **so easy to scrub and clean.** Really wonderful how quick it works." **Mrs. H. Cole, N. Y.,** writes: "I am simply delighted. Robs scrubbing and floor cleaning of all its hard work and takes so little time. Can clean dirtiest floors with scarcely any effort." **C. Barnes, S. C.,** writes: "No other invention means so much to the home. I am **booking orders like lightning.** It takes every woman by storm." What woman hasn't been eagerly waiting for the Scrubbing and Floor Cleaning Machine. It's here—perfected—selling like wildfire. **Sells for $3.50**—banishes forever woman's worst torture. Could anything be more appreciated, popular, irresistible? **Don't delay**—seize this live opportunity. **Be first—get exclusive territory**—make a fortune. **Send today for agency, free sample and credit terms.**

SANITARY SUPPLY CO., Box 295, Sta. F, TOLEDO, OHIO